

as she took it he said with reverence—
 “Thank you. If we never see each other again that’s something.”

He ate no lunch that day but went to Jackson’s berth later, and after a little casual talk he said, as he stared through the porthole at the gray sea,
 “What do you know about that lady in mourning?”

“Ah, Mrs. Herman!” said Jackson, who had quite forgotten he had spoken of her to Wyatt years before. “I thought you’d be interested in her. She’s a splendid sort, and not always complaining like the rest of them. She and old Herman, who’s agent for a dozen firms, have been up and down this coast for the last six years.”

“How did she come to marry him?” asked Wyatt.

“How does anyone come to marry anyone else?” asked the purser. “She came out to Java with her brother and his wife and they both died within a week and she was left stranded. And I suppose Herman just came along.”

“What sort is he?” asked Wyatt.

“The sort that ought to have bought a Java woman for a slave,” said Jackson. “And what kind of life is it for a woman to loaf about in hotels in Peking and Hongkong and Sourabaya and all the stinking ports of the East? Of course the only thing she had to live for went out. Her little girl died last year in one of our boats and was buried at sea, just about here. I’m very sorry for her.”

“Ah,” said Wyatt, “then that’s why she’s in mourning!”

And Jackson talked of himself and his desire to get back home. What he wanted to smell was the Strand.

“And here I am,” he growled, “flying up and down in the ‘scented East,’ with a drunken skipper and mate! I shall be glad to get out of the old *Lycemooon* before one of them piles her upon the Paracels. Why is it that when a man drinks he gets into the habit of cutting off corners and running things fine? It wouldn’t surprise me if Simpson made two red lights out of one on the starboard bow and

started to run along between them.”

“I thought you said the skipper had braced up,” said Wyatt. “It didn’t look like it at tiffin to-day.”

“No, it didn’t,” owned Jackson uneasily.

And Wyatt was uneasy too, for all his unhappiness, as he went away. He walked straight into the saloon and there found Mrs. Herman by herself. They looked at each other but did not speak. Then Number One in his long robes brought in the tea. She poured it out for Wyatt in silence. When she did speak it was with strange irrelevant abruptness.

“I hate the whole, long, long, weary coast,” she said.

“And I,” sighed Wyatt, “but I shan’t forget *you* even if we never meet again.”

And she said with curious bitterness—

“I shall try not to remember.”

It was as if she had said—

“What’s the use of remembering?”

And what Wyatt said was, as if speaking to himself—

“One hasn’t the courage to follow one’s instincts.”

And she looked at him strangely, and though she said nothing he knew that what held her to her duty was not instinct.

That night at dinner Captain Fidler, who was often very talkative, said not a word but drank steadily. When the meal was over Jackson came across to Wyatt.

“Did you see the old man to-night, how he soaked? And the mate’s just the same. I don’t believe he could see the holes in a ladder now.”

“Something ought to be done about it,” said Wyatt.

“Well, what can be done?” snorted Jackson. “Every skipper’s a tin joss on wheels aboard his ship. And as for the second mate, who’s a sober little chap, you can see he daren’t open his mouth to either of them.”

“How’s that man we were speaking of this morning?” asked Wyatt. “I mean her—her husband, you know.”