

any of the stores where he had shown it. The shoe dealer had no recollection of that particular box, Alan, however, was continuing his inquiries.

In September he reported in a brief, totally impersonal note, that he was continuing with the investigations he had been making previous to his visit to Harbor Point; this came from Sarnia, Ontario. In October he sent a different address where he could be found in case anything more came, such as the box which had come to Constance in August.

SHE wrote to him in reply each time; in lack of anything more important to tell him, she related some of her activities and inquired about his. After she had written him thus twice, he replied, describing his life on the boats pleasantly and humorously; then, though she immediately replied, she did not hear from him again.

She had returned to Chicago late in September and soon was very busy with social affairs, benefits, and bazaars which were given that fall for the Red Cross and the different Allied causes; a little later came a series of the more personal and absorbing luncheons and dances and dinners for her and for Henry, since their engagement, which long had been taken for granted by every one who knew them, was announced now. So the days drifted into December and winter again.

The lake, beating against the es-

planade across the Drive before Constance's windows, had changed its color; it had no longer its autumn blue and silver; it was gray, sluggish with floating needle-points of ice held in solution. The floe had not yet begun to form, but the piers and breakwaters had white ice caps frozen from spray—harbingers of the closing of navigation. The summer boats, those of Corvet, Sherrill, and Spearman with the rest, were being tied up. The birds were gone; only the gulls remained—gray, clamorous shapes circling and calling to one another cross the water. Early in December the newspapers announced the closing of the locks at the "Soo" by the ice.

That she had not heard from Alan was beginning to recur to Constance with strange insistence. He must have left the boats by now, unless he had found work on one of those few which ran through the winter.

He and his occupation, instead of slipping from her thoughts with time, absorbed her more and more. Soon after he had gone to Manitowoc and he had written that he had discovered nothing, she had gone to the office of the Petoskey paper and, looking back over the twenty-year-old files, she had read the account of the loss of the Miwaka, with all on board. That fate was modified only by the Indian Drum beating short. So one man from the Miwaka had been saved somehow, many believed. If that could have been, there was, or there had been, some one alive after the

ship "disappeared"—Alan's word went through her with a chill—who knew what had happened to the ship and who knew of the fate of his ship-mates.

SHE had gone over the names again; if there was meaning in the Drum, who was the man who had been saved and visited that fate on Benjamin Corvet? Was it Luke? There was no Luke named among the crew; but such men often went by many names. If Luke had been among the crew of the Miwaka and had brought from that lost ship something which threatened Uncle Benny that, at least, explained Luke.

Then another idea had seized her. Captain Caleb Stafford was named among the lost, of course; with him had perished his son, a boy of three. That was all that was said, and all that was to be learned of him, the boy.

Alan had been three then. This was wild, crazy speculation. The ship was lost with all hands; only the Drum, believed in by the superstitious and the most ignorant, denied that. The Drum said that one soul had been saved. How could a child of three have been saved when strong men, to the last one, had perished? And, if he had been saved, he was Stafford's son. Why should Uncle Benny have sent him away and cared for him and then sent for him and, himself disappearing, leave all he had to—Stafford's son?

Or was he Stafford's son? Her thought went back to the things which had been sent—the things from a man's pockets with a wedding ring among them. She had believed that the ring cleared the mother's name; might it in reality only more involve it? Why had it come back like this to the man by whom, perhaps, it had been given? Henry's words came again and again to Constance: "It's a queer concern you've got for Ben. Leave it alone, I tell you!" He knew then something about Uncle Benny which might have brought on some terrible thing which Henry did not know but might guess? Constance went weak within. Uncle Benny's wife had left him, she remembered. Was it better, after all, to "leave it alone?"

But it wasn't a thing which one could command one's mind to leave alone; and Constance could not make herself try to, so long as it concerned Alan. Coming home late one afternoon toward the middle of December, she dismissed the motor and stood gazing at the gulls. The day was chill, gray; the air had the feel, and the voices of the gulls had the sound to her, which precede the coming of a severe storm. The gulls recalled sharply to her the day when Alan first had come to them, and how she had been the one first to meet him and the child verse which had told him that he too was of the lakes.

She went on into the house. A telegraph envelope addressed to her father was on the table in the hall. A servant told her the message had come an hour before, and that he had telephoned to Mr. Sherrill's office, but Mr. Sherrill was not in. There was no reason for her thinking that the message might be from Alan except his presence in her thoughts, but she went at once to the telephone and called her father. He was in now, and he directed her to open the mess-

age and read it to him.

"Have some one," she read aloud; she choked in her excitement at what came next—"Have some one who knew Mr. Corvet well enough to recognize him, even if greatly changed, meet Carferry Number 25 Manitowoc Wednesday this week. Alan Conrad."

Her heart was beating fast. "Are you there?" she said into the 'phone.

"Yes."

"Whom shall you send?"

There was an instant's silence. "I shall go myself," her father answered.

She hung up the receiver. Had Alan found Uncle Benny? He had found, apparently; someone whose resemblance to the picture she had showed him was marked enough to make him believe that person might be Benjamin Corvet; or he had heard of some one who, from the account he had received, he thought might be. She read again the words of the telegram . . . "even if greatly changed!" and she felt startling and terrifying warning in that phrase.

CHAPTER XV.

Old Burr of the Ferry.

IT was in late November and while the coal carrier Pontiac, on which he was serving as lookout, was in Lake Superior that Alan first heard of Jim Burr. The name spoken among some other names in casual conversation by a member of the crew, stirred and excited him; the name James Burr, occurring on Benjamin Corvet's list, had borne opposite it the legend "All disappeared; no trace," and Alan, whose investigations had accounted for all others whom the list contained, had been able regarding Burr only to verify the fact that at the address given no one of this name was to be found.

He questioned the oiler who had mentioned Burr. The man had met Burr one night in Manitowoc, with other men, and something about the old man had impressed both his name and image on him; he knew no more than that. At Manitowoc!—the place from which Captain Stafford's watch had been sent to Constance Sherrill and where Alan had sought for, but had failed to find, the sender! Had Alan stumbled by chance upon the one whom Benjamin Corvet had been unable to trace? Had Corvet, after his disappearance, found Burr? Had Burr been the sender, under Corvet's direction, of those things? Alan speculated upon this. The man might well, of course, be some other Jim Burr; there were probably many men by that name. Yet the James Burr of Corvet's list must have been such a one as the oiler described—a white haired old man.

Alan could not leave the Pontiac and go at once to Manitowoc to seek for Burr; for he was needed where he was. The season of navigation on Lake Superior was near its close. In Duluth shippers were clamoring for cargoes; ships were lading in haste for a last trip before ice closed the lake's outlet at the Soo against all ships. It was fully a week later and after the Pontiac had been laden again and had repassed the length of Lake Superior that Alan left the vessel at Sault Ste. Marie and took the train for Manitowoc.

(To be continued.)

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