

ANNABEL

THE TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANNABEL'S JOURNEY TO ENGLAND. She did her best to think so now, and to calm her anxiety by saying to herself that she was unduly alarmed; that the circumstances which had allowed herself to believe strange and suspicious might be natural and innocent, after all; and that on the morrow she would arrive in safety at Rockstone.

The small extent to which she succeeded in calming her fears may be gathered from the fact that she did not retire to rest in the small dirty shed which served the purpose of a bed, nor did she yield to the weariness under which she still laboured, so far as to go to sleep on the bench where she reclined; but she lay there full awake through the hours of night, and heard the creaking and groaning of the ship as she made her way through the water. By-and-by the lamp went out, and she was left in the darkness till the glimmer of dawn struggled through the opaque skylight, and the morning of the new day merged in sunrise, one solitary ray of which however, could not penetrate into the place where Annabel sat.

Perceiving, however, that it was now broad day, she resolved to make her way on deck to see if the ship was not yet near to the English coast. A slight but steady breeze had blown all night, and she fancied land ought not to be far.

On ascending the steep companion way and making her appearance on deck, she observed there only two men—one at the tiller, the other pacing the deck. Both were dirty, and evidently belonged to the lower class of French sailors. As sight of her they manifested considerable astonishment, mingled with evident curiosity, interest, and even alarm, for startled looks passed between them, and the one who had been pacing the deck suddenly started down a hatchway in the fore-part of the vessel.

Beyond bestowing on them one brief glance, and making these observations on the effect of her presence, Annabel took no notice of the men, but walked to the bulwarks, and gazed forth over the bright sea, for the water was glittering with golden lustre, under the slanting sunlight as it streamed from the east.

To her intense surprise they did not appear to be more than half way across, for on both sides of the ship the hazy land was visible, and not apparently nearer in one direction than another. Annabel was sadly disappointed, for at this rate of speed they could not reach the shore before mid-day, and as she knew that Rockstone lay far in the interior, the prospect of arriving there at an early hour vanished from her hopes.

She had been but a few minutes on deck, and was gazing with sad abstraction on the shining sea, when Dick made his appearance, not fully dressed, and looking drowsy and frowning. She did not notice him till he was close to her and spoke.

"Now, Miss, you had better go below," he said, in a surly tone. "It ain't quite time for breakfast yet, but I'll bring it to you when it's ready."

"May I not stay here?" she asked. "No—the men don't like passengers to come on deck—especially women. Besides, you will be better below for all the time."

"When shall we land," she eagerly enquired. "Can't say; depends on the wind. We'll get ashore some time, I dare say. Why have we come in such a vessel as this?" demanded Annabel.

"What ails the vessel?" It's large enough for us two, ain't it? "But why have we not come in the regular way—by the steamer from Calais? You told me at first it was for quickness we took a different route, yet we have been more than a week, when we might have accomplished the journey in two days."

"Who could help the wind being contrary?" returned Dick, gruffly. "Tain't no use grumbling, Miss. We'll get to our journey's end by-and-by. Never fear."

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