

was almost pained surprise to show in his clear-cut face. "It is unfortunate, I'll admit; but—"

The indrawn breath of Kendrick was like the rasping of a file; he leaned forward, his head thrown out.

"Don't say you'll refuse. She'll die unless you do it, sir."

"It is unfortunate—most unfortunate. No; it is not so much a question of means, as you seem to think. To be sure, I make it a rule never to perform an operation of any kind without first receiving my fee—"

Kendricks burst in upon the precise mouthing of words; he could hardly restrain himself from seizing the man and dragging him to his own mean home. He knew Dr. Sigurdson held the gift of healing; it was common humanity demanding his services.

"But, perhaps under the conditions, it might have been possible to waive that. An exceptional case, such as this is—"

He had a habit of seldom finishing his sentences; he left them to the will of his hearer; it saved trouble, and no one could ever accuse him of a pronouncement that might sound inhuman.

"I haven't a stiver saved—honest; but look at them." He held out stubby fingers, covered with black hair to the knuckles; the digits of a mighty man. Sigurdson studied them closely, wondering what fear of consequences it was that held those same fingers back from his throat. For he knew that the necessary operation would never be performed by himself. "I'll work them to the bone; I'll be your slave; you can use me for what you like; but—but—save her, sir; for God's sake, save her."

Sigurdson shook his head. It was well shaped, with hair greying at the swelling temples; but there was that in the slow, sideways movement that gripped icy fingers round Kendrick's heart. He would not give up the contest; he was a born fighter to the last. He made another appeal.

"Sailors can't save; I was a sailor before I—I married and took on this job at the docks. But I'll sell myself to the devil if nothing else will serve."

"I'm sorry; but it is impossible. Don't you know, I sail by the 'Mercantius,' and she leaves in less than an hour."

"There's a score of boats sailing inside the next ten days, sir; what does a day matter? Save her; she's only a tiny mite, five years old—not a day more; and that cunning—why!" he drew his hand across his forehead and looked vacantly at the dripping

fingers—"why, she's wrapped herself round my heart; her fingers have taken hold of me here." He clutched at his breast. Normally an unemotional man, his dire need made him a magnificent actor, and Sigurdson noted at the back of his receptive brain the fact that real emotion was the finest teacher of gesticulation in the world.

"She pulled me up out of hell, she did; a little thing like her. It's her life that's going, and you can save it. He said you'd do it—that young doctor I got to her."

He broke off, looking imploringly at the eminent surgeon through eyes that were suspiciously swollen. He was a big man, his strength was monstrous; Sigurdson knew a moment's fear. If this man cut loose from his restraint and hurled himself upon him, the consequences might be disastrous.

"And it's to be done at once, if at all," said Kendrick. "Will you do it, sir?"

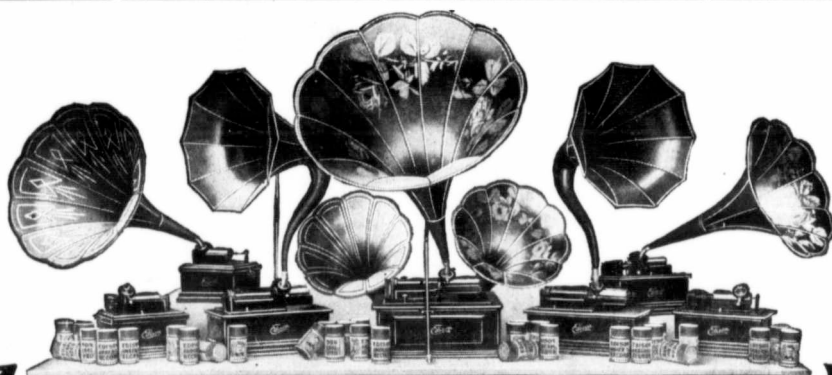
"I've told you—it's impossible. I sail in an hour—really," he

looked at the solemn-ticking clock. "I shall have to leave you now."

"Then you're going to let my Lucy die? That's what it is—she's dying fast. God above, you don't mean it, sir—you can't. What's a trip by the Mercantius compared to a child's life? She's dying."

"She will probably be spared a deal of trouble my man. This world is pretty full of troubles at the best."

"And it's the like of you that create the most of them." A tiny fleck of foam had appeared upon



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