

MOONDYNE JOE
THE GOLD MINE OF THE VASSE

BOOK SECOND
THE SANDALWOOD TRADE
I.
THE MATE OF THE CANTON

It is midwinter, in a little Lancashire village on the coast, not far from Liverpool. One quiet main street, crossed by three or four short side streets, that lead in the summer days into the sweet meadows and orchards. One of these side streets has only three houses on one side, separated by goodly gardens. The house in the centre is the smallest, but it is extremely neat, and the garden fairly glows with color.

This is the home of Mrs. Walmesley, a widow; and the garden is looked after by herself and her daughter Alice, about sixteen years old. The house on the right of Mrs. Walmesley belongs to Mr. Draper, the richest man in the village, a retired shopkeeper. The house on the left belongs to Captain Sheridan, a bluff old Irishman, retired from the navy, and now Inspector of Coast Guards, whose family consists of his son and daughter—Will Sheridan, the son, being just twenty years old.

At the gate of Draper's garden, opening on the street, stands a handsome young man in the uniform of the merchant marine. He is Sam Draper, first officer of the *Canton*, arrived a few weeks before from China.

"Good-morning, Alice," he says in a cheerful but not a pleasant voice, as Alice Walmesley passes down the road.

Alice stopped and chatted lightly for a minute with her old schoolmate. Draper evidently paid her a compliment, for her cheeks were flushed as she entered her mother's gate, standing near which was young Sheridan, whom she slightly saluted and hurriedly passed, much to his surprise, for their relations were, at least, of the oldest and closest friendship.

"Alice," said Will, in a wondering tone, as the girl passed with a flushed face.

"Well—did you speak?" And she paused and turned her head.

Will Sheridan loved Alice, and she knew it, though no word had been spoken. He had loved her for years in a boy's way, cherishing her memory on his long voyages, for Will, too, was a sailor, as were almost all the young men of the village; but he was soon to leave home for a two years' service on Sam Draper's vessel, and of late his heart had been urging him to speak to Alice.

He was a quiet, thoughtful, manly young fellow, with nothing particular about him, except this strong secret love for the prettiest girl in the village.

"Yes, I spoke," he answered hesitatingly, as if wounded; "but perhaps you haven't time to listen."

"What is it, Will?" she said in a kindlier tone, and smiling, though before she spoke she saw with a side glance that Sam Draper had gone away from the gate.

"Oh, it isn't anything particular," said Will; "only there's rare skating on the mill-pond, and I was going there this afternoon."

"And?" queried Alice, archly.

"Yes—I wish you would," said Will earnestly.

"Well, I think I will," she replied, laughing, "though you haven't told me yet what I am to do."

"Why, go skating with me," said Will, highly pleased; "Sam Draper and his sisters are going, and there will be a crowd from the village. Shall I come for you at 3?"

"Yes," she replied, "I'll be ready," and as she turned toward her mother's house, the flush was in her face again.

Will Sheridan walked lightly on, thinking happy thoughts. Passing Draper's gate, Sam Draper stepped from the shrubbery, whence he had observed the interview. He was a tall, handsome fellow, with fair hair and blue eyes; not the soft blue which usually denotes good nature, but a pale slaty blue that has a hard and shallow look. He had a free and easy way with him that made people who met him for the first time think he was cheerful and amiable. But if you observed him closely, you would see, in the midst of a boisterous laugh, that the cold blue eyes, were keenly watching you, without a particle of mirth.

There was something never to be forgotten by those who discovered this double expression in Draper's face. He had a habit of waving his arms in a boisterous way, and bending his body, as if to emphasize the heartiness of his laugh or the warmth of his greeting. But while these visible expressions of jollity were in full play, if you caught the cold and calculating look from the blue eyes that were weighing you up while off your guard, you would shudder as if you had looked suddenly into the eyes of a snake.

Draper knew too, that his face could be read by keen eyes; and he tried to mask even the habit of concealment, until at last his duplicity had become extremely artful and hard to be discovered. But he always knew the people who had caught his eye and read his soul. He never tried his boisterous manner on them again, but treated them gravely and quietly. But these were the people he hated.

Seven years before, when he and Will Sheridan were school-boys, Sheridan not only saw through the falsehood of Draper's manner, but exposed it before the whole school. Nearly every boy in the school had

had some reason to dislike Draper, but his loud good-natured way had kept them from speaking. But when Will Sheridan publicly pointed out the warm laugh and the cold eye, the friendly word and the cruel act, every one saw it at a glance, and a public opinion against Draper was instantly made among his school-fellows, which no after effort of his could quite remove.

From that day he nourished in his soul a secret desire to do Sheridan some injury that would cut him to the quick.

Not that Draper had no friends—indeed he was always making new friends—and his new friends were always loud in his praise; but when they ceased to be new, somehow, they ceased to admire Sam Draper, and either said they were mistaken in their first impression, or said nothing.

Both young men were sailors. Some years ago, the English merchant service was almost as well ordered and as precise in discipline and promotion as the Royal Navy, and young men of good position entered it as a profession. On his last voyage, Draper had become first mate; and Will Sheridan had lately engaged to take his old place on the *Canton* as second mate.

As Draper stepped from the shrubbery and hailed Will with a cheery word, his hand was outstretched in a most cordial way, and his lips smiled; but his eye was keen and smileless and as cold as ice. He had known for years of Will's affection for Alice Walmesley; and it was commonly said in the village that Alice returned his love.

"Why don't you ask Alice to go skating this afternoon?" said Draper.

"I have just asked her," said Will, "and she is going."

"Bravo," said Draper, in a hearty tone, so far as the sound went; "I thought she would like to be asked, when I told her half an hour ago that we were going."

Will Sheridan had some light word on his lip, but he did not speak it; and his smile faded, though without apparent cause, while he looked at Draper's pleasant face.

"She didn't say he had told her," he thought, "and somehow the thought troubled him. But he put it away and forgot all about it before the afternoon."

The mill-pond was covered with skaters when Will and Alice arrived. They had often skated together before, and because Alice was timid on the ice, she used to hold Will's hand or take his arm; and now and then, and as often as he could, Will's arm was around her, as he struck out strongly and rapidly.

Unconsciously they had assumed settled relations toward each other, resting on him with confidence, and he quite assured of her trust.

Today there was a disturbing element somewhere. Before they had been 10 minutes on the ice, Will noticed that Alice was, for the first time in her life, listening inattentively to his words. And more than once he saw her looking over his shoulder, as if seeking some one in the crowd of skaters. After a while she evidently found whom she had sought, and her face brightened. Will, at the moment, asked her some question, and she did not hear him at first, but made him repeat the word.

With a strange sinking of the heart, he followed the direction of the girl's eyes, and was just in time to see Sam Draper kiss his hand to her—and Alice smiled.

Will Sheridan was a sensitive and proud young fellow, and his quick feelings of honor were wounded by what he perhaps too hastily deemed the deceit of Alice Walmesley. A change had certainly come in her relation to him, but what right had he to charge her with deceit? He had no claim on her—had never spoken a word of love to her in his life.

The evening had closed when he left her at her mother's gate. They said "Good-night" in a new fashion—the words were as cold as the wind, and the touch of the hands was brief and formal.

After that Will did not ask Alice to walk or skate with him. He called no more at her mother's house as he used to do. He went to none of the usual places of meeting with her. If he had gone, he should have been all the more lonely; for he could not pretend to be pleasantly engaged with others while his heart was full of pain and unrest. But he could not help watching for her from his room window; and surely it were better for his happiness had he overcome this, too.

He saw that where he used to be, there every day was his rival. He heard Draper's loud and happy voice and laughter; and he noticed that Alice was happier and far more boisterous than ever he had known her—and that her happiness and gaiety became even louder when she knew he was observing.

But at last came the time of the *Canton's* sailing. On the evening before leaving, Will Sheridan went to Mrs. Walmesley's to say good-by, and Alice was not there, he remained talking with her mother, with whom he had always been a favorite. After a while he heard the gate swing, and saw Alice approaching the house, and Draper looking after her from the gate.

When Alice entered, he was standing and bidding farewell to her mother, who was weeping quietly.

Alice understood all, and the flush faded from her cheek.

"Good-by, Alice," he said, holding out his hand. "You know I am

going away in the morning." He had walked toward the door as he spoke, keeping her hand, and now they stood in the porch.

He saw the tears in her eyes, and his courage gave way, for he had only a boy's heart to bear a man's grief; and he covered his face with his hands and sobbed.

In a few minutes he was calm, and he bent over the weeping girl. "Alice!" he whispered, tenderly, and she raised her tear-stained face to his breast. Poor Will, yearning to take her in his arms, remembering what he had seen, only pressed her hands in his, and sipping, kissed her on the forehead again and again. Then he walked, tear-blinded, down the straight path to the gate.

A moment after, he felt a man's hand on his collar, and, turning, met the hard eyes of Draper. Sheridan's face was still quivering with the powerful emotion.

"What do you mean, Draper?" he demanded angrily, dashing the hand aside.

"I mean to let you know," said Draper, contemptuously, weighing the words, "that I saw all your snivelling scene, and that I have seen all your impertinent attentions to that girl."

Will Sheridan controlled himself by a violent effort, because the name of Alice Walmesley was in question.

"That girl, as you impudently call her," he said, calmly, "is one of my oldest friends. My attentions have never been impertinent to her."

"You lie, you cur!" brutally answered Draper.

Though few words had been spoken, here was the culmination of an enmity that was old and rankling. On both sides there had been repression of feeling; but now the match had touched the powder, and the wrath flamed.

The word had barely passed the insulter's lips, when he reeled and tumbled headlong from Sheridan's terrible blow. As soon as the blow was delivered, Will turned, and walked toward his own home, never even looking behind.

It was half a minute before Draper picked himself from the frozen earth, still dazed with the shock. He showed no desire to follow, or continue the quarrel. With teeth set like a vise, and a livid face, he looked after the strong figure of Will, till he turned into his father's house.

Next day, the young men left the village, and entered on their duty as officers of the *Canton*, which lay in a Liverpool dock. No one knew of their quarrel, as neither had spoken of it, and there had been no witnesses.

The preparations for sea kept them apart for several days. The vessel sailed from Liverpool, and soon cleared the Channel. Two weeks later, when the ship passed on a beautiful night within sight of the Western Islands, the young men came face to face on the poop. Will Sheridan had come on deck to enjoy the delightful scene, not thinking that the first mate was officer of the watch.

"Draper," said Will, in a friendly tone, holding out his hand when they met, "I did not know you were engaged to Miss Walmesley. We should both be sorry for what happened that night."

The eyes of Draper glittered like steel as he answered in a sneering tone.

"And who told you, sir, that I was engaged?"

"I judge so from your conduct," said Will.

"You are not a good judge, then," answered Draper.

"Then there's all the less reason for us to quarrel, man. Take back your insulting words, and let me apologize for my violence."

"My insulting words—let me see, what were they? Ah, yes," he spoke slowly, as if he meant to wound with the repetition—"I think I said that I had been a witness to your snivelling scene of farewell—and that I was acquainted with your unsought and impertinent attentions to that girl. By the way, I may tell you that she herself made me acquainted with the offensive persistence of her obtuse admirer."

"She told you?" said Will, staggered by the word. "She said my love was offensive to her?"

"Ha! no—not love exactly," said the other, with the same biting sneer; "I believe you never gave her a chance to fling that in your teeth."

"Take care, Draper!" said Sheridan.

"Well, let us go on with the insulting words, as you choose to call them. I also said you were a liar, if I remember well; and a cur—did I not?"

"Why do you repeat the foul words, man?" asked Sheridan, indignantly.

"Why? Because I used them after careful choosing—because they are true! Stay!" he added, raising his voice, and backing to the rail, as he saw Sheridan approaching. "I am the first officer of this ship, and if you dare to raise your hand against me, I will shoot you like a dog. We'll have no mutiny here."

"Mutiny!" cried Sheridan, more astounded and puzzled than angry.

"What in heaven's name are you talking about? I want to be calm, Draper, for old time's sake. You call me vile names, and threaten my life, and yet I have given you no earthly cause. What do you mean?"

"I mean, that he who pretends to be my friend, while he ruins my character, is a liar; and that he who tells a slander in secret is a coward."

"Slander your character!" said Sheridan, "I never said an ill word of you—though I have unwillingly

become acquainted with some things that I wish I had never known."

The latter part of the sentence was slowly added. Draper winced as if cut with a whip.

"You have made a change," continued Sheridan, sternly, "and you must explain it. How have I slandered you?"

Draper hesitated. He hated the man before him, like a fiend; but he hated still more the subject he had now to touch.

"You knew about that girl in Calcutta," he said, now fairly livid with passion; "no one in England knew it but you."

"Yes," said Sheridan, slowly, "I learned something about it, against my will."

"Against your will!" sneered the other, "was it against your will you told the story to—her?"

Draper never repeated Alice's name, as if it were unpleasant to his tongue.

"I never mentioned your shameful affairs," answered Sheridan, with scorn and indignation; "but you are justly punished to have thought so."

"You did tell her!" cried Draper, terribly excited; "you told her about my marriage in Calcutta."

"Your marriage!" and Sheridan stepped back, as if recoiling from a reptile. Then, after a pause, as if speaking to a condemned culprit—

"Your infamy is deeper than I thought. I did not know till now that your victim in Calcutta was also your wife."

With lightning rapidity Draper saw the dreadful confession his error had led him into. He knew that Sheridan spoke the truth, and he hurriedly attempted to close the grave he had exposed.

"She is dead," he said, searching Sheridan's face; "you should have known that, too."

"Dead or alive, God have pity on her!" answered Sheridan, whose face and voice were filled with revulsion and contempt. "For her sake, I pray that she may be dead; but I do not believe you. I shall see that those who were warned in time who are still in danger."

Sheridan deliberately turned on his heel and entered the cabin, while Draper, confounded and dismayed at his self-conviction, leaned on the rail looking out at sea, cursing his own stupidity that had betrayed him.

"Who else could have known?" he muttered; "and who else could have told her?" But she doesn't wholly believe it—and when I swore it was false that last evening, I think she believed me. I'll take care, at all events, that he shall have no chance to unsay my word."

For hours the brooding rascal walked the poop deck, till the watch was changed, when he went below, and tried to sleep.

II.

COUNTERMINING THE MINER

Will Sheridan's life on the *Canton* was a restless and unhappy one from the night of his altercation with Draper. He was daily associated with a man who had exposed his own villainy; a catfish so vile, that he had sought, and probably still intended, to blight the life of a girl he had known from childhood.

The discipline of the ship required a certain courtesy and respect toward the first officer. This formal recognition Will paid but nothing more.

A few days after this meeting, Draper made an advance toward intimacy; but this was repelled with such cold severity as showed him that he had nothing to expect in future from Sheridan's forbearance.

"Do not dare to address me as a friend again," Will said, sternly; "I shall write to England from the first port, and expose you as the scoundrel you are."

Draper's dry lips—his lips were always dry—moved as if he were speaking, but no words came. His shallow eyes became wells of hate. He passed by Sheridan without reply, and went to his room.

There are a hundred ways in which the chief officer of a large ship can grind his inferiors; and Sheridan used every day the subtle malvolence of his enemy. But these persecutions he did not heed. He knew that underneath these symptoms lay a more dangerous rancor that, sooner or later, would try to do him a deadly injury.

What the form of the attack might be, he knew not. But he prepared himself for emergencies. Will Sheridan was not only a brave and straightforward young fellow, but he had a clever head on his shoulders.

Why should I let this cunning scoundrel injure me?" he asked himself. "His villainy is easily seen through, and I'm going to watch him closely."

He did watch him, and it served him well. Every secret and dangerous move he saw and disarranged. A trumped-up plan of mutiny among the men—which would have excused bloodshed, and the shooting of an officer, perhaps, by accident—he nipped in the bud, and almost exposed the machinations of him who hatched it.

Draper soon understood that he was playing with his master, and changed his method. He began to wait for an opportunity instead of making one.

This will be the case almost invariably; when honest men are fighting way to defeat them, the surest watchfulness. Evil-minded people are generally shallow, and easily countermined. Only, when they are countermined, they should be blown up, and never spared.

The *Canton* touched at Singapore for orders and was detained a week.

Will Sheridan resolved that on the night before she sailed he would leave the ship. Draper seemed to divine his purpose, and watched him like a tiger. But Will's constant attention to duty, and his equable temper, deceived the watcher.

The night before the *Canton* was to sail, Will dropped a bundle into a dingy under the bow, swung himself after it, and went ashore. A close search was made for him next day by the police, headed by Draper, the law in those ports being rigid against deserters. But he could not be found, and the *Canton* sailed without her second officer.

The first thing Will Sheridan did when he knew he was out of danger was to write to Mrs. Walmesley, warning her of Draper's marriage in India. This done, he set about getting some sort of employment.

He was in a strange place, and he knew no business except that of the sea. In a few days he shipped as mate on a bark bound for Western Australia, in the sandalwood trade.

A large and lucrative trade in sandalwood is carried on between China, India, and the Penal Colony. Vast districts in West Australia are covered with this precious wood, which is cut by ticket-of-leave men, and shipped to China and India, where it is used in the burning of incense in the Joss-houses or temples, and in the delicate cabinet and marquetry work which is so plentiful in oriental countries.

This was a life that suited Sheridan's vigorous temperament. He found his occupation pleasant, and would have quite forgotten the enmity of Draper; but he still feared that his influence over Alice Walmesley had not been broken.

He spent a year in the sandalwood trade, and was thinking of taking a trip to England, when he received a package through the post office at Shanghai, containing all his letters, and a brief unfriendly message in Alice Walmesley's handwriting, informing him that she was Captain Draper's wife, and that she scorned the cowardly nature that sought to destroy an honorable man's good name by malicious falsehood.

Will Sheridan was dumbfounded and grieved to the heart. In all he had previously borne, in his efforts to crush out of his heart a hopeless passion almost as strong as his life, he had, he thought, sounded the depths of his love for Alice Walmesley. But now, when he knew her utterly beyond his reach, and saw opening before her a desert life of misery and despair, the pity in his heart almost killed him. He would have given his life then that his enemy might be an honorable man. Her letter did not wound him, because he knew she had been deceived.

At first, he knew not what to do. He feared he had been hasty—he did not actually know that Draper was a villain—his own accusing word was not enough, perhaps, or it might bear an explanation. Should he write to Alice and take back his cruel charges? Or should he remain silent, and let time unravel the trouble?

To do the first would be wrong—to do the second might be woefully unjust. The true course was to find out the truth; to go to Calcutta and learn for himself; and if he were wrong, to publicly make acknowledgment. If he were right, he could remain silent if it were for the best.

Two months afterward, Will Sheridan returned from Calcutta to Shanghai. He had found out the truth. He proceeded at once to Western Australia to join his ship, and from that time he wrote no more to England. One part of his life, thenceforward, and tender part, without fault of his, had suffered woefully, and had died before his eyes. It was shrouded in his memory, and buried in his heart. Like a brave man, he would not sit and moan over the loss. He set his face to his duty, hoping and praying that time would take the gnawing pain from his heart.

TO BE CONTINUED

A WOMAN OF FRANCE

(By Rose Cordian in the Ave Maria.)

She stood at the gate of the Chateau de Fernand and wildly cheered the passing recruits. They were un-armed and un-uniformed, yet they marched stately and in step; their expectant eyes turned toward Chantilly, where they were to join the regiment and take the train for the North. She tore flowers from the vases near her and flung them at the soldiers.

"Good-bye, Antoine, Jean, Pere Dufeuil! Fight bravely and come back victorious! *Au revoir!*"

As the soldiers passed, they stopped, waved their hats and shouted: "*Vive la France! Vive Madame de Fernand!*"

She knew them all,—her tenants and the peasants of the country about Haville.

"Pierre, Andre! Ah, Louise, do not cry!" she said.

The old servant beside her stepped forward to look at the two soldiers who had stopped an instant to smile a farewell to her.

"My sons! They will be killed, and what will become of the little grandchildren! God have mercy!" she wailed, as the two men turned and faced the backs of the comrades before them.

"You should be proud Louise," Madame de Fernand comforted, "to be able to do so much for France. And, then, you have Louis left to you."

The line of march closed with ten boys all under twenty. Their sparkling eyes and elastic step moved her,

"Brave men!" she called. "France will reward you! Protect her with your lives!"

The boys cheered, and went on. When the last one had disappeared behind a bend in the road, Madame de Fernand turned to her young son. He had stood far back, hiding his disappointed face behind a pillar.

"Is it not splendid, Raoul?" she said, as they walked back to the house, her arm on his shoulder. "Those men have gone to the noblest of duties. It is the life for a man."

"And it is the life that I desire," the boy looked up at her with ardor, "I shall feel like a coward to be left behind with the women and children."

"But you are so young, Raoul; and you can serve France in other ways, as your father did." Her voice shook a little and she drew the boy nearer to her.

In the salon they found Captain La Touche waiting for them. He was a strong, handsome man of about forty, famed for his bravery. He arose as they entered and bent over her hand.

"I have come at your command, Madame," he said.

"You are here promptly, Captain, I did not expect you till this afternoon."

"I received your note only a few hours ago, Madame. It is twenty-five miles but my *Rochet* goes like the wind."

"You are the more welcome, Captain. And what does Paris think of the war?"

"There is much excitement and wild talk of a second siege, German dirigibles, and aerial bombardment; but all this is submerged in the silent and swift movement of men and artillery to the front."

"The peasants here, too, in the villages are aroused. Did you see the men from Raville?" asked Madame de Fernand.

"Yes, I watched them starting as I came through the town."

"Their submission and patriotism is wonderful," she said, her face glowing.

"It is accountable with such women as you to inspire them, Madame," he replied gallantly.

"Ah, it is but little we women can do in such times as these!" she sighed.

"But you can give your men to France."

"And that I cannot do now." (She looked at Raoul standing before a window.) "I have read in the newspapers that you are to organize a private company, Captain."

"Yes," he answered. (Raoul turned and came a little nearer.) "I shall gather together about a hundred of my friends and former associates. Dr. Armand has already agreed to furnish part of the equipment."

Madame de Fernand leaned forward.

"Captain it is my desire to assist you in this undertaking. I, too, wish to do something, as all the rest of France is doing. Will you allow me to furnish the rest of the equipment?"

The Captain looked up in surprise and was silent for a moment.

"You honor me highly, Madam," he said with emotion.

"The only compensation I shall ask (her voice quavered) "is that you and your men fight bravely."

"Your generosity affects me deeply, Madame," La Touche replied. "Let me assure you that my men will do their utmost when they think of you and your noble offer. That alone will serve to make them fight valiantly."

The temporary headquarters of Captain La Touche were turbulent with excitement when Madame de Fernand and Raoul came to see the preparations.

"We have received orders to leave on the 15th," La Touche explained; "and the men are eager to move."

"Is your company complete?" asked Raoul.

"As complete as it shall be; although, thanks to Madame's kind gift, we have equipment for a few more."

"I have heard that Henri Colfeau, the artist has joined your company?" said Madame de Fernand.