

transcript of one of the most gorgeous Southern sunsets I ever beheld, and I lounging beside him, when glancing carelessly out at the foamy track left by the vessel, as she plowed her way through the rippling waves, I saw between me and the glowing sky a thin filmy vapor ascending. Lazily I watched for a while, as it curled and wreathed in fantastic shapes that lent a flickering softness to the brilliant tints beyond. After about ten minutes' lazy enjoyment of the novel effect, a vague wonder crept into my mind as to how it got there. Could some one be smoking, leaning out of the stern windows, or sitting among the cordage and chains? Yes, that was probably the cause of it; some of our fellows no doubt had chosen that place for a quiet chat. But who could it be? They were most of them in groups near us; I did not miss any one. So at last, out of pure curiosity, I determined to look over and see.

'I'll be back in a minute, Hugh,' I said, rising very slowly and, in spite of my curiosity, reluctantly, and making my way aft. When I arrived at the taffrail and leaned over, no one was to be seen: but, what I for a few seconds thought odd, there seemed to be hot vapor oozing through the crevices of the planking, and the air smelled so strangely. What could it be? I sniffed once or twice, and then with overwhelming force the conviction rushed through my mind—the ship was on fire. To run forward and tell the captain was the work of an instant, and a minute later it was found that the large saloon in the stern, in which the ladies usually sat, was on fire.

Our men manned the pumps turn about with the blue-jackets, and we put in our turn with the rest, Hugh throwing aside his unfinished sketch, and working like a horse at whatever came under his hand.

'Who is Captain Cameron?' asked Solace, coming up hurriedly to where we were working, carrying away all inflammable articles from the proximity of the fire. He was in his shirt sleeves like the rest of us, and though his face was pale, his voice was firm and clear as he spoke.

'I don't know,' answered Hugh, shortly, as he turned to assist a marine vainly striving to move some ponderous article by his unassisted strength. 'Why do you want him?' he continued, wiping the sweat from his brow, as he staggered forward with his tired helper.

'Only that I haven't seen him doing any thing, and I want him to come and help us. We must all work now if we wish to live.'

Suddenly from the forward part of the ship came the man he was looking for, pale, haggard, and with big drops, brought there not by pain, but by anguish and fear, standing on his brow, the very picture of abject terror.

'Oh,' he cried, with a pleading gesture of his hands, 'now are you getting on? Is the fire being got under? For mercy's sake tell me quick!'

'The worst is to be feared, Captain Cameron,' answered Solace, coldly, turning with disgust from the pitiable figure of his senior, 'but cowardice indeed changes the handsome face into an abject and unsightly object; imagine, therefore, its effect on Cameron's breaking countenance. For one moment he stared wildly at the brave youth, then a paroxysm of fear seized him, and forgetting all who were present—his position, duty, everything—he raved and cursed his cruel fate in the wildest throes of mortal terror.

A minute's glance was all we could vouch for to our pitiable exhibition; when next we looked in that direction he was gone. A few minutes after, business took me forward, where a party of our men were taking breath after their spell at the pumps. A little apart from the silent wary group stood Sergeant Green, and talking eagerly to him, with violent gesticulations and hurried breathing, was Cameron, whom I had so lately seen ordering on in a fit of insane terror.

this thing if I can prevent it: and you,' he added, turning to the men, 'return every one of you to your duty, or I shall report you to your officers. Have you no shame that you should try to leave the ship before all hope is lost? Think of your comrades toiling till the very life is worn out of them to save themselves and the ship. Are you not ashamed to stand here concocting a villainous scheme that must deprive some at least of the chance of safety if you succeed, and that if you do not succeed will not the less cover you with infamy.'

'That is all very fine,' sneered Cameron, a feeble spark of energy roused in him by hate and fear; 'but if I prefer to save myself rather than stick by this cursed tub till the flames reach the powder, and if these brave fellows choose to make an effort for their lives, none shall prevent us; you, if you make another attempt to stop us, shall be pitched into the sea; I can promise you that much, I think.'

Hugh laughed scornfully, and springing on the bulwarks caught hold of one of the davits to support himself, at the same time opening a large clasp knife, with which he intended to cut the rope if obliged; at least, as he told me afterward, he intended to try and cut the rope, though well aware that his knife was a very weak weapon for such an undertaking.

As he opened the knife, Cameron, goaded to fury by the idea that his carefully prepared scheme was about to fail through Hugh's agency, aimed a blow at him with all his force. Involuntarily I sprang forward intending to catch Cameron's arm, but before I could reach him the blow had been delivered; missing his mark, Cameron overbalanced and fell heavily against the bulwarks, cutting himself pretty severely about the face and head. Then I caught Hugh by the arm and dragged him down.

'What are you about,' I said, breathlessly, 'standing up there, where a touch would knock you over into the water? Let us take that madman, Cameron, and shut him up somewhere; it will then be easy to deal with the rest.'

We turned to look for him, and perceived Solace assisting him to rise.

'Captain Cameron,' he said, 'you don't know what you are doing; you are not fit to be left alone; you must come with me and help us to work.'

Cameron staggered to his feet, fairly beside himself with rage.

'It is that fellow,' he yelled, pointing to Hugh; 'he is setting the men against me. I will be revenged for his cursed impudence.'

He struggled to get free from Solace, who, however, held him firmly, and answered:

'Captain Melton did his duty, and when you are in your calm judgement you will thank him for acting as he did. Now come with me,' so saying he went off, dragging his unwilling superior after him, who turned back for one minute to mutter a fierce curse on Melton, and swear with bitter emphasis he would be revenged. A few sharp words dispersed the sulkers, and then, turning again to our work, we found that in the interim the fire had been considerably subdued, and there was now really some hope of saving the ship.

Animated by that hope, we set to work again with the will, and in about half an hour enjoyed the luxury of resting a few minutes without any fear of the fire, which was now completely quenched. I could hardly help laughing as I surveyed several of the most dandified young fellows in the regiment, now looking like an assemblage of chimney-sweeps and coat-beavers; indeed some of them were so begrimed as to be almost unrecognizable. As to Hugh, now the excitement was over, he looked indeed a dismal picture; his fair hair singed, his clothes torn, and dirty, and, above all, an impatient, anxious expression on his countenance. He smiled faintly as he looked at me, fancying, no doubt, that I was as queer-looking as he

The little town lay near the Himalayas, and was at this period used as an outpost, on account of the lawless, predatory habits of the mountain chieftains, which rendered the constant supervision of the British Government and a tolerably powerful executive necessary.

It was not a bad quarter, after all; and some of us managed to make ourselves very comfortable. There was plenty of sport, and many a good day Hugh and I had among the hills. Though at the foot of hills, our station was intensely hot, and most tantalizing it was to see far away the summits of endless mountains rising one above the other in endless confusion, until their snowy peaks seemed to pierce the blue vault above. Hugh revelled in the endless beauties they spread out before him of form and color, while I took every opportunity of getting a ramble over their unexplored pathways, with my gun on my shoulder and a pleasant companion by my side.

CHAPTER VI.

CAMERON'S VISITOR.

There are drawbacks to every place, and the drawback to A—was, as far as I was concerned, that it did not agree with me. The intense heat brought on a kind of low fever, which, though it did not quite lay me up, yet made every pursuit, whether in connection with my duty or otherwise, a burden to me. Our medico assured me I should soon get over it; in the meantime I had better keep quiet, and avoid all exertion during the heat of the day.

So it chanced that one day, as I was lounging in an easy chair by my window, getting the benefit of the cool breeze that at that hour (it was half past seven in the evening) was beginning to steal down from the mountains, I heard a vehicle approaching the barracks. Curiosity prompted me to raise a corner of the mat that shaded the window and look out. My window commanded a view of the drive up the compound to the door, and I saw a kind of covered carriage of primitive and dilapidated appearance driving up. It stopped at the door, and then I, still keeping myself concealed, saw seated inside a very handsome woman.

But who could she be coming to see? Every one was out with the exception of myself—Hugh sketching, a lot of the others shooting, and Cameron, I thought, visiting. As for me, I had never set my eyes on this lady before; so certainly her visit was not intended for me. I did not hear for whom she asked, but in a few minutes Cameron appeared, and then I saw I had been mistaken in supposing him away. He handed her out, and before she disappeared with him through the doorway I obtained even a better view of her than I had at first been able to.

She was tall, with a perfect figure, which was displayed to the greatest advantage by a light muslin dress, over which was thrown carelessly a magnificent black lace shawl, that rather enhanced than concealed the effect. In stepping out of the carriage she displayed a slender foot, with an instep arched as that of an Arab, while the hand that rested ungloved on his arm was small and white, the taper fingers sparkling with jewels. A perfect hand it was, and you would have said, had you not seen the face, it must have belonged to a lady. As to her face, it was gloriously beautiful, complete in every feature, and wanting only the nameless charm of refinement, without which beauty is to some minds valueless. Imagine a broad white brow, with penciled eyebrows of the most perfect form surmounting eyes large and dark as a gazelle's; a peach-like bloom on her cheeks set off the clear olive complexion; while her mouth would have been lovely, showing as it did when she

Cameron laughed a little at her question, and answered in a more cynical manner than I could have fancied any man would have used to such a woman:

'You were right not to mind what any fellow might report about me. You know we are married; so you are safe whatever may happen, though no one knows how we stand with regard to one another. You have kept our secret, I hope?' he added, with some sternness.

'Indeed, Edward, I have,' she replied, earnestly, 'though why I should do so I can't see. And when I hear such things said of you I do long to hold up my head boldly, looking people in the face, as I have a right to do, and saying, "Your stories are false; I am his wife, and no woman shall come between us while I live."'

'Well, well,' he answered, in an impatient bored manner—or which I felt it in my heart to kick him, so much had my sympathies been enlisted by the sweet wifely words and tender caressing manner of the beautiful stranger—you know I don't like declamation or heroics; they bore me; and you are getting a little into that style now and then. Try and get out of it, dear. As to why our marriage should be kept a secret, I told you long ago that my embarrassments would not permit me to declare it; as to this report, why, you must encourage it as much as you can, as at present it is my only help in keeping my head above-water. The Jews will wait, in hopes of reaping a golden harvest when it comes off, as this Miss Meares is a great heiress. Indeed, I have been thinking that it would not be a bad move for either you or me could it be accomplished.'

There was a pause after this sentence, during which interval of silence a feeling of horror stole over me of this fair, calm-looking man, with his quiet, gentle ways, his smooth, persuasive voice, and his womanish attention to personal appearance, who concealed a soul so vile, a mind so base, as not only to plan such a scheme, but to dare to talk over it boldly and openly with his young wife.

The dead silence was at last broken by that sweet voice, saying, in a hesitating tone that told an eloquent tale of horror, astonishment, and pain:

'I—I—don't quite understand you, Edward, I think. Surely I can't have heard aright!'

'Oh yes, quite right,' he answered, with a laugh that sounded unpleasantly sneering. 'You needn't look shocked so harm can come to you whatever I do. Remember you are quite safe, and don't trouble your head about this Miss Meares, who is, after all, the only one to be pitied. What I want you to do is this: I am engaged to marry this Miss Meares—have been so, in fact, since we were children—and had no right to marry you. Now if you are only wise and keep our secret, what is to prevent my marrying this girl in England? I shall never bring her out here, and her money will enable me to give you those luxuries I have so long wished to shower upon the only woman I ever met who had sufficient attraction for me to induce me to forego the brilliant future opened out before me as the husband of the heiress Maud Meares. It is only my love for you that makes me desire this. Other men can adorn those they love with jewels and costly garments, as I would like to do my beautiful darling, while I, with all the affection I feel for you, have never been able to show you more than those few paltry trinkets that look so unworthy the beauty they adorn. And it will not harm Miss Meares either. No one will know of your existence, and she will certainly have the best of the position as my wife. After all, in other countries men may have more wives than one, though our stupid laws are against it. Still, I don't see the harm if it can be managed.'

He laughed sneeringly and brutally as he finished, but a low wailing cry from his wife

neck. As to my loving her, believe me dear, you are a thousand times sweeter and more charming to me than any other woman who ever breathed. I don't care a fig for her, but I want her money; and as for her, I don't think she likes me, though I believe she tries to persuade herself she does; and I am pretty sure she cares a good deal for that hang-dog fellow, Hugh Melton, curse him!'

'Then, Edward darling,' said the beauty, in a calmer voice, 'how can you wish so to wrong both her and me? Of myself I will say nothing; you must know all I have to say as well as I; but only think of her. What has the poor girl done that this man and shame should be brought upon her? Let her marry that man, if she can care for him after being engaged to you. Are you sure she doesn't love you?' she added. 'Are you only telling me that about the other man to turn my suspicions aside, because you love her yourself? Swear to me you are telling me the truth. Only a little while ago, and I should not have asked you to swear—I should have believed your word; but now you are so strange I almost fear you. Why did you tell me all this, and say those dreadful things? I know you were only trying me, but I can't bear it. Promise me not to talk so any more, won't you?'

With the most coming and persuasive voice, in which there was still a tremor of fear and passion, she uttered these words, and I could fancy how, as she said it, her white hands wound themselves around his neck, and her beautiful lustrous eyes looked pleadingly up into his.

But blandishments and prayers were alike wasted on him; he had begun his subject, and he meant to go through with it: he continued, therefore:

'The reason she don't marry Hugh Melton is that he is a beggar, with nothing but his pay, and her fine fortune goes to the dogs, or somewhere equally satisfactory, if she does not marry me; and marry her I will I am going home in a year's time to do it; so I would advise you to keep quiet, madam, and not spoil my little game, or it will be the worse for you.'

'But I will spoil it,' she cried; 'I will spoil it. Do you think I will stand by quietly and see you ruin another life as you have ruined mine? Is it not enough for one woman to have married a villain, who will darken her future life by the curse of an unrequited affection, without another being dragged down by the same man to a darker misery, a deeper shame? No; I have here the copy of my marriage register; I always carry it with me; as a precious treasure at first, henceforth as a safeguard against treachery. Oh, Edward, I thought you loved me! Say you will give up all thoughts of Miss Meares; I will forgive you everything, for I love you still; even though you had perpetrated the deed you threatened, Heaven help me, I believe I should love you even then.'

'Where did you get that copy of the register?' was all the answer he vouchsafed to her passionate appeal.

'You know,' she answered—and there was a sound of coming tears in her plaintive voice—'I got the copy the day we were married at St. Margaret's in Calcutta. Don't you remember? And you laughed at me, and called me goose. Oh, in those days Edward, you did love me, say what you will. Why can you not do so again?'

'Show me that,' he answered, laughing; 'Who said I didn't love you? I do, dearly; but then you must let me show it in my own way, and that's by making you as rich as I can. Yes, the copy's all correct,' he continued, from which I knew she had given it to him as desired. The next minute I heard a fusee struck, then a quick, sharp cry in the woman's voice, and as of some one springing rapidly forward, and then, in Cameron's cynical-sneering tones, 'Too late, my dear.'

To be continued.