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THE Lady of the Night
 —OR—
Amelia Makes a Success

CHAPTER XIII.
 LONAWAY.

"Do you like to see pretty things, Cyril? Come and look at them. Not that you'll care about them as a girl would; boys don't appreciate diamonds."

She tumbled the contents of the box upon the table, and smiled at Nora's exclamation of surprise and admiration.

"Oh, yes, they are very beautiful," said Miss Deborah, taking up a necklace and running it through her fingers. "I used to wear these. But that's a long time ago, a very long time ago. Yes, you can take them up and look at them if you like; but don't mislay any; they are worth a great deal of money."

Nora examined the trinkets with all a girl's interest in precious stones. Presently she came upon a small miniature set in diamonds. The face was that of the portrait on the stairs, and, like it, bore an extraordinary resemblance to Eliot Graham. Miss Deborah was collecting the jewels, and, taking the miniature from Nora's hand, gazed at the portrait with an expression so sad, so wistful, that Nora was startled.

"There is another portrait of that gentleman; the one on the stairs," she ventured.

Miss Deborah came back slowly from the land of dreams and nodded. "It is a very handsome face," said Nora.

"The handsomest face in all the world," murmured Miss Deborah. "The best and noblest of men; the most unhappy."

"What was his name?" asked Nora fearfully. Deborah looked at her almost sharply, and said drily, with a sigh— "You are almost as curious as a girl, Cyril. Boys should learn not to ask questions. Take the box up to my room, and then go about your work."

The following day Nora was weeding the garden, when she saw Mr. Trunton, the Nelsworth lawyer, driving up the avenue. She dropped her tools and fled, quaking, to her room; from the window of which she saw him drive away again an hour or so later.

"That evening Miss Deborah looked up from her mechanical meal and said— "You will have to go over to Lonaway to-morrow, Jacob. Mr. Trunton wants some papers taken over."

checks? He will charge for it all the same."

"Is it Lonaway Island?" asked Nora. She had heard of the place, and from the top of the cliffs had caught glimpses of it, as it lay against the sky line.

"That's it," replied Jacob disgustedly, "and it's well called, for if ever there was a lonely, God-forsaken place, it's Lonaway. I wish it was sunk in the middle of the sea. I reckon Miss Deborah wouldn't be much the poorer."

"Then it belongs to Miss Deborah?" asked Nora.

Jacob nodded grumpily. "Yes, and I wish it didn't, with all my heart. A miserable place; mostly stone and rocks, with nothing but gulls skimming over it."

"There must be people there, or Miss Deborah would not want you to take these papers," remarked Nora.

"There's what you might call a farm, and a granite quarry," said Jacob, "but there's precious little profit from either of them. And most like, when I get there, I'll be kept in the desolate place for goodness knows how long. It'll be the death of me, shouldn't wonder. There's the v'rage scribble that dretful boat and a hard bed tooller, damp, most like."

He groaned again, and shook his head dolefully.

"Nora looked up with a sudden flush. The description which Jacob had given of the island had fascinated her, and aroused the spirit of adventure which was so easily excited.

"Why couldn't I go, Jacob?" she said.

He sat down his knife and fork and stared at her with an expression of relief spreading over his face.

"That's a good idea of yours, my lad. And come to think of it, you'd enjoy the v'rage. And, after all, Lonaway ain't such a bad place—especially for a boy. Yes, I dessay you'd enjoy it terrible; it'd be quite a holiday for you. It's only to deliver these papers, and look after things a bit; and you'd do it just as well—well, almost as well—as I should. You've been a good-behaved boy, and—yes, I'll let you go."

them in my pocket. There they are, Cyril."

Jacob examined the papers when he and Nora were alone, and shrugged his shoulders.

"The usual thing," he remarked; "notices to quit. Hodges and the other man never pay their rent until they're served with one of them, but they always pays in the end, though they hangs back so long as they can."

"You'll have a nice time on Lonaway, my lad, a nice lazy time. You can collect gull's eggs, and—and amuse yourself in other ways. You must be down at Porlash quay at nine o'clock, by when the tide 'ull suit for Cap'n Marks to set sail. You can take some extra clothes in a bundle—"

"I haven't any," said Nora, colouring.

"Well, I'll see if I can find 'ee a coat or some'ut," said Jacob, who was resolved that no obstacle should stand in the way of his substitute. "It's a comfortable place, the farm, I mean, and they'll do 'ee well. So now go and enjoy yourself."

Nora was down at Porlash quay at nine the next morning, and found Captain Marks' boat nearly ready to start. It was something between a yawl and a small yacht, and it had crossed to Lonaway so often that its owner was wont to declare that, set its nose in the direction of the island, and it would make it without a hand on the helm. It was taking in provisions and goods for the sparse inhabitants of Lonaway, and Captain Marks greeted his only passenger with hearty warmth.

"How long shall we be making the v'rage?" he replied in answer to Nora's inquiry. "That depends on the wind and the tide, shipmate. Is so be as the wind keeps so far as it be now, the Happy Lucy will run into Lonaway Cove afore you can say Jack Robinson."

Nora could have pronounced these mystic words many thousands of times before the Happy Lucy ran with a bounce over the island surf and brought to at the rough line of huge granite blocks which served as a landing-place. Fortunately for her, the sea had been fairly calm, and though she had suffered a few qualms on starting, she had resolutely fought them down, and in so doing had earned the admiration of the skipper; an admiration which became still more marked and emphatic when Nora, having conquered the sea-sickness, displayed a great desire to learn something of the sailing of a boat, and to assist in the management of the Happy Lucy.

"Why, bless my soul!" exclaimed Captain Marks, with enthusiasm, "you be regular cut out for a sailor-man. If I 'ad you board the Happy Lucy for a week or two I'd make a first-class A.B. of you. There's a power of seamanship in that curly head of yours, and you're as quick and spry as a monkey. Come of sea-faring folks, my lad."

"No," said Nora.

"Folks live ashore?" asked the Captain, jerking his mahogany-coloured face in the direction of the land. Nora nodded, and the Captain, noticing a sudden sadness in the young face, hastily averted his eyes, and bestowed a fixed attention on some mysterious rope.

shared her regret, for he gripped her small hand in one of his huge hairy paws and smote her on the back with the other, till Nora, breathless, and choking laughingly, had said good-bye at least a dozen times. She looked back as she ascended the steep road, and waved her hand, and the Captain, as he waved his in response, observed to the Happy Luck, to whom he was in the habit of addressing his remarks when he was alone on board—

"That's the likeliest and spryest youngster of a boy as ever I clapped eyes on!"

Nora climbed up to the top of the cliff, and saw a very small farmhouse nestling in one of the combs or valleys which ran through the island. She went towards it, and as she reached the gate of the cottage, for it was little better, a girl came out with a milk-can on her arm. She was rather a pretty girl, with fair tumbled hair under a sun-bonnet. She stopped short at sight of Nora, and stared at this new-comer, her sunburnt face glowing with a blush of shy surprise.

Nora raised her cap—it was wonderful how easily she had acquired not only the gait and bearing, but the manners which belonged to the other sex—and asked—

"Is this Mr. Hodges'?"

The girl nodded, she seemed too shy to reply in words.

"Yes? Is he at home? Can I see him?"

The girl shaded her eyes with her hand and looked across the hills.

"Father's coming now," she said. "Will you please come in, sir?"

Nora followed her into the common living room of the cottage, and the girl signed to her to take a seat by the fire, for it is never very warm on Lonaway, and even in July the evenings are so cool that an invitation to the fire is the first duty of hospitality; then, without a word, she laid a cloth over the end of the long table and began to set out some tea-things. The silence grew irksome to Nora, but presently it was broken by the entrance of the girl's father, a short, thick-set man, with the most placid and untroubled countenance Nora had ever seen. She introduced herself and Hodges shook hands, accepting the paper laughingly, as if it were not of the least consequence.

"That's all right, young man," he said, as if the notice to quit were a compliment. "I've been expecting it this quarter; but there, I dessay Mr. Trunton, not to speak of Miss Deborah, have had more mighty matters to think of. Let's see; it gits me to the 25th. I don't know exactly when that is, but it ain't no matter just now. You'll stop on the island, Mr.?"

"Cyril," supplied Nora.

"Mr. Cyril, and us'll be main glad to have 'ee. We don't have many visitors, and we'm glad to see 'em and hear the news; for this be a terrible out-o'-the-way place, bean't it, Margery?"

The girl coloured and turned speechlessly to the fire.

"And how be Miss Deborah? Well and hearty, I'm hoping. Lor, I remember her a slim and heartsome gal—how the time do fly! Margery, do 'ee get the tea on; the young gentleman will be wanting bit and sup after his v'rage."

(to be continued.)



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