

THE SEA-MAIDEN.

A TALE PICTURE.

There was a lily and rose sea-maiden
In marvellous depths of far-away seas,
Whose eyes were blue, and whose head was laden
With luminous curls like the honey of bees.

Half hidden by corals and swaying rushes
And vines of the ocean, she sat arrayed
In a tremulous veil of delicate blushes
And robes of quivering light and shade.

The sun fish came to worship her graces,
The dog-fish lingered and marvelled beside,
And she gayly smiled in their whimsical faces,
And sang them songs till they laughed or cried.

A poet of earth looked down upon her,
And loved, and beckoned, and told his love;
But her soul was coy with a sea-maiden's honor,
And she would not go to the world above.

So there he staid by the crystalline water;
He leaned and gazed with heart on fire;
And died at last for the ocean's daughter—
Died of sorrow and long desire.

And still she sits in the peace of ocean—
The peace of the mouth of the ocean caves—
A damsel without an earthly emotion,
Who cares not for men, their loves, or their graves.

Thus deep in calms of woman's life, covers
Herself some maiden, on aureate sands
Of duty and innocence, far from lovers,
From beatings of hearts and reachings of hands.

—J. W. DE FOREST, in *Harper's*

A SAFE ANCHORAGE.

(Continued.)

Mrs. Mostyn was buried in the Southampton cemetery, where long before she had laid her two infant sons. Mary had never been there since the funeral, and I had promised to take her there one day.

So one afternoon we set off, taking with us a basket of exquisite roses plucked from her mother's favorite trees. It was a lovely day at the end of June, and the cemetery had never looked more peaceful and beautiful, with the golden sunlight filtering through the fresh green leaves and glowing on the masses of roses of every hue that crept and twined and clustered everywhere around us.

Mrs. Mostyn's grave was in a shady corner; the small railed enclosure was wreathed with roses and ivy, which nearly hid the white stone on the children's grave. We laid the flowers we had brought at the head and foot of the still brown earth that covered Mary's mother, and then, thinking that she would like to be alone, I left Mary sitting down to rest on a neighbouring grave and went off to speak to the sexton, whom I saw at a little distance. When I came back, I saw that she had been crying. I sat down beside her, and we fell to speaking of those two dear ones now gone.

How quiet it was! Not a soul except our selves was there; the sun was sinking low, and the long slanting rays lighted up the pure white and rich red of the roses on the grave and played on Mary's pale face and her long-lashed down-cast eyes.

"I hope the stone for mother will be put up before we go away," she said presently. "I want to see everything done before I leave Greenbank. Aunt Fanny's home is so far away in Cornwall that I don't know when I shall see Southampton again after I have once left it."

"Mary," I remarked, after a pause, "I have never yet told you what your father's last words to me were."

"I thought I knew all, Douglas. Was there any reason why I should not have heard before?"

"I thought there was; but now I will tell you. He said, 'Take care of my little Mary, Douglas.'"

Her eyes filled with tears; but she did not or would not understand.

"Indeed you have taken care of me," she said simply. "I don't know what would have become of me without you; and we are trusting to you to help us about letting Greenbank too."

"It was a different sort of taking care he meant, dear—the care that a man takes of what is dearer to him than life, the care that I would take of my wife, Mary."

We were both silent; her head drooped lower, and heavy tears were falling on her clasped hands. I took them in mine.

"There—now the secret's out at last; and hard work it has been to keep it so long. What is it to be, dear?"

"Oh, no," she sobbed, half turning from me—"no, no, Douglas—dear, kind old friend! I know your good generous heart—that you think the best way you can fulfil my father's last request is by asking me to marry you. But, oh, I can't let you do that! It is impossible—it cannot be."

Blundering idiot that I had been, to put it to her in such a fashion!

"Of course," I said humbly, "I have made a wretched muddle of the whole thing, making you believe that I asked you to be my wife only out of pity. Pity indeed! Oh, what a clumsy brute I am!"

"Oh, no, no; don't say that!"—faintly.

"But I am, though. However, we will have no more mistakes about this. Mary, my darling, will you believe me when I say that, even before we left in the *Runnymede*, it was my earnest desire to tell you how I loved you, but the Doctor thought you were too young, and made me wait until we should get home? He knew it all along, and it was his dearest wish that I

might find you heart-whole and willing to give me the love of your heart."

How she trembled. But still she said nothing.

"I know, dear, that I am much older than you are, that there is no romance about me—for I am only your old friend whom you have known all your life, and a poor wretch of a purser into the bargain; but I love you better than life, Mary. Can you love me a little too?"

My arm was round her now. With a sudden movement she turned and hid her face upon my breast.

"Will you try to love me?" I whispered again.

She half raised her head, and a deep blush—the first color that I had seen on her white face for weeks—spread over her cheeks.

"I think I must have loved you all my life, Douglas—though how much I never knew till now."

We sat talking until one of the gardeners came to tell us that the gates were being closed. As we rose to go, Mary stooped and plucked a half-opened white rose, and silently gave it to me. It is very brown and faded, but I have it still.

Our engagement lasted only a month; for there were many reasons why we should be married at once. Mrs. Lorraine had been a long time from home, and was anxious to return soon; and my only desire was to have Mary to myself, and to give her the love and care that none but a husband could bestow. The few necessary arrangements were simple and easily made. Greenbank was to be left in charge of old Hannah, Mary's former nurse and present factotum, with the young servant for company; for I intended to take Mary abroad and give her a thorough change of scene. The marriage was to be the quietest possible. We should drive to the church with aunt Fanny, and go off almost at once to Southampton, en route for the Continent.

I had occasion to go to Portsmouth a week before the wedding; and, as I was going down the High Street, who should come out of "The George" but Sir Hugh Seymour! He made me go back with him to luncheon, and I had to tell him all about Mary and our approaching marriage.

"Poor little girl, poor little girl!" he said several times. "Ah, she's had a terrible time of it! You must be very good to her, Adair, for she has no one but you now. And who is to be there?" he asked presently.

"Only ourselves and Mrs. Lorraine," I answered.

"Then who will give her away?"

Upon my word, I had never thought of that part of the business until that moment. Now I remembered that we had not secured any one to perform the necessary duty. The Doctor being an only child, there were no near relatives on his side; most of his wife's people were dead, and Mary's nearest male relative, Patrick Lorraine, was in India with his regiment.

"Do you think," Sir Hugh asked, "that she would let me take her father's place? I would not intrude for the world; but I think, if Miss Mostyn knew how greatly I valued and esteemed the Doctor, she would not refuse to grant my request. You ask her, Adair, and let me know. I am here for the next ten days."

Mary was greatly touched when I told her of the skipper's offer, made in a way so thoughtful and delicate that my rough style of putting it does not at all convey; so we gratefully accepted his proffered kindness.

The day arrived in due course, and with it Sir Hugh; and we four drove quietly to the little gray church. Although we had tried hard to keep the matter secret, the day and hour had become known, as such things will leak out; and quite a goodly congregation awaited us, many of them the poor and aged whom Mary and her mother had helped and comforted, and who had hobbled up the hill from the village to give their blessings to their "own young lady."

As she passed up the aisle on Sir Hugh's arm, in her soft gray dress and white bonnet—for she had put off her mourning for this day—I saw the tears in those dim old eyes, and heard the blessings of those feeble tremulous voices, and I began to think that, well as I believed I knew her, I had not learnt the half of Mary's goodness yet.

I was glad when it was over, for the strain was almost too much, though she was outwardly calm and composed. The presence of Sir Hugh was a real help and comfort to her, and she did not break down until, just before we went away, he clasped round her neck a magnificent locket containing an exquisite portrait of her father; and then, as he touched her brow with his lips and said tenderly, "Heaven bless you, my child!" there fell from Mary's eyes the first tears she had shed on her wedding-day.

I took my wife to Brittany first, intending to go on to Germany; but she was so charmed with the lovely country and quaint people that she begged we might go no farther. So we wandered on from one pretty little quiet place to another. Day by day I saw the color returning to her cheeks, and her languid step regaining more of its old lightness; and I was rejoiced to find that my constant efforts to cheer and comfort her were not without success. So we lingered on; and, as the autumn was late and fine, it was not until November that we returned to Greenbank, where we settled down to a quiet, happy, uneventful life.

When the next late autumn came, our little Douglas was born; and now indeed Mary was comforted. So a second winter passed. Sud-

denly one day in early spring I got my appointment to the *Wood-Pigeon*, under orders for the Australian station. It was a terrible disappointment for Sir Hugh, who had always kept up friendly intercourse with us, was expecting to be appointed to the Channel Fleet, and had promised to apply for me as his pymaster. A note from him the next day said that he found he was not likely to be employed for several months, so there was no help for it. I could not afford to retire; I must simply go.

The day of parting came at last. Mary was alone, and I once more on blue water. I soon shook down again to my old life; and sometimes as I worked at my books and overhauled my safe, it seemed almost impossible to believe the changes that had taken place since I was last at sea. But there at the foot of my bunk hung Mary's picture, and the little round-eyed white-froked mortal on her lap was my son, and the inheritor of my name—and but little else—of a long line of illustrious Adairs.

We got out to our station all right, and for some months had to do "senior officer" in the absence of the Commodore at New Zealand. As soon as he returned, we were sent off to cruise among the islands; several outrages on British merchant ships had been committed recently, and our duty was to find out and chastise the delinquents.

Within two days of the first place on our rota—a place known as Curfew Island, where the crew of a schooner called the *Kildare* had been murdered—we sighted a small group of islets on our port bow, marked on the chart as the Michaelmas Islands. The inhabitants were not known to be unfriendly; and, as we wanted fruit and vegetables, Captain Threlfall determined to call there. It was about noon when we lay to off the largest of the group, and in half an hour we were boarded by several canoes, whose occupants appeared very friendly; The Commodore had sent us a marine to act as interpreter, he having picked up a fair knowledge of some of the principal dialects in use on the islands; and he explained to the chief who had come on board that we wished to buy fruit and vegetables. It was agreed that towards evening we should send a boat ashore, taking the price of the stores in calico, beads, fish-hooks, and the like. So, about an hour before sunset, the cutter was in readiness, I, as paymaster, being in charge of the commercial part of the expedition. Our party consisted of Rice, the sub-lieutenant, in command, myself, the ward-room steward, eight blue-jackets, four marines, and the coxswain. We beached the boat, leaving two men in charge; and I went up to the village, with the coxswain, steward, and our interpreter, while Rice and the rest of his crew made for a copse at a little distance, with the intention of cutting brushwood for brooms.

I had been busy bargaining for twenty minutes, when there arose a sudden noise of distant shouting, which approached rapidly, and our men came tearing down to the boat, followed by a yelling crowd of savages brandishing clubs and spears. In a twinkling the stretchers were out of the cutter, and a desperate fight was going on, the sight of which to the chief was like a spark of gunpowder. The others were nearly all in the boat, towards which I was trying to fight my way, being some distance off. Rice saw my danger, and in a moment he had leaped ashore, crying, "Who'll help Mr. Adair?" Then a sudden crushing blow descended on my head, and I knew no more.

The unexpected fight had begun, as I learned long afterwards, in a dispute between a marine and some natives about the brushwood our men were cutting; blows were soon exchanged, and a free fight followed. I was left for dead on the shore, and the cutter managed to get away, not without some severe casualties among our men. Captain Threlfall immediately took a strong party of marines and blue-jackets ashore in the launch and the cutter; but, when they landed, the village was entirely deserted, and they could only find a few decrepit old people, who either could not or would not say what had become of the others. The island was large and hilly, and the utmost that could be done was to scour the country in the immediate vicinity; but no traces of the fugitives could be found; and at last the landing-party had to return to the ship; and I was ultimately reported to the Admiralty as having been killed by savages at the Michaelmas Islands.

My captors took me to a small village on the north coast of the island; and I believe it was at first their intention to kill me. But I was saved by an old woman whose only son, a subordinate chief, had been killed in battle. The poor creature was left desolate; and, seeing that I still lived, she begged that she might have me for a servant, to perform the dead warrior's duties to her; and, after a long discussion, her request was granted.

For some time I was very ill from the effects of the blow I had received, aggravated by my agony of mind at the prospect of a life-long captivity and the knowledge of what my wife would suffer on hearing the news of my fate. As I grew better, I began to fulfil my duties to old Tanavuka; and, in gratitude to her for my preservation from death, I tried to do all I could for the poor old woman. My chief work was to cook fish and cultivate the patches of yams and sweet potatoes round the hut. Terribly monotonous it was, for, though Tanavuka was kind enough in her way, she would hardly let me go out of her sight, and any effort to escape would have brought the whole of the village after me. The people seldom took any notice of me when once

the novelty of my white skin had passed off; but they watched me well. The north side of the island was quite out of the track of passing ships, which almost invariably made the south shore, as we had done; so that any hope of escape seemed remote indeed.

Still I never lost heart, and kept count of time; and the days wore on, until more than two years had passed. Tanavuka was growing very infirm; and I dreaded her death, not knowing what might then become of me. At last she did die, carefully tended to the last by me. Then I began to fear and expect that the chief would claim me; and, though now it was unlikely that he would put me to death, yet I did not like to think of being transferred to his ownership. But, as it happened, his hands were pretty full just at this time, as he was trying to quell a revolt that had broken out in his own neighborhood, and the few fighting-men in our small village had all hurried off to the fray.

At sunset on the very day after Tanavuka's death an American whaler appeared in the offing, bore up, anchored about a mile off, and sent a boat on shore. Now or never was my chance! I stole through the wood behind the hut, down to the creek where Tanavuka's canoe lay, and paddled noiselessly down until I gained the open sea, when a glance showed me a large whale-boat advancing rapidly. I hung back until the boat had got clear of my course, as I thought it best to get on board first before making myself known; then I gave way with a will, and never slackened speed till I made fast at the gangway of the *Golden Gate*.

No prince could have treated me more nobly than did that Yankee whaler. I had not a paper, not a letter, to prove my identity—nothing but my watch and chain, which poor old Tanavuka had kept, and which I took from her when she was dead. But Jim Seabury trusted me.

"I believe you're a gentleman, for all your savage rig," he said, with his hand on my shoulder; "and, even if you were the biggest rascal out of Fresco, I'd help you to get out of this heathen hole."

And—Heaven bless him!—he did help me; for the best of all he had he gave me; and all the time that I remained with him his kindness could not have been exceeded by that of my own father. At the end of three months we fell in at Levuka with a Swedish barque homeward bound to Swansea, in which I secured a passage, for which Seabury paid, besides providing me with a comfortable outfit and a hundred dollars at parting into the bargain.

"If you're a British naval officer, you won't let me be the loser, I know. You can remit to the British Consulate at Frisco; and I'd trust you if it were only for the sake of the face in there;" and he touched the locket that hung at my watch-chain.

I thought he would have wrung my hand off at parting; and, as I watched his boat pull away from the *Ellida*, I felt that I was parting from the truest friend that ever man had.

We arrived safely at Swansea, after a tedious voyage; and the first thing I did was to report myself at the Admiralty and prove my identity to the satisfaction of the authorities. I found on inquiry that Mary was alive, and drawing her and the boy's pensions regularly; and, taking it for granted that she was still at Greenbank, I never inquired about her address, but hurried off to Southampton by the next train.

But here a grievous disappointment awaited me. Greenbank was let to a family from India, and Mary had removed to a distant part of Devonshire. I got her address though—Laurel Cottage, Aynsworth; and then, tired and downhearted, I retraced my steps to "The Ranger," the little inn where I had so often put up in old days. But it also had changed hands, and the landlady was a stranger to me. She seemed to know a good deal about Mary, however, and told me all she knew, in answer to my questions.

"Mrs. Adair left about a year ago; she had a good offer to let the cottage to Major Marshall—and very like she's not too well off, like many officers' widows. I think she's gone to be near her aunt, who lives at Aynsworth Park with her son Sir Patrick."

"Sir Patrick! he used to be only Captain Lorraine."

"Yes, sir; but he's left the Army now; for nigh upon two years ago he came into the title and estates on the death of his father's cousin, quite unexpected. The old gentleman's only son died sudden, and in few months Sir John followed."

Here was a change! Poor penniless Pat Lorraine a rich Baronet! Well, thank Heaven I had not been received with bad news instead!

"Mrs. Adair was ill a long time after she heard of her husband's death," my informant continued; "she took on most dreadful, poor lady; and people said it was only the little boy that kept her alive. Dear me, sir, it will be sad work for her to hear all you have told her. What troubles some of us have to go through, to be sure!"

It was not until the next evening that I reached Aynsworth, a little seaside village far from the main line. I was directed to the Lorraine Arms, where I ordered dinner at once. The landlady, a comely, pleasant woman, waited on me herself, and I could see that only the merest crust of politeness kept her from plunging at once into the questions she was longing to ask as to my business at Aynsworth. I did not keep her waiting long, for I was far too anxious myself for the information I wanted. I said that I had only just returned from abroad, that I had been at the island where Mrs. Adair's husband