

A Proposal in the Sea.

"I had a sort of yearning, too, to see the old country again; and at last the longing got so strong, that off I went back to England, leaving my land in the care of a neighbour under a capital Scotchman I had got hold of. He is now a first rate farmer about Ottawa River, and was only a ploughboy when last he saw the Clyde. 'Thought I,' as I set off, 'if my brothers and sisters are in the mill, they will be glad to come over to my place and breathe fresh air, and need never be worried again with the eternal buzz, buzz, buzz, of those wheels from morning till night.' And then I pictured to myself, my mother, duly installed as head-manager of a real farmhouse! But what do you think I found when I got home! My mother married again, and to the very foreman who had been the bane of my existence when a lad! Most of my little brothers and sisters had died in consumption, and those left were so wedded to the dull routine of factory life that they would not hear of going back with me to Canada. So I saw that I must go back at last as I came—alone. I tried hard to fall in love with one of the village girls, but I could not manage it. There was nothing in any of them to take my fancy, and I was not hard to please then. As for the factory girls, with their frounces and parasols, pale faces and ringlets, they absolutely frightened me. But time was pressing; I knew I should be wanted back in my own place, and to finish up matters I had a quarrel with my stepfather. He set to work one night and railed at my father as a drunken profligate that I was obliged to stop him. It was a dreadful scene, and I am half afraid I struck him, my old hatred having got the better of my discretion. My mother took his part, so I left the house in high dudgeon, and tramped off again to Liverpool. I resolved to embark in the first vessel, and determined in the bitterness of my heart never to return to my native land again. I was just in time—at least not too late, for I found that the *Ocean Queen*, bound for Quebec, had dropped down the Mersey with passengers and cargo aboard, and as the wind was blowing dead ahead, she was compelled to anchor until it shifted. I hired a fishing-boat to take me to the vessel. The boatman trimmed the sails and I steered, and as the tide was running very fast we sped down the river at a gallant rate, and soon came in sight of the craft. Her huge black hull was standing between us and a sky glittering with a golden sunset. The people like little black specks, hustled one

another on her decks. I can picture the scene at this moment. I tried to round her, and get alongside where the force of the current would be broken by the vessel. We had a severe buffeting with the gale, and nearly upset as we passed merrily under the ship's bows. We halloed for a rope, but all seemed so busy on board to attend to us. Guess, then, how surprised I was when, in answer to my fifth or sixth shout of 'Oh-h-h-hoy there! throw us a rope!' I heard a sweet timorous voice reply—'I cannot get any of them to hear you, sir. I will throw a rope myself if you are afraid of being drowned!' I was thunderstruck when I looked up. Gazing upon me was the sweetest little face I had ever seen in the whole course of my life. She looked down upon me long and anxiously, as if I were some dear old friend, and in distress. The whole affair was so strange—the clear girlish voice—our ludicrous situation—that I was fascinated, and forgot what I was about. A false turn of the rudder pitched our boat against the chains of the ship, the wind caught her sails at the same instant, that the little vessel canted suddenly to the water's edge, and boatman and passenger were plunged into the river. As the water closed over my head I heard a loud and piercing shriek. I was not very frightened myself, for I knew I was a first-rate swimmer; but I saw the poor boatman carried off immediately by the sweep of the stream, and I had to make to his assistance. He could swim also, but being an old man, his strength was fast leaving as I came up with him. The shriek had done us good, as the seamen immediately lowered a boat, without which we could not possibly have been saved. We were picked up, and the fisherman's smack captured and righted. The first object that caught my eyes on arriving on board was the owner of the sweet little voice lying senseless on a heap of tarpaulin. No one appeared to be attending to or caring for her. I went up to the captain and asked who were her friends. He said she was quite alone, and recommended to his care by a lady of his acquaintance. I never felt as I did at that moment; and, dripping with wet as I was, I immediately took her in my arms, and carried her down into the cabin. There was a young sprig of an ensign on board, going to join his regiment in Canada, who thought he would improve the occasion by being facetious. My answer was to the point, and I felt we should never get on together. 'If I don't have that bonny little creature for a wife,' thought I to myself, 'I'll never have a wife at all!'

(Conclusion next week.)