



## After a busy morning

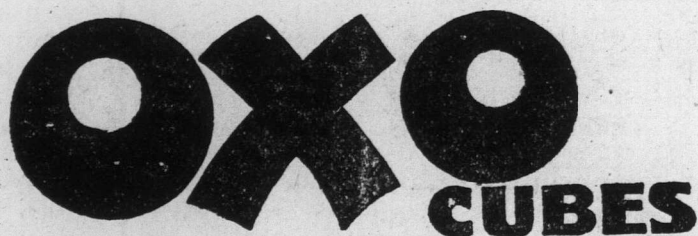
THE pleasure of shopping may cause you to forget that you are hungry and fatigued till you are on the point of reaching home. On such occasions, or, in fact, whenever you want food quickly, a cup of OXO is just the thing. It can be prepared in a moment.

It is a good plan to take a cup of OXO whenever you experience fatigue, or have to expose yourself to wet or cold. It is wonderfully refreshing, and fortifies against sudden changes of temperature.

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Love in a Flour Mill,

OR,

The Romance of Two Loyal Hearts!

CHAPTER XIX.

Vane unlocked the door noiselessly, listened for a moment to Smithers' penny whistle, which was going merrily, and said:

"Send him away."  
"Hi, Smithers!" called Ronald. "I've left my tobacco-pouch in the boat; wish you'd go and get it for me."

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded Smithers; and presently they heard him trotting towards the landing-place. They went out with an air of casualness, and looked about them.

"Anywhere will do," said Ronald. "No, it mustn't be too near the house," said Vane; "some one might see the newly disturbed earth. We'll go to that little bit of rock there."

Ronald nodded assent, and they sauntered to the spot, sat down on a rock, and smoked in silence for a minute or two; and in that space Ronald's mind actually wandered from the treasure to that other island where a greater treasure dwelt. At last Vane knelt, down, scooped with his knife a small hollow in the earth, placed the wallet in it, and filled up the hole. He sighed with relief as he finished the operation, and linking his arm in Ronald's, almost drew him away.

"That's off my mind," he said. "We will let it lie there until the night we go for the treasure."

"Well, keep it off your mind," said Ronald. "I tell you what you'd better do—take the Hawk for a short cruise and get a breath of ocean air, and don't turn up again until the day. If you hang about here you'll work yourself into a fever and be laid up. I'll stay here and keep guard until you return."

"That's good advice," said Vane. "I'll take it. You're a good chap to

put up with my nonsense in the way you do."

They returned to the chalet; and Smithers came back with the tobacco-pouch a minute or two afterwards.

"Here you are, sir," he said. Ronald took it and thanked him, and Smithers turned away; but he paused and said:

"Did you and Mr. Vane leave the house and take a walk just now, sir?"

"Eh, what? Why?" asked Vane sharply.

"Nothing, sir," replied Smithers, saluting; "but I thought I heard something movin' at the back there."

"It's all right, Smithers," said Ronald. "Mr. Vane and I strolled out for a breath of air. Good night!"

Ronald persuaded Vane to go to bed, early as it was.

"I won't turn in just yet," he said with a sense of guilt and deception, for it went against the grain with Ronald to keep his secret from his friend. "I'll take a row."

He rowed over to the island; and Cara, who had been watching for him, came singing softly, to meet him at the tree. He took her in his arms, and there was silence for a long minute, as they gazed into each other's eyes with a lover's rapture and a lover's hunger; then Ronald whispered:

"Your father?"

"I have come to tell you," she said. "He came home this morning, but he has gone again. I saw his boat sailing from Messina; he was not alone; a man who sometimes helps him with the fishing was with him. He is a deaf and dumb man. I think that is why my father likes him and has to help him. I suppose they are fishing."

"They must be," said Ronald.

"Yes, they may be; but you must not stay, dearest. They may come back when the tide turns and find you here."

Of course he lingered; but at last he tore himself away. He went over there again the next night, and the flame of their love, fed by these meetings, burnt still clearly, more fiercely. Ronald could scarcely talk of anything but their marriage.

"I'm an absolute pauper, Cara," he said; "but—something may turn up; in fact—oh, dash it! I can't tell you. I wish I could, but I'm under a promise."

"You shall not tell me," she murmured, her eyes upturned to him with infinite trust, with absolute content. "I can wait."

"It will not be long if—it pans out right, this—this chance of mine; but, anyway, Cara, whether it comes right or wrong, you will marry me?"

"Yes," she said, a blush stealing over her face. "If I would say no, I cannot. I must do what you ask me, now and forever."

The days slipped by; Ronald felt as if the hours were a pageant of a dream. The night before the hunt for treasure drew on him stealthily, and he was perforce compelled to think of the treasure and the work that lay before them on the following night.

He rowed over to Cara's island in the evening, and waited at their meeting-place beside the tree; but Cara did not appear. He waited some time with the impatience, which became an almost intolerable anxiety, is half an hour, an hour dragged by. The dread that something had happened to her, that she had been taken away by that strange and mysterious man, her father, almost drove him mad; he had hard work to restrain himself from going to the house in search of her; but he feared that his presence there might bring trouble upon her, and, for himself, he had no particular desire to be shot; for Cara's love had made his life extremely valuable to him.

After waiting for some time he reluctantly left the island, pausing every now and then to listen as he went to the beach, and rowed back to Tricania. The night was exceedingly dark; but he succeeded in making the landing-place, and went slowly and moodily up to the chalet. The sound of Smithers' tin whistle came to meet him, and the merry air that accomplished individual was playing jarred on Ronald's senses. He went into the sitting-room and flung himself down in a chair; and Smithers came in presently with the spirit-stand.

"Have you had a look round?" Ronald asked him.

"Yes, sir," replied Smithers. "All right and quiet, sir. It's the darkest night we've had, and I'm thinkin' that there's a kind of gale blowing up; it's coming right in the wind's eye."

"You're quite the sailor, Smithers," Ronald remarked absently. "You'd better turn in now."

Smithers made his usual nautical response and retired; but Ronald felt too restless, too anxious, for bed, and he lit a pipe and went on to the verandah, from which he presently strolled to the garden, and he stood there for a minute or two, torturing himself with all kinds of apprehensions regarding Cara. The silence and the darkness were intense; but he was conscious, even in his pre-occupation, of a peculiar stir in the atmosphere, the coming of a keener wind than that which usually visited the island. When his pipe was out, he went in and to bed, but he did not sleep for hours; and he lay awake blaming himself for not going straight to Raven's house and ascertaining whether Cara was there.

At last he fell into an uneasy sleep, in which he dreamed that Lemuel Raven and he were fighting for Cara, who was tied to their meeting-tree.

He awoke with a start and heard some one hammering on the outer door of the chalet and calling his name. It was Vane's voice. It was not yet dawn, and was still pitch dark. Ronald sprang out of bed and hurried to the outer door, almost running into Smithers, who ran to the door and flung it open, for he, too, recognized Vane's voice.

Vane stepped in; he was wet, his face pale, his manner agitated.

"Hullo, Vane!" said Ronald. "What is it? Why have you come back?"

Without a word, Vane took from Smithers the lamp which he had lit, walked past them into the sitting-room, and when Ronald had followed him, closed and locked the door.

"Is all right?" he asked hoarsely, and with a nervous twitching of his lips. The perspiration was standing on his brow in great drops.

"Yes, it's all right," said Ronald,

"What ails you, man? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

Vane dropped into a chair and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"That's what I feel like," he said. "I don't know what's got hold of me. I don't generally act like a neurotic idiot. I've been uneasy every minute during the cruise. I've been haunted by a dread that something would happen, something go wrong. I had to come back; I tell you I had to; you're sure everything is right?"

"Quite sure," said Ronald. He poured out a stiff drink, and almost thrust it into Vane's hand, which shook as he took it and drank it off at a draught. "You're wet. The rain has started since I turned in. You must turn in yourself, Vane; your nerves are all wrong. Get outside another drink and go to bed."

Vane nodded, sat staring at the floor moodily for a little while, then, with a nod, went off to his room; but in a minute or two he was back, whiter than before, and with his lips sternly set.

"It's no use; I can't rest!" he said almost fiercely. "Call your man; we'll take some tools and go down there at once. Something—a vague fear—is driving me mad."

"Right!" said Ronald, for he saw it was useless to argue with him.

He called Smithers; they got a couple of picks and a spade, and, with the hurricane lantern partially screened, they left the chalet and penetrated into the intense darkness. Not a word was spoken. Smithers trotted beside them with a pick over his shoulder, as if there were nothing unusual or extraordinary in their proceedings. Vane walked hurriedly, and once he would have stumbled if Ronald had not caught him.

"For God's sake, be calm, Vane!" he said, in a low voice. "I was over the ground only a few hours ago; nothing can have happened."

Vane made no reply, and, moving as quickly as they could, they approached the spot indicated by the papers. Suddenly Vane stopped.

"I'm a fool," he said, in a hoarse whisper—"a weak, nervous fool. We will go back, wait till to-morrow, get Shanks—"

"No, no!" said Ronald firmly. "We'll go on and have a look round at any rate, or you won't be able to rest."

Vane began to pace carefully as they came in line with the tree and he point of the cliff. Suddenly he stopped, snatched the lantern from Ronald's hand, waved it aloft, then uttered a cry—a cry of rage, of despair.

Ronald sprang forward, Smithers by his side, and Ronald echoed Vane's wild cry. For there, where a few hours ago had been plain, unbroken ground, were great holes and recently thrown-up mounds. Vane flung himself forward, and on his knees beside the holes, uttered a groan, then rose, and, with his hands clenched at his sides, stared vacantly before him. Ronald, kneeling, saw two rusted iron chests lying at the bottom of the holes; the lids were open, the boxes were empty, the treasure had gone!

(To be Continued.)

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