

On his return from that memorable stroll on the beach, Diaz went straight to the great, gaunt dining-room, whence projected the oriel window over the sheer wall of cliff. Mrs. Pengarvan and Lance were there, and Hilda sat in the embrasure of the window, toying with a coil of rope, to which was attached a heavy stone.

"Here you are, Tony, old man!" cried Lance. "You've been a deuce of a time getting back from our little experiment."

"I took the opportunity of inspecting the shore," Diaz replied. "I found a cave which interested me. As to the experiment, it was a complete success. Not a hitch anywhere. Miss Carlyon, as a manipulator of weighted cables you are supreme. If my consignment of fancy goods was not so heavy I would rather entrust it to you than to the unwieldy contrivance with which you have been good enough to allow me to disfigure this room."

"Poor old room!" replied Hilda, her eyes sparkling. "I was told the other day that it was tumbling down, and wanted painting. But I love it all the same, and so, Senor Diaz, I also love the plot which is going to restore to it some of its former romance. We poor women are in sore need of excitement, and we hail you as a benefactor for providing it. When do you expect the horrible contrivance and its load?"

"Any moment now, since your English merchants are men of their word when sure of their cash," replied the Senor, cheerfully.

Two or three days passed, and then one morning a farm waggon arrived, so heavily laden with great iron-bound boxes that four horses could hardly drag it up the steep slope to the Tower. Lance Pengarvan and Diaz had been on the look-out, and helped the two drivers unload the waggon at the main entrance. It was hard work, and when it was finished Lance sent the men round to the kitchen to be regaled by Martha on bread and cheese and beer. While they were so engaged, Lance and Diaz stood surveying the cumbersome packages ruefully. "It will take four strong men to carry each of those into the dining-room, Tony," said Lance. "Tim Pascoe, Martha's husband, is available as the third, but we shall have to enlist one of the drivers as the fourth. It is a nuisance, because none of these local chaps ought to know that your rummy exports are going inside the house. These two Helston men think that the stuff is machinery for experimental borings for tin. It was the best yarn I could pitch, but it'll break down if they find it is for indoor consumption."

"They must not know that—not a whisper of it," rejoined Diaz. And the two friends stared at each other in dismay.

A RIPPLING laugh caused them to wheel round towards the front door. There stood Hilda upon the threshold, fresh as a June rose, and divested of the half-scornful stateliness which she affected towards outsiders—Mr. Wilson Polgleaze, for example.

"You poor helpless things," she said. "I overheard the difficulty. Why not get Nathan Craze to lend a hand? He is loyal to the backbone, and we shall want someone on the all-important night, remember."

"An excellent notion, which I ought to have thought of myself," Lance assented. "See here, Tony, I must stay here to settle up with the carmen, and it is raining too hard for Hilda to go. You know those three cottages in the cove at the foot of the hill. Run down to the furthest of them and see if Craze is at home. He's the father of Billy, that cabin boy of mine, but Billy is aboard the ship at Falmouth, so he won't be there to spot you. Just ask Craze to come up and do a job for me. He's a crusty old fellow, so don't go into details. He'll take them better from me."

Diaz nodded, and walked away down the hill so quickly that neither Lance or Hilda noticed the gleam of pleasure in his dark eyes. They did not know that he had met the fisherman's daughter, and that he had hailed the

opportunity of again seeing the girl whose beautiful, tear-stained face had haunted him ever since.

BUT the mysterious foreigner, charged with an errand on this wild and lonely coast, was doomed to disappointment. The door of the picturesque, wreckage-built hut was opened by a grizzled giant of sixty, wearing a blue guernsey and great sea boots.

"What is it?" demanded the man, eyeing him suspiciously.

"I am only a messenger," replied Diaz, returning the hostile gaze with frank friendliness. "Captain Pengarvan, up at the Tower, sent me. He wants you to help him carry some heavy cases into the house."

Nathan Craze's sombre scowl died a quick death. "Master Lance wants me, hey?" his deep voice rumbled. "I'm his man, then. I was about going off to my lobster pots, but they must bide if the Tower folk have need of me. Come along, Mister."

They trudged up the hill together, and at the end of the first hundred yards Diaz gave up all attempts at conversation. His companion rebuffed him with silence or inarticulate grunts. He fell back to studying, in sideway glances, the rugged countenance of Marigold's father, and though the grim lines of the stern mouth and dogged jaw had relaxed their menace he came to the conclusion that this man was not only in sore trouble, but was obsessed by some set purpose that dominated his life.

A different note was struck when they reached the main entrance of St. Runan's Tower. The empty waggon was disappearing on its long journey back to Helston, and Lance and Hilda were sitting by the array of iron-bound cases under the portico.

"Now I take this kindly of you, Nathan!" cried Lance. "We are in a bit of a fix to get these boxes under cover, but your mighty arms will soon pull us out. It was Miss Hilda who thought of you."

The Cornishman looked at the young mistress of the Tower with the adoration which a Breton peasant bestows on a wayside shrine.

"I'd carry that load a mile for you, Master Lance, but I'd carry 'em two for Miss Hilda. What be they, if I may make so bold? Your ship come home at last, and these be pianos and new furniture?"

Diaz, Lance and Hilda exchanged glances.

"No, it's something a trifle more risky," laughed the captain of "The Lodestar." "Shall we tell him now? He'll have to know before many days are past, and Nathan Craze is as safe as a church," added Lance, turning to the others.

Miss Carlyon merely smiled a confident assent, but the South American added a verbal endorsement.

"I have walked up the hill with Mr. Craze, and I would defy anyone to make him talk if he didn't want to," he said. "The great secret can be told to him so far as I am concerned."

"I ain't one to prattle," said the big fisherman, casting a more friendly glance, in which was a flicker of grim humour, at the stranger who trusted him.

"No, and that is why we are going to take you on, Nathan," said Lance, in his breezy way. "Also because you have good old smuggling blood in your veins that doesn't take too much stock in the law. This is the way of it, then. Those cases contain quick-firing guns which my friend here, the Senor Antonio Diaz, has bought to aid a revolution in his own country. Being contraband of war they cannot be exported openly, so we have got to do the other thing."

And Lance Pengarvan proceeded to sketch out the programme, narrating first the events that had led up to it. Diaz, the son of a wealthy patriot and ex-president of Guyaca, in order to throw the party in power off the scent, had with the connivance of his friend, the captain, embarked on "The Lodestar" in the guise of a common sailor, and had worked his passage to England with the object of buying guns

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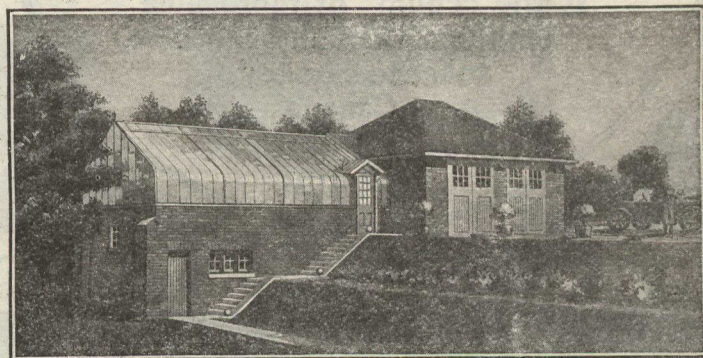
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