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TO HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.

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Coast," she said, "that is what I have paid my passage money for."

Amber was well-nigh speechless.

"But—you can't—your luggage?"

"My luggage is in my cabin," she said innocently; "didn't you know I was coming with you?"

Amber said nothing, his heart being too full for words.

* * * *

When they were five days out, and the sugar-loaf mountain of Teneriffe was sinking behind them, Amber awoke to the gravity of the situation.

"I've been a selfish pig," he said, "if I'd had the heart to do it I could have persuaded you to leave the ship at Santa Cruz—you ought not to come."

"J'y suis—J'y reste!" she said lazily. She was stretched on a wicker lounge chair, a dainty picture from the tip of her white shoes to the crown of her pretty head.

"I'm an explorer's daughter," she went on half seriously, "you have to remember that, Captain Grey."

"I'd rather you called me Amber," he said.

"Well, Mr. Amber," she corrected, "though it seems a little familiar; what was I saying?"

"You were boasting about your birth," he said. He pulled a chair to her side—"and we were listening respectfully."

She did not speak for some time, her eyes following the dancing wavelets that slipped astern as the ship pushed through the water.

"It is a big business, isn't it?" she said suddenly. "This country killed my father—it has taken my brother—"

"It shall not take you," he said between his teeth, "I'll have no folly of that kind; you must go back. We shall meet the homeward Congo boat at Grand Bassam and I shall transfer you—"

She laughed out loud, a long low laugh of infinite amusement.

"By for e, I suppose," she rallied him, "or wrapped up in canvas labelled 'Stow away from boilers.' No, I am going to the base of operations—if no further. It is my palaver—that is the right word, isn't it?—much more than yours."

She was wholly serious now.

"I suppose it is," he said slowly, "but it's a man's palaver, and a nasty palaver at that. Before we catch up to Lambaire and his party even—" He hesitated.

"Even if we do," she suggested quietly; and he nodded.

"There is no use in blinking possibilities," he went on. His little drawl left him and the gentleness in his voice made the girl shiver.

"We have got to face the worst," he said. "Lambaire may or may not believe that the River of Stars is in Portuguese territory. His object in falsifying the compass may have been to hoodwink the British Government into faith in his bona fides—you see, we should have believed your father, and accepted his survey without question."

"Do you think that was the idea?" she asked.

Amber shook his head.

"Frankly no. My theory is that the compass was faked so that your father should not be able to find the mine again: I think Lambaire's idea was to prevent the plans from being useful to anybody else but himself—if by chance they fell into other hands."

"But why take Francis?" she asked in perplexity.

"The only way they could get the plan—any way their position was strengthened by the inclusion of the dead explorer's son."

This was the only conversation they had on the subject. At Seirra Leone they transferred their baggage to the Pinto Colo, a little Portuguese coasting steamer, and then followed for them a leisurely crawl along the coast, where, so it seemed, at every few miles the ship came to an anchor to allow of barrels of German rum to be landed.

Then one morning, when a thick white mist lay on the oily water, they came to an anchor off the low-lying coast—invisible from the ship—which was the beginning of the forbidden territory.

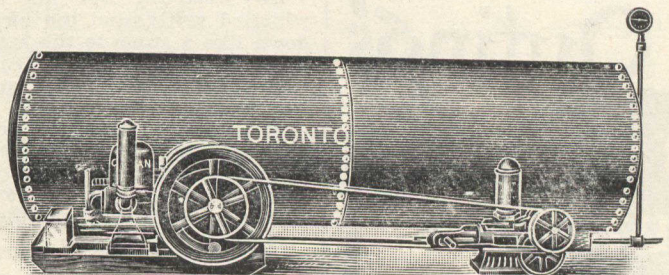
"We have arrived," said Amber, an hour later, when the surf-boat was

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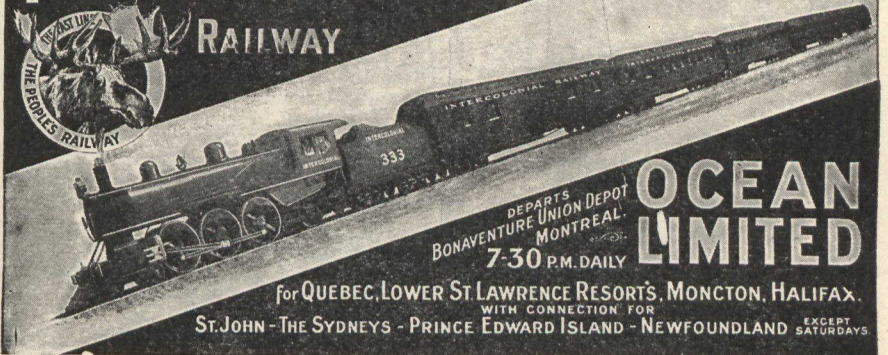


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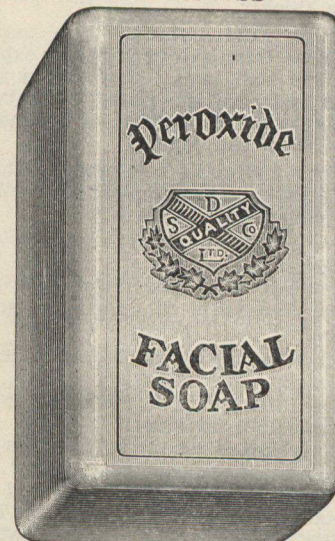


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