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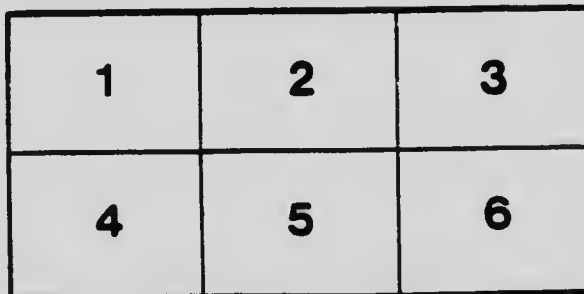
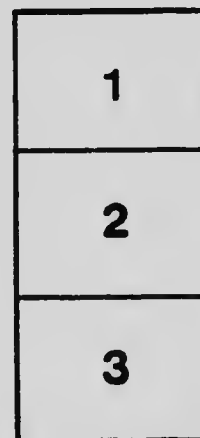
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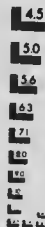
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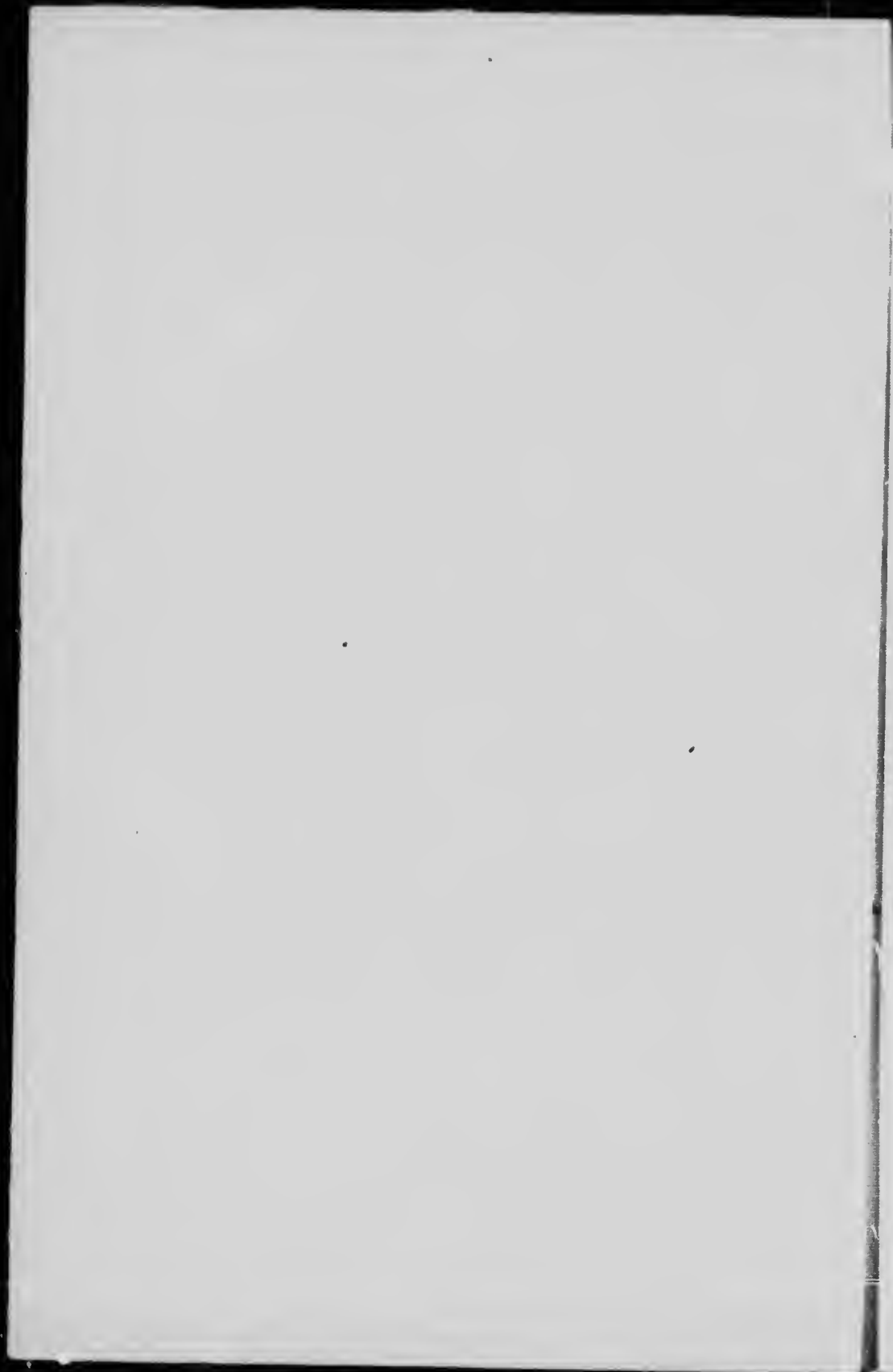
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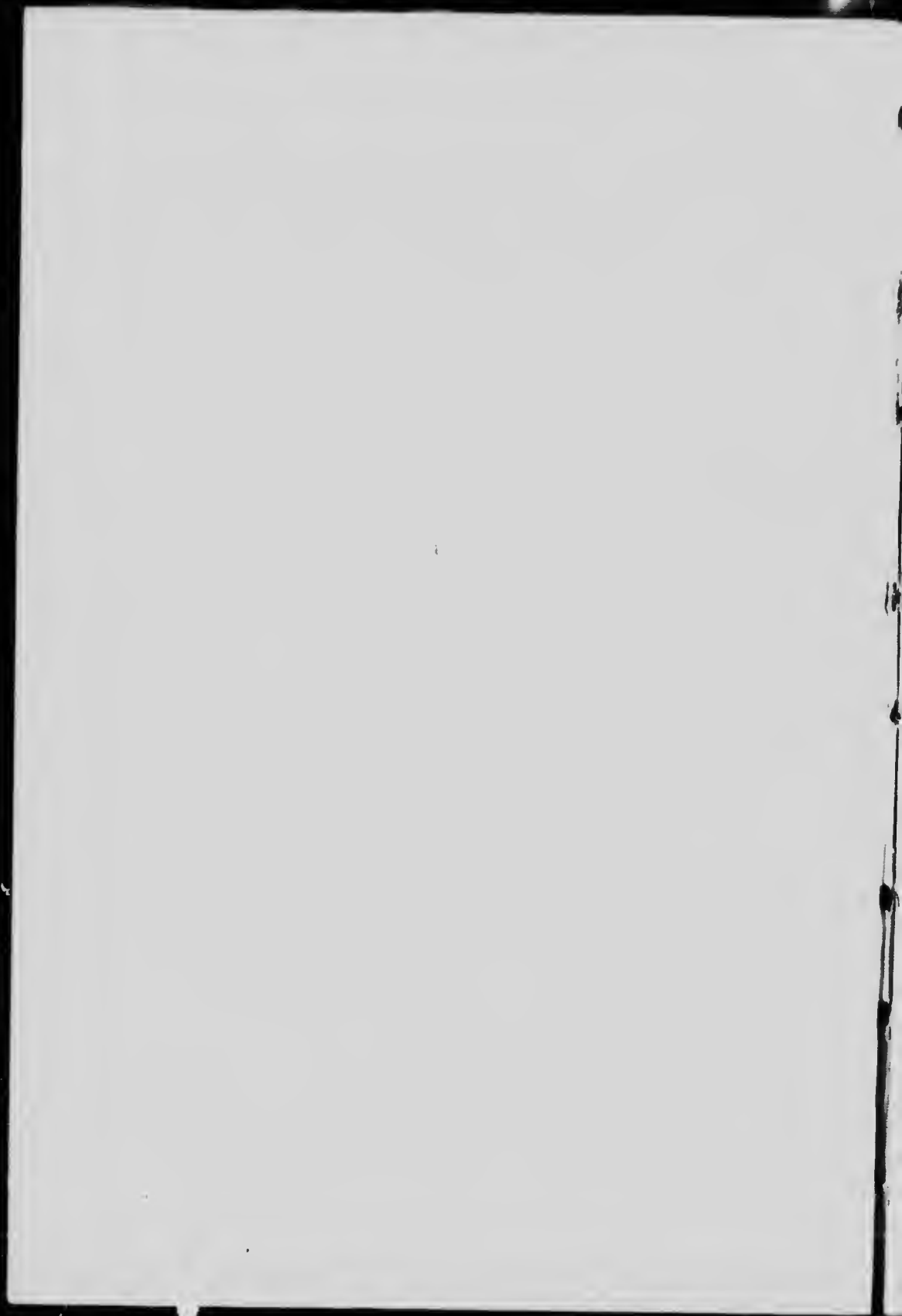


Henry C. Rowland

To Mamma
From Mother



THE MAGNET



THE MAGNET

(Published serially as "The Pilot-Fish")

A ROMANCE

By

HENRY C. ROWLAND

Illustrations by

CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS

1913

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THE MAGNET



CHAPTER I

THE big schooner-yacht *Shark* lay peacefully at anchor in Shoal Harbour, Maine. At her taffrail the National Yacht Ensign aired itself lazily in the land-breeze; from fore- and main-trucks fluttered the pennant of the N. Y. Yacht Club and the burgee of Captain Eliphalet Bell, U.S.N., retired.

A solid old seafaring tub was the *Shark*, built some time back in the seventies, when, no doubt, she had been a tremendous swell. She was square in the jowls, pug-nosed, paunch-bellied, with a stern like a coach-horse, and there was a break from her quarter-deck to the waist, and a high, t'gallant forecastle. Solid timber she was . . . or at least looked to be, though a gimlet might have shown differently . . . and what ballast she had was inside her and not jerking away at the keel in frantic efforts to whip out her spars.

For a yacht of her size the *Shark* probably carried the smallest crew on record, modern double-action hand-winches and other labour-saving devices being installed about her decks. Brightwork there was scarcely any, and that covered with

a coat of shellac. Galvanised iron took the place of brass, but if the old schooner lacked the glitter of metal she certainly shone with spotless cleanliness.

One saw at the first glance that the *Shark* was less of a pleasure-craft than a floating home, and such a domicile she had truly been for fifteen years. Asthma and an insubordinate heart had retired her owner from the service of his country; the same affliction forbade his residence ashore and compelled him to seek a warm winter climate. Wherefore, he wisely bought the *Shark* for a mere song, and made of her a home for himself and his three little motherless daughters: Cécile, aged nine; Paula, aged seven, and Hermione, aged four.

That was fifteen years before the epoch of this saga, so that we find our three sirens at the dangerous ages of from nineteen to twenty-four. Little heed had their cantankerous parent ever given them, and little need had they of it, as from the very first day to the present, they had found a wise and kindly nurse, playmate, and duenna in that splendid old grizzled viking, Christian Heldstrom, Master Mariner.

Captain Heldstrom, sailing-master of the *Shark*, had previously served for ten years in the U. S.

Navy and might have had a commission had he wished. Most of his service had been under the choleric Captain Bell, to whom, for some incomprehensible reason, he was devoted. It was, therefore, not unnatural that he should have followed him on his retirement, nor that he should have assumed the care of the little girls, the old Norseman having, like so many big-muscled, big-hearted men, a tremendous fund of paternal instinct. They had their governess, of course, but it was "Uncle Chris" who really brought them up and tended them when ill and imparted to them much of his own honest, fearless nature. He taught them discipline as well, and all three had more than once felt the flat of his big hand where it would do the greatest good; Cécile for impudence, Paula for theft (stealing goodies from the galley), and Hermione for adventuring aloft and swarming out on the jib-boom. This last admonition had been followed by a cuff on the side of the watchman's head which had sent that grinning tar into the scuppers.

Thus one may listen with less surprise to a certain conversation taking place upon the ample quarter-deck of the schooner, she squatting peacefully upon the sparkling waters of Shoal Harbour, one golden day early in August. Sprawled

amongst the cushions on a transome, basking like a pussy-cat in the sun, was Cécile, a luscious beauty, ripe to the point of falling from the bough, and already petulant for the plucking. For three seasons this girl had demoralised the yachting world, for Captain Bell was widely known, and the *Shark* as hospitable as her namesake. A high-tempered but jovial host, epicurean of appetite and ready to immolate his health on the altar of good-fellowship at a moment's notice; three lovely daughters, one a desperate flirt, one soft and sweet as a West Indian night breeze, the third a long-legged nymph with violet eyes, her pretty mouth full of sailor slang, ready to swim a race around the ship or run one over the truck. . . . My word, it is no wonder that old Heldstrom's hair had visibly whitened in the last three years.

Cécile was catching it fore-and-aft upon this August day.

"It vas me br'rought you oop," growled the Norwegian in his beard, "und somedimes I am not pr'roud of it. How maay yoong men haf you jilted this summer?"

Cécile dropped her chin on her knuckles and kicked up her heels most unmaidenly.

"I haven't jilted anybody. It's not my fault

if they slam off in a rage. I don't ask any odds, and if they can't play the game without bawling, they shouldn't play it at all."

"Love is not a game; it is a serious business, as some day you may find out to your cost."

Cécile gave the nearest cushion a vicious kick, and her head a toss which set the bright hair to shimmering opalescent as a new-hooked porgy.

"Don't fear," she said; "when I find the man who can make me feel what I want to feel, he will have no cause to complain."

"Perhaps you may," Heldstrom retorted. He bent his big brows upon her flushed, resentful face, and his eyes, clear and blue as polar ice, softened a little. "I hope not, my dear. Mean-while, you must not encourage dese oder yoong men. . . ."

"But how am I to know . . ." Cécile interrupted, when Heldstrom raised his hand.

"You vill know. Und if you do not know, den it is not der r'right man." He took a turn or two on the deck, then paused to stare toward the harbour-mouth. Up forward the sailors were clustered about the windlass, talking in low, vehement tones, the murmur of which reached aft. "Less noise for'ard dere," ordered the captain in

his great, resonant bass, and the gabble ceased. The hands were all staring toward the entrance, and as he looked forward Heldstrom gave a little growl in his throat.

"Dis Pilot-fish . . ." said he, turning abruptly toward Cécile. "Vas he anudder?"

"Another what?" she asked, sulkily.

"Anudder wictim. Anudder yoong man you haf made crazy . . . und pull your skirt down by your ankles, my dear; you are now too oldt to flop ar'round dot way like a little girl."

Cécile jerked her supple young body upright.

"If you are going to do nothing but scold," said she, sulkily. "I am going below." She sprang to her feet and stood as primly as was possible for one of her nymph-like allure. "I must say," she snapped and thrust out her chin haughtily, "it seems to me that I have reached an age where I might expect to be spared lessons in conduct from the sailing-master of my father's yacht."

She turned toward the companionway, head in air.

"Cécile!" said Heldstrom, sharply, and the little feet stopped as though despite themselves.

"We" . . . ?"

"You vill say: 'Excuse me, Captain Heldstrom.'"

"I won't."

"You vill say: 'Excuse me, Captain Heldstrom.'"

Cécile pressed her lips firmly together.

"Look at me."

Slowly, and as if moved by some compelling force, the lovely, rebellious face was turned and the long, grey eyes, with their double fringe of black lashes, were raised to meet the clear blue ones flashing from under the bushy eyebrows. Cécile's eyes sought the deck.

"Forgive me, Uncle Chris," she murmured.

"Dot is efen better, my dear. Listen, Cécile; I ara not a poor man und I am getting on in years. My brudder has left me lands und houses in Norway und I own in some big ships. But I stay und sail dis old yoonk for your fadder und draw my pay vich is nodding, und vy? Because if I go, who den vill take care of my little girls? Your fadder is not rich; perhaps he is not so rich as me, but you are my family und all dot I have is yours, yoost as I am yours. Und so, my little girl, I talk to you like a Dootch uncle, und I am not

Cootch, but Norwegian und a gentleman born. Dot is all, my dear."

But it was not quite all, for Cécile rushed to the old viking and flung her young arms about his neck and kissed the first exposed spot she could find on the deep-lined, bearded face.

Then she stepped back and surveyed him through misty eyes.

"When I meet a man like you," said she, and caught her breath, "he will find out that I am something more than a flirt."

And she turned and fled below.

Hardly had she disappeared when the captain's alert, if somewhat blurred, vision was caught by a yacht's dinghy rapidly approaching the *Shark*. Picking up his glasses he at once discovered, sitting in the stern of the boat, a young man whom he recognised as a Mr. Huntington Wood and who had been the previous summer one of Cécile's most devoted suitors. When the caprice of the spoiled beauty had sent him eddying in her wake with the other wrecks, Heldstrom had sighed deeply. He had liked and admired Wood, finding him all that a well-bred young American ought to be. Included amongst these virtues was a very large fortune, and Captain Heldstrom had been deeply

disappointed that Cécile could not have found it in her heart to care for him.

Seeing that Wood was coming to call, Heldstrom sent the steward to inform Cécile, then received the guest himself, there being no one of the family on deck. Wood was a clean-cut, thoroughbred-looking man of about twenty-eight. Perhaps his greatest attraction lay in the thoughtful kindness of expression which was habitual to him. There was humour, also, and the typical American alertness.

As Wood and Heldstrom exchanged their greetings there came from forward a sort of buzz of suppressed excitement. The hands were peering intently into the dazzling reflection of the sun on the water at the harbour-mouth. Captain Heldstrom quickly levelled his glass in that direction, then laid it down with a shrug and a shake of the head.

"What is it?" Wood asked.

"Der Pilot-fish, zir," answered the sailor.

"What do you mean?"

Heldstrom was about to reply when Cécile came up through the companion and Wood went to meet her. She greeted him with a rather quizzical smile. Wood flushed.

"You were right," said he. "Here I am back again in less than six months."

"We have missed you," said Cécile, and led the way aft.

"Thank you. I have come back, not as a suitor, but as a friend."

"Still bitter?"

"Not in the least."

"I heard," remarked Cécile, with a little laugh, "that you were building a Home for Sick Babies."

"That is true. My cure for bitterness . . . and not a bad thing for the babies. If all of your rejected lovers would only turn to philanthropy for their cure what a lot of good you would do."

"That is a nasty remark."

"Sorry. Let's drop personalities. How are you all?"

"Papa's asthma is better. He has taken a tremendous fad for cooking, and spends most of his time stewing over the galley stove. This seems to be a good thing for him, though bad for us. The cook's wages have had to be raised."

Wood laughed. "And the girls?"

"Paula is as sweet as ever. Hermione has grown up. She is taller than I and is going to be a beauty."

From the hands clustered on the t'gallant fore-castle there came at this moment a sort of stifled yelp, immediately followed by some deep-sea admonition from Captain Heldstrom. As if in answer to the commotion there popped out of the galley, which as in most old-fashioned vessels was in a forward deck-house, a corpulent gentleman with a crimson face, snow-white moustache, and a shining bald head whereof the lustre was marred by streaks of flour.

"Papa . . ." called Cécile.

Captain Bell, for it was he, turned sharply, and seeing Wood, his choleric face lightened. He tore off his apron, wiped his bare, floury arms, and came striding jerkily aft.

"Well, well, Huntington . . . glad to see you, my boy. Excuse my negligée . . . was just at work on an omelette soufflée, but somehow it went wrong. Infernal thing collapsed like a punctured tire. All the fault of this Pilot-fish. . . ."

"What is the Pilot-fish?" asked Wood.

"Cécile will tell you while I brush up. You will stop for lunch . . . yes, this is not a request, it is an order. I have made a *plat* that I want your opinion of." He glanced over the rail. "You are off the *Arcturus*?"

"Yes . . . cruising with Livingston Poole. I leave him to-morrow. His people are to join him at Portland."

"Come and visit us a bit." He raised his voice. "Christian, tell that man from the *Arcturus* to go back and say that Mr. Wood is lunching with us."

"Yes, zir."

Pausing to search the horizon with his glasses, Captain Bell went below. Wood looked inquiringly at Cécile.

"Did you ever hear of a pilot-fish?" she asked.

"Yes. It is a little fish which is a constant companion of the shark. So this is a companion of yours?"

"There is a man who lives on a little yawl and goes wherever we go. Last summer we began to notice that, no matter where we were, there would turn up sooner or later this same little boat. Sometimes she would be in port when we arrived. No doubt he got our next address at the post-office and then passed us *en route*. The *Shark* is about as speedy as a brick-barge, and this yawl is a smart little sailer."

"What is the game of this Pilot-fish?" asked Wood.

"It appears that we are his mind. He makes

us do his thinking for him. Here comes papa; get him to tell you of his interview with the Pilot-fish."

Captain Bell, refreshed inside and out, appeared at this moment in the companionway. His first glance was for the harbour-mouth.

"Come here, papa," called Cécile, "and tell Huntington about your conversation with the Pilot-fish."

Captain Bell joined the two. "The Pilot-fish," said he, "is a balmy galoot in a little yawl who has been eddyin' around in our wake all summer. When it got certain that his whole business was to trail us I went alongside him and asked what he meant by such cheek. I found a long, tawny, sleepy-eyed scoundrel drinking tea and munching macaroons."

"'Good-day,' says he. 'Won't you come aboard? You ar' just in time for tea.'

"'Thanks,' said I, 'but I didn't come for tea. I came to ask why in thunder you hang under my fin like a bloomin' pilot-fish.'

"He sets down his tea-cup and turns a pair of yellow eyes on me.

"'Do you mind?' he asks. 'I don't want to intrude.'

“‘That depends on what you do it for,’ I answered.

“‘Well, then,’ says he, rumplin’ up his hair, which is about a foot long and the colour of coir rope, ‘I follow you because it saves me the trouble of deciding where I want to go.’

“‘The deuce you do,’ said I, too surprised to say more.

“‘Do you mind?’ he asks again.

“‘I don’t know that I mind,’ said I, ‘but you make me tired. Can’t you do your own thinkin’?’

“‘It’s so distractin’,’ says he, and heaves a sigh. ‘You see, Captain Bell, I am a poet and if I have to determine where I want to go it breaks into the Muse. . . .’” And Bell went off into a fit of wheezy laughter which finished in a coughing spell. “Now what d’ye think of that . . .?” he gasped.

“It sounds fishy to me,” Wood observed.

Bell nodded. “Still,” said he, “there may be something in it, after all. I give you my word, I come near flying off my chump sometimes trying to decide where to go next. The girls will never help me out. But to go back to this balm. ‘Just the same,’ I said, ‘it must be deuced inconvenient

sometimes to follow me through all kinds of weather in that little thing.' Says he, 'That's good moral discipline. If it weren't for that I'd lie in one place and rot. You'd see the pond-lilies sproutin' from my spars. For instance . . . ' says he, 'comin' up here I got started too late to catch the tide, and was dodging rocks in the fog all night long. That is an excellent way for a poet to refresh his faculties,' says he. 'Of my own initiative it would never happen, but I put myself under a moral obligation to go wherever and whenever you do.'"

I gave a plethoric chuckle. "'Well,' said I, 'at any rate, you must know your business. It was thick as pea soup.' Says he, waving his fin, 'I can usually find my way around . . . ' And he took a swig of tea. Upon my word, I began to like him. He has only one man; a half-baked Finn with a cleft palate and one eye swung over to port; a warlock, if ever you saw one. The Pilot-fish told me that he found the beggar starving on the beach. Nobody would ship him, he was that rum. These two zanies scarcely ever speak. The Finn lives up forward and only comes aft to handle the boat and valet him. He was ironing his shirt on the fore-hatch while we talked.

I asked him to dinner and you'd have thought from his face that I'd suggested our havin' a glass of potassium cyanide together. 'Oh, no . . . no . . . no . . .' says he, takin' a grip of his yellow thatch. Said I: 'What's the matter? I'm not planning to poison you.' He began to spatter out apologies; said that once he had met my household he would not feel at liberty to tag me around, and asked me once more if I was sure that I did not object. 'Follow me to Hades if you like,' said I. 'The sea is free to all, and you never get within half a mile, anyway.' My word, he was so upset he broke his tea-cup against the coamin', and I left him tryin' to swig his tea out of nothin' and bitin' the china ring around his finger. Coming off that evening we passed the Finn. 'Kennybunkport Kennybunkportkennybunkportkennybunkport . . .'" he was patterin' to himself. You see, he'd been ashore to find out our forwarding address. When we reached Kennebunkport sure enough, here was this floatin' bug-house lyin' at anchor and the Pilot-fish refreshin' himself with tea and macaroons. As we rounded up . . ."

His narrative was interrupted by a commotion forward. The men were talking and gesticulat-

ing. Out of the galley bounced the cook, a pair of battered glasses in his hand. Up through the pantry hatch popped the steward like a rabbit coming out of his hole, and the girls' maid, a matronly woman, followed him.

"Look-a-that!" growled Bell, in disgust. "You'd think the White Squadron was comin' in . . ." He levelled his glasses at the swimming glare. "Confound him . . . it's he . . . and Cécile gets into me for ten dollars."

Down below a cabin clock rang sharply two bells. "Two bells, sir," said a quartermaster. "Make it so," snapped Bell, for the *Shark's* routine was strictly naval.

Two bells were struck forward, to be followed by a smothered chorus of exultation from the winners of sundry bets. "Silence, there," cried Bell, and added to Wood: "This ship has got to be no more than a bloomin' Grand Stand. That lobster has lost me ten dollars. He must have stopped to fish."

Captain Heldstrom started forward, smiling under his grizzled beard.

"Win, captain?" snapped Bell.

"Fife dollars . . . from der cook, zir," answered the captain.

"I'm glad it was the cook . . ." muttered Bell.

"This Pilot-fish," observed Wood, "has got the races beaten to a finish."

All eyes aboard the *Shark* were directed over the starboard bow. Out of the vivid glare appeared presently a small, chunky vessel, yawl-rigged, though from the size of her mizzen she might have been classed as a ketch. No bunting did she fling to the light, offshore breeze; no pennant, burgee, ensign, nor even so much as a tell-tale at her truck. Huntington, a yachtsman of some experience, doubted that she had been designed and built for a yacht. Beating back and forth across the bay, the yawl finally made her berth about halfway between the *Shark* and the eastern side of the harbour.

"What is her name?" asked Wood.

"Her name," Bell answered, "goes with the tea and macaroons. It is *Daffodil*."

"Oh, fudge . . ."

"His name," said Cécile, "is Harold Applebo."

She had expected to hear a feeble cry for help, but was disappointed. Wood sprang up from his lounging position.

"Harold Applebo . . ." he cried. "Why, he

was a classmate of mine. I might have known . . . from your father's description."

Cécile opened wide her grey eyes. "Tell us about him," said she.

"Harold Applebo," Wood began, "is eccentric and a poet. At college, however, he was not considered by any means a fool."

"Does he write good verse?" asked Cécile.

"One needs to get into the bath-tub to read it. Yet, although mushy, he has a few admirers, and has published two books, doubtless at his own expense. Selections from the first were read to me this summer by a friend. When she had finished my head felt like a bottle full of bees. There was one 'Ode to a Dew-drop in the Heart of a Pansy'; another was called 'Flowers at Play.'"

"Nuf', nuf' . . . let me up . . ." murmured Bell.

"I managed to keep my strength," continued Wood, "until my friend, who happened to be a young mother, recited from memory, 'Baby in the Asphodel.' That finished me. I have never felt the same toward babies since. That is unfortunate, considering my charity."

He levelled a glass toward the yawl. "Yes

. . . I see Harold . . . and there is a thing like a gollywog getting into the dink."

"The Finn," said Cécile. "Tell us some more about Applebo."

"At college he kept house with a parrot and a bull-pup, and was known to have eccentric ideas. He did not believe in friendship, saying that one's attitude should be the same toward all of one's fellows. Although known to be tremendously powerful physically, nothing would induce him to enter athletics. He said that the demonstration of individual prowess was a vain exhibition of superiority, and therefore not ethical. It was observed that his arguments were beautifully adapted to his own tastes."

"Sounds rather an interestin' ass," said Bell. "Why not jump into the dinghy and see if you can't get him for lunch? He might come for you."

Wood glanced at Cécile, who nodded.

"Do," said she. "Tell him that he may let us do his thinking for him, just the same."

"Very well," answered Wood, always obliging. Captain Bell raised his fat, throaty voice.

"Away . . . dinghy . . ." he called to the quartermaster on duty.

CHAPTER II

WHILE Captain Bell, Cécile, and Huntington Wood were idly discussing the manœuvres of the Pilot-fish, and different members of the crew were engaged in settling their bets, there was one person aboard the schooner who was taking measures to put an end to the peculiar devotion of Mr. Harold Applebo, poet.

In her roomy cabin below, Miss Hermione Bell had heard the exclamations which announced the sighting of the Pilot-fish. The port-hole over her bunk commanded a view of the harbour-mouth, and resting on brackets overhead was a big, battered old-fashioned telescope. Hermione threw down her book, reached up for the glass, and took a dead rest on the brass rim of the port-hole, when the *Daffodil* sprang to meet her vision, swimming unsteadily in the vivid reflection of the sun.

Once the yawl was clear of the glare, Hermione was able to examine her in detail. The first object to catch her eye was a figure squatting in a toad-like way up forward, and which, even as she looked, scrambled upright, as though in obedience

to an order, and began to clear the anchor. Hermione observed that the man's body was disproportionately wide for its height, that his head resembled a deck-swab, and that the legs were very bowed.

"The Finn . . ." she muttered. "What a brute! He looks like a sea-spider."

Passing from the Finn, she tried to distinguish the figure at the wheel, but all that was visible above the high coaming was a mop of reddish-yellow hair and one big, bare shoulder. As though conscious that he were under scrutiny, Applebo kept his face persistently turned away, and Hermione had learned by experience that when he was presently forced to go about, he would shift himself to the other side of the cockpit, keeping his back to the *Shark*. The wheel of the yawl was placed very low and almost hidden by the high coaming.

"Hang him!" Hermione burst out, and closed the telescope with a vicious snap.

For several minutes she sat on the edge of her bunk, lost in thought, her head tilted slightly forward and her eyes unfocussed. One graceful leg hung straight down; the other was tucked under her, schoolgirl fashion. Her kimono, open

at the throat, showed that splendid, arching bust seen most frequently in singers. Hermione was not a singer, but she was a strong swimmer, and the lung development is similar. Her neck was straight and strong, the little *nuque* a detail for sculptors to dream of, carrying its subtle curve to hide in the thick, black, lustrous hair. Hermione's type was Keltic; Irish and French would both have claimed her, the latter for an Auvergnatte, because of her very deep violet eyes and the little nose with the retroussé tip, which all three of the girls had from their mother. Hermione was taller than her sisters and was destined to be a big woman at maturity, this promise being so far draped in youth.

Europeans found Hermione far more beautiful than Cécile, and Paula lovelier than either. But to the American taste the girl's type was too tropical, even her indigo eyes commonly passing for black. There was also about her a tempestuosity which appalled most people. Hermione was not a hoyden; she was far too feminine for that, but she was temperamentally impetuous, often to the point of violence, and her discourse, when angered, was not always what it should be. Christian Heldstrom worshipped the planks she trod on

. . . and she had given him more trouble than both of the others put together. Which is to say, that she gave him more trouble than did Cécile, as Paula was always good.

Hermione had already many beaux, whom she treated like dogs. Yet her method was kinder than Cécile's, for Hermione never flirted. If she liked a man, she permitted him to row and sail and swim with her; if she did not like him, she told him to clear out. For gallantry she had no patience and was apt to receive with contumely the most subtle of flatteries.

And yet . . .

Hermione's long, round arm reached for the lid of a little locker beside her bunk. Therefrom she took a large package of cream, or rather, corn-coloured note-paper closely covered by a small, regular handwriting which at the first glance resembled Greek script. From this package Hermione selected a sheet at random, then flinging herself face downward on the bunk, dropped her pretty chin into one hand, and resting on her elbow, she proceeded to acquire the following interesting information:—

TO HERMIONE

*The fog may blanket the sleeping sea,
Hermione;
Sunbeams may falter, moonbeams pale
May swoon at the frown of the darkling gale.
I follow thee,
Hermione.*

*The skies may weep or the tempest shrill,
Hermione;
Tide-rips may growl and the rock-fangs yawn
And sea-traps be set in the lightless dawn.
I follow still,
Hermione.*

*I may not see thee nor hear thy voice,
Hermione;
Nothing I ask but to feel thou art there,
To share thy ocean, to breathe thy air.
So I rejoice,
Hermione.*

*Thus if I sing one little song,
Hermione,
'Tis the cry of the gull swept off on the wind,
One soundless sigh of a love that is blind.
Forgive my wrong,
Hermione.*

Hermione read the verses twice through, then stared at the white bulkhead.

"Fool!" was her polite comment.

There were a great many of these poems, each bearing a different date, and each a souvenir of some port where the *Shark* had visited. Over a period of three months ran the verses, and not once during that time had the poet been within a quarter of a mile of her to Hermione's knowledge. Once or twice she had caught a glimpse of Applebo's face through her telescope, but never a satisfactory one. Paula was the only one of the girls who had ever seer him at close range; she had come on him face to face in the post-office, but had been quite unable to say whether or not he was good to look at.

The verses always came most prosaically through the mail. All three of the sisters had a large correspondence, so that Hermione's corn-coloured letters, with their peculiar calligraphy, had excited no especial comment. Once or twice she had been asked from whom they were. "A darn fool . . ." Hermione had answered, for which her father, old sinner that he was, saw fit to reprove her.

Hermione lay on her bunk and kicked up her

heels and read her verses, sometimes with a curling lip when the sentiment impressed her as particularly mushy. Yet, oddly enough, there was a flush glowing darkly through the olive of her cheeks, and any one would have sworn that her eyes were a very velvety tone of black. Once or twice her long, lithe young body squirmed uneasily and her broad forehead clouded as though from displeasure.

Certainly, there was, aside from the presumption of the poet in sending her the verses at all, nothing to give offence in Applebo's effusions. All were of the very essence of delicacy, and each carried somewhere in its text a little word of apology.

Hermione rose suddenly, flung the leaflets back into the locker, and sat for a moment with brooding eyes and the warm flush burning through her clear, olive skin. The girl never burned nor tanned nor chapped; her complexion preserved invariably its delicacy of tint and texture.

"What a lot of rot . . ." muttered Hermione to herself. "The man's an idiot. If I make him feel like that, why doesn't he come over and kick about it instead of flopping around in that little tub and writing me fathoms of slush? Here's

where he gets a little sonnet from his Hermione."

With her flush even darker, she reached for her writing block and penned the following epistle:—

SCHOONER-YACHT *Shark*, Shoal Harbour,
August fourth.

HAROLD APPLEBO, Esq., Yacht *Daffodil*.

Dear Sir:—Has it ever occurred to you that it is scarcely fair to my sisters, Cécile and Paula, that I, the youngest, should be the sole recipient of so many poetic gems? Inasmuch as your acquaintance with them is precisely that of our own, my sense of fairness no longer permits of my being the only favoured one.

I must, therefore, request that you transfer your delicate attentions for the next few weeks, at least. This measure will also give me an opportunity to recover from the emotions produced by your latest:— "Hermione's Eyes" . . . which, by the way, do not happen to be "grey as the sleeping sea."

Thanking you for your delicate attentions, and in the hope that my sisters may appreciate them even more than my limited poetic faculty has permitted,

Very truly yours,

HERMIONE BELL.

"There," said Hermione, "if that doesn't send the sentimental youth flapping out to sea, I'll give him something that will."

She sealed and addressed the letter and proceeded to dress, putting on a white-serge sailor blouse and skirt, the latter short enough to clear her trim ankles. The thick, black hair she wound in snug bands about her head, added a crimson ribbon, and capped the whole with a white tam. Thus costumed she appeared a tall, slenderly graceful girl with a pretty, tantalising face, of which one carried away an impression of warm, vivid colouring, sapphire eyes, tip-tilted nose, and red lips ever ready to return insults for the kisses which would seem to fit them. Hermione always looked slender to the point of being thin when smartly dressed; it needed her bathing-suit or a riding-habit to reveal her as the Diana which she was. Whether for good or ill, the mother had left a rich legacy of physical beauty to her three girls.

As Hermione went on deck she saw Wood pulling away in the dinghy in the direction of the *Daffodil*. He had declined the offer of a man to row him, and had promised to do his best to bring Applebo back for luncheon.

"Where is Huntington going?" asked Hermione

of Cécile. "I thought he was to stay for lunch."

"So he is. We sent him over to see if he couldn't induce the Pilot-fish to come, too. It seems they were classmates at Yale."

"Applebo won't come," said Hermione.

"Why not?" asked her father.

"It would strip him of his sentimental pose to be formally presented. I'm going ashore to post a letter."

The quartermaster brought her own little cedar skiff alongside, and Hermione got aboard and pulled in for the landing of the Reading Room. Arrived, the boatman took charge of the skiff, and Hermione started to walk up the steep path which led through the scrub pines and was a short cut to the village. She had gone about half the distance when she saw, waddling rapidly toward her and resembling in the thicket some gnome or troll, a short, squat figure which she recognised immediately as the Finn.

Hermione had several times seen the man at close range, the last of these occasions being while he was propelled to the landing in a wheelbarrow, insensible with drink, and suggesting some great pulpy kraken or other fetid creature of the deep. It had taken the girl a couple of days to get over

the effect produced by the sight of the sodden, inert body, bloated purple face with its shock of wild, black hair, and the misshapen limbs dangling and flopping grotesquely over the sides of the barrow.

Now, as she saw him approaching, Hermione felt a strong impulse to turn and bolt. Even at the distance of one hundred yards she could distinguish the pallid face which the sun seemed powerless to tan. As she drew closer she observed, with a shudder, the wide cleft in the upper-lip and the eyes set so painfully askew that the man was forced to turn his head almost at right-angles to his shoulders in order to look at an object in front of him.

Pride kept Hermione straight on her course; then, as the Finn drew near, it occurred to her to give her note to him. This would obviate furnishing information to a possibly curious and inquisitive postmistress, for both the *Shark* and the *Daffodil* had spent a good deal of the summer at Shoal Harbour, where the striking personality of Applebo must have attracted a certain amount of attention.

Therefore, as the Finn drew abreast of her, Hermione made a sign with her hand. His head

still cocked sideways and somewhat curiously suggesting that of a sea-bird hunting its food in the spray, the man waddled up. Hermione, watching him half in disgust, half in curiosity, received a surprise. For the face of the Finn, distorted as it was, held, nevertheless, a sort of wild and spiritual beauty. Whether this was because of an expression of infinite pathos and suffering, or owing to the beautifully shaped forehead and deep, velvety brown of the eyes, Hermione could not have said, but suddenly all of her repulsion vanished, leaving only kindness and pity. The expression in the great, melting brown eyes, twisted as they were, suggested that which one might see in the eyes of a faithful Newfoundland, his back broken by a motor-car.

Hermione held out her letter. The Finn took it with a smile, then bowed.

"For your master," said Hermione.

The Finn smiled and nodded.

"Yo, leddy . . ." said he.

Hermione, thinking to tip him, opened her purse. To her surprise the man sprang back, while an expression, almost of fright, filled the misshapen face.

"Na . . . na . . . na . . ." he mumbled.

Hermione noticed that while he held up one big, gnarled hand, as if in protest, he was nevertheless drawing nearer, and that in a stealthy, sidelong way. Startled, she snapped shut her pocketbook.

"What's the matter?" she asked, sharply.

The Finn's face fell. He drew the back of his hand across his forehead. Hermione saw that it was beaded with perspiration.

The Finn looked at her with a tragic sort of smile, pointed to the purse, then made a motion as of one drinking deeply. Hermione understood.

"You are afraid that if I give you some change you may drink?" she asked.

The Finn nodded vigorously, stood for a moment regarding her, then, with a tug at his forelock, turned on his heel and scuttled off down the slope toward the landing.

CHAPTER III

CLOSE aboard the *Daffodil*, Wood was about to lift his voice in a hail when there came to his ears the sounds of one declaiming in a rich and resonant bass. Having observed the departure of the *Finn* some half-hour earlier, Wood decided that Mr. Applebo must be refreshing his solitude by the recital of some of his own verse. It was therefore with no more consciousness of eavesdropping than has one who pauses to listen to the practising of a musician that Wood rested on his oars, to be startled by the following interrogation:—

*“Tell me, beloved, since your eyes
Hold all the azure of the skies,
Why, then, when night their brightness mars,
Those lustrous depths hold all the stars?
But when the day’s once more begun,
I look, and lo . . . there shines the sun,
And when it sets, alack too soon,
In each deep orb I find the moon.”*

*“The answer is, Hermione,
All heaven’s in those eyes for me.”*

Before Wood could sufficiently recover from the astonishment produced by this innocent query and its answer, the same voice continued in prose, apparently in criticism of the effort and as follows:

“Shucks . . . How do I know her eyes are azure? . . . I never saw them. . . . They might be cadmium or cobalt or madder lake, for all me.” (A pause, then) “when night their brightness mars . . . mars . . . oh, hell, what does it mar it with . . . a handful of mud?” (Another pause, then) “Mars is rotten . . . let’s see . . . mars, cars, spars, tars, chars, bars . . . augh . . . what the deuce . . . oh, let it go; it’s no worse than the rest. In each deep orb . . . fudge, I wonder how many thousand millions of bum poets have said that . . . oh, dammit . . . dammit . . . dammitttt . . .”

There came the sound of paper violently torn. Wood, smothering his laughter at this unofficial peep into the soul of the poet, raised his voice:—

“Aboard the *Daffodil* . . .”

There was no answer. Wood tried again.

“Aboard the *daffy daffodilly* . . . I say . . . Harold . . .”

Followed an instant of silence, then a tawny, leonine head was pushed up through the hatch.

"Hello, Harold!" said Wood.

The poet blinked a pair of clear, amber-coloured eyes. His mane of ruddy-yellow hair was touselled and his expression was that of a person surprised in a yawn.

"Hello, Huntington!" he drawled, in a very deep and husky bass. The yellow eyes blinked once or twice at the dinghy. "You're off the *Shark?*"

"Jusso, Mr. Pilot-fish. May I come aboard?"

"Pray do. I am in the act of brewing tea. Sorry I haven't anything more robust to offer you. I cannot keep spirits, as my crew is a Finn with second sight and an alcoholic affinity. He can spot a whiskey-bottle through a teak locker; then he forces the lock and drinks all that there is without reference to the next man. If there were a gallon, he would drink it all."

"And then what?" asked Wood.

"Then I chain him to the mainmast so that he will not start to swim back to Finland. However, my tea is very good. So are the macarons . . . after you scrape off the green mould. The weather has been warm and humid, and I

cannot get fresh ones here. I have wired to Boston for a supply. But come aboard . . .”

He reached over the side for the painter of the dinghy, and caught a clove-hitch one-handedly and with a deftness which did not suggest the amateur. Huntington stepped aboard and looked about with interest.

“A handy little boat,” he said.

“Yes. She was designed for a Block Island sword-fisher. I bought her on the stocks before they had touched her inside. These boats’ plans are all got out by yacht designers. She is not dull.”

“No motor?”

“No. They smell, and the grease would soil my manuscripts. Besides, the beat of the engine would pound my head and spoil my metre. Think of trying to write dactylic hexameter with an accursed motor pounding away:—‘Juba-this . . . Juba-that . . .’ Come below. Our tannin is distilled.”

In the cosy cabin, singular for its extreme bareness and singular yellow colour-scheme, Wood seated himself upon the edge of the bunk and watched the poet as he poured the tea. Mr. Applebo was in his customary service rig of faded

yellow rowing-shirt, white duck trousers, and leather sandals. His long, wavy hair, naturally of a reddish yellow, was sun-bleached to the lustreless tone of oakum, and hung in heavy clusters that almost hid his ears. The lithe, beautifully muscled figure was flawless, so far as one could see; big-boned, brawny, deep-chested, yet with a suggestion of lightness and grace which one associates with statues of Hermes. His skin, wherever visible, was of the quality of satin, the colour of old-gold, and his hands, while hardened from physical work and the handling of wet ropes, were exquisitely shaped, the fingers straight and strong and well-spaced.

Most striking of all was the poet's face, and it was here that one paused in doubt before rendering a verdict upon Mr. Applebo's physical attractiveness. In feature and expression there seemed to be no standard with which to compare the man's singular type . . . or at least, no human standard. Many faces find their caricatures in the lower animals; one sees people who resemble, or at least, suggest the sheep, monkey, bull-dog, camel, etc. Applebo's face suggested a sleepy lion. There was the same tawny colour-scheme, the blinking, amber eyes focussed on some

far-distant point, the straight, broad nose with a mouth which was slightly lifted in the middle, cheeks cut away and showing a prominent malar bone . . . certainly, the general resemblance was rather toward the cat carnivora than toward anything human.

So far as expression went, Wood could discover absolutely nothing. There was about the poet an atmosphere of languor, either real or assumed, and one felt that if this sloth could be torn aside, the true man or animal, beneath, might stand revealed.

"What do you do on this boat?" asked Wood.

"I dream dreams . . . and laugh at them. I weave long and fascinating romances of which I am the glorious hero . . . and laugh at them. Also, I write many winged words."

"And laugh at them?"

"No. Other people do that."

"I have been sent over here," said Wood, "to order you to report for luncheon aboard the *Shark*. They are getting tired of you as merely a parlor game."

Applebo looked a little scared.

"Thanks awfully . . ." he said, less dream-

ily, "but I cannot go. My delicate sense of social ethics prevents."

"Rot!"

"Really. My extreme sensitiveness. You can't tag strangers about until they ask you to luncheon, nor, having been so weak as to yield to the temptation and accept, could you continue to tag. Then I would be all adrift and not know which way to sail."

"Harold," said Wood, "please go and sing that to the sirens. I am wise to your ingenious sophistries. You are in love with a lady, oh poet. That, and not a lacking initiative, is the reason of your singular fidelity to yon tub."

Applebo raised his tawny head, and blinked once or twice at his guest. Then, in the same dreamy way, he lowered his full cup from his lips. Nothing was more remote from his manner than any hint of agitation, wherefore it struck Wood as odd that he should have let the cup turn in his hand and spill the scalding tea on the dorsum of his bare foot.

"Confound it!" quoth the poet, and grabbed at his foot. The tea-cup struck the edge of the spirit stove and broke, leaving the porcelain ring

of the handle on Applebo's finger. Forgetting his foot, he looked at it and blinked.

"There . . ." said he. "That is the second time that this has happened. A ring upon my finger the minute that my true motive is questioned. I do not like that."

"You ought to," observed Wood, "since you are in love with her."

"Not necessarily. My intentions are honourable but not matrimonial, and a ring is not the symbol of love but of marriage."

"Cynic . . ."

"No . . . poet. Love to the poet is part of his material. It is the most important of his implements of craft. His motive force. I love, but I ask nothing in return . . . beyond being permitted to love from afar. But not too far. A poet must be in the general neighbourhood of his inspiration."

"Stop . . . my tea is coming up . . ."

"Worldling! No doubt you are in love with her yourself." The voice of the poet held the tone of one being roused from a beauty-sleep. "I hope that you are . . . and that she returns your passion. So much the better. A hopeless love is always productive of the purest verse.

The Italian poets understood this. It is all that I needed."

"If I listen to you any longer you will have to chain me to the mainmast with the Finn. Why did you pick out Hermione?"

The eyes of the poet shot him a yellow gleam.

"What makes you think that it is Hermione?"

"You were yapping her name as I came alongside. Never mind; I will not betray you. But I wish that you would let me tell them that it is hopeless passion and not feeble-mindedness which leads you on in the wake of the *Shark*. They would be so pleased."

"Tell them, if you like. It does not matter, since we are destined never to meet. But don't tell which one I am in love with. The others might tease her. All women are cats."

"A lover-like opinion. . . ."

"I am very fond of cats. They are my index . . . just as yellow is my colour. I am really very much in love with Hermione."

"When did you see her?"

"Last winter. It was her superb walk that vanquished me. I have never seen her, bow-on. Last winter, on my way down Fifth Avenue every morning to breakfast at the club, I often over-

hauled her. But I never passed. She drifted along like a marsh lily gathered by the flood."

"But she might enjoy meeting you."

Applebo shook his head. "I am wedded to my Muse. She will not brook a rival. Should Hermione enter my life, I would never write another poem. You see, I would be merely living one. Have a macaroon. There is very little mould on this one."

Wood glanced at him with suspicion, but Applebo's face would have made that of the Sphinx look open and confiding. A big, yellow tom-cat he appeared as he sat there, great shoulders hunched forward, back bent, blinking impenetrably at his guest. He finished a macaroon and licked the crumbs from his lips, and looked even cattier. It would not have surprised his guest had he begun to purr.

"Where did you learn so much seamanship?" asked Wood. "Captain Bell says that the way you find your way around is uncanny."

Applebo waved his hand and shrugged.

"A mere instinct. One might almost say a lower attribute and shared with birds, mammals, and fishes. I am not proud of it."

"Do you write poems of the sea?"

"Sometimes, but the subject does not interest me. A great, empty desolate waste of wet. No, why write poems of the sea when there are so many lovable things; old gardens and dear old people; little children and lovely women . . . the last, always in the abstract." His amber eyes glowed.

Wood stared at him keenly, but Applebo appeared oblivious. Wood rose to his feet.

"It is almost two bells," said he, "I must be getting back. Sorry you will not come."

"Thank you, dear boy. Please make all of my excuses. Tell them what you like . . . only mention no names. Express my deep appreciation of their goodness, and thank them in my name for permitting me to rot around in their wake. Good-bye . . . God bless you."

In a very pensive mood Wood pulled back to the *Shark*, where his lack of success was received somewhat caustically by Cécile. But at the luncheon table Wood had his revenge.

"It is just as I thought," said he. "Applebo's plea that he follows the *Shark* about to save himself the wear and tear of deciding where to go is all a bluff."

Had he been looking at Hermione as he made

this statement, Wood might have seen something in her face to have given him food for thought. But he was looking at Cécile, not without a certain touch of malice. Since the coquette had rather cruelly thrown him over after having given him reason to believe that he was not indifferent to her, Wood had done a good deal of thinking, finally to arrive at the conclusion that all had happened for the best, and that a girl who could find it in her heart to do this sort of thing was not the girl that any man should want to marry. He no longer loved Cécile, and was therefore no longer blind to her faults. Conspicuous amongst these was a tremendous appreciation of her own charms, and Wood felt instinctively that, on learning of Applebo's confession, Cécile would immediately appropriate this devotion to herself. Wood bore no rancour for her treatment of himself, but he would scarcely have been human had he not found a certain cynical enjoyment in the situation.

“I am not at liberty to mention any names,” said he, “but when I directly accused him of being secretly in love with some lady aboard the *Shark*, Applebo acknowledged that this was the fact.”

Hermione's blue eyes opened very wide and a sudden rich colour flooded her face. Captain Bell and Wood were, however, looking at Cécile. Paula, the second sister, was lunching with friends ashore.

Cécile's black, curving lashes swept down, and she looked at her plate and laughed, while a delicate colour tinged her soft cheeks. Secretly, she had suspected for a long time precisely what Wood had just stated, and the news brought to her that flush of triumph which attended every new and interesting conquest.

Captain Bell surveyed his eldest daughter with disgust.

"My word!" he snapped. "Has it come to a point where they follow her around in boats?"

Wood glanced at Hermione with the slightest suspicion of a wink. She coloured and laughed. Hermione and Cécile had but little in common, and aside from a certain amount of sisterly affection, were rather indifferent to each other. Cécile disapproved Hermione's frank, impetuous manner, and Hermione detested her sister's cold-blooded coquetries. Both of the girls adored their sister Paula.

"Applebo's is a somewhat peculiar devotion,"

Wood observed, "but that is to be expected, considering Applebo. He asks only to worship from afar. It appears that his sentiment is useful as a source of inspiration; 'motive force,' as he expressed it. He even went so far as to say that it would profit him even more if some other person were to win the heart of his inamorata, as hopeless passion was always productive of the best poetic results."

"Huh . . ." grunted Bell. "I told you he was a balm!"

"So he intends never to meet me . . . us . . .?" Cécile corrected herself, but not in time to save the laugh.

"A modest young person, my daughter Cécile," said Bell, dryly. "Of course it's not within the scope of human possibility that Paula or Hermione should have found favour in the eyes of this omelette-head. Cut another notch in your gunstock, my dear . . ." And he continued in this ironic strain until Hermione and Wood took pity on Cécile and changed the conversation by sheer weight of voices.

Toward the middle of the afternoon Paula Bell returned aboard. There was nothing of the sea about this girl, who was wholly of the warm and

comforting earth. Paula's type was such as one sees in the sculptured figures of French public buildings, lending themselves to emblematic decoration, and representing Ceres, with overflowing cornucopia, Justitia with her scales, or perhaps an opulent creature to depict La Vendange, the vintage, or Return of the Grape. In face and figure Paula might have posed for one of these splendid, heroic sculptures. Already, at twenty-two, her form was gracefully mature, and her face, pure of feature, had that pretty alluringness of expression with which the French sculptors know so well how to sweeten and vitalise the classic Greek. We Anglo-Saxons, on the contrary, seeking to copy directly from the ancients, are too apt to get as a result the well-known, frozen-faced females which suggest rather George Washington, a suffragette, or an idealised William Jennings Bryan than the desired Mother of the Earth.

"What do you think . . .?" cried Paula.

"I met the Pilot-fish face to face."

"You did!" cried Hermione. "What did he do?"

"Nothing. It was in the post-office. He stood with his eyes fixed on infinity while the clerk sorted his mail. He is very striking in appear-

ance and as graceful as a panther. People turn to look at him."

"How was he dressed?" asked Cécile.

"Beautifully . . . but not the least hint of the nautical. White serge suit, straw-coloured pongee shirt with a dark, smoky-orange colour tie, yellow buckskin shoes. His hair is long and beautifully *ondulé*; such a chevelure is wasted on most men, but not on the Pilot-fish. I wonder if he sleeps with it in papers."

"No," said Wood. "It has always been like that. Freshman year the Sophs tried to cut it for him. The infirmary did a big business for a week. His bull-pup and parrot got in the game and bit one man and gouged the ear of another. The next night the Sophs went back in force to do the job or die. Harold waited until they got inside, then locked the door, threw the key under the bed, and pulled aside the curtains of an alcove. Here was a forbidding-looking keg with "POWDER" stencilled on the side in big red letters, and a fuse in the top. Before anybody could stop him, Harold let out a fearful yell and lighted the fuse. It began to sputter, and the Sophs lost interest in Harold's hair. You see, he was known to be such a wild freak that there was no telling what

he might not do, so out they went, taking the door with them and piling up in a heap in the corridor, which was narrow. The fuse reached the bung-hole, when there came a sort of mild explosion. One man fainted. When the smoke cleared away, there was Harold drawing beer out of the other end of the keg. They let him keep his hair."

Cécile did not join in the laughter of the others.

"Then he is a sort of clown?" she asked, a little sharply.

Wood shook his head. "Not a bit. It seems to me that the others were the ones to perform."

Cécile made no answer. To herself she was registering a little vow that she would put the leonine Mr. Applebo through his tricks, and that before she was many days older.

There was to be a little dinner party aboard the *Shark* that night, and Captain Bell, the most recent of whose fads was the culinary arts, had spent his morning in the galley, preparing certain dishes with which to "surprise" his guests. This innocent pastime of their father's had been encouraged by the girls; as Hermione said, "it kept him out of mischief, while the heat of the galley,

acting as a Turkish bath, was good for his asthma."

In the present instance, however, this beneficial occupation was destined to directly affect the future affairs of several people, notably those of Mr. Harold Applebo.

It was during the soup course Captain Bell ventured to expand a little to his guests on the higher attributes of the culinary art:—

"A cook," he observed, didactically, "is far above the menial class. He is an artist, and entitled to the same respectful consideration which might be shown a sculptor, painter, poet, or musician. More, in fact, because a cook ministers, not only to our æsthetic sense and intellectual demands, but to the physical as well. In substantiation of these statements, I am about to offer you an entrée made this morning by my own hands . . . ah . . ."

The peroration was cut short by the entrance of the steward bearing the gastronomic chef-d'œuvre, which was in the form of a vol-au-vent, or chicken-pie. At first glance, the dish appeared to be highly successful. The crust was brown and flaky, and seemed to promise succulent delicacies within. After the first anxious glance, Captain

Bell sank back into his chair and looked about with the benevolent expression of one about to confer a rare treat upon his friends.

The steward, struggling manfully with his grin, presented the dish to Cécile, who proceeded to attack it with a blunt knife. The crust sagged like the head of a slack drum, but refused to give up its dead. Cécile exerted a little more pressure. The crust held valiantly, while certain unhallowed gurglings came from beneath. Everybody was watching Cécile with that painful anxiety peculiar to such moments. Bell began to fidget.

"Cut into it . . ." he snapped. "The chicken ain't goin' to bite you."

The popular tension found relief in a laugh at this witticism. Bell glared, and the ill-timed mirth subsided. Cécile threw her solid weight upon the knife. It bent, and a tiny jet of juice found its exit, hitting Mr. Poole in the eye. He wiped it furtively, and the others pretended not to have observed the accident.

"Briggs, give me a pointed knife," said Cécile.

"Of course . . ." growled Bell. "Always serve a pointed knife with a pastry."

The perspiring Briggs fetched the desired weapon. Thus armed, Cécile successfully at-

tacked the crust, which she flayed back as one might skin an animal. She helped herself daintily, and the dish was passed to Wood, all eyes watching him as though he were about to draw in any other lottery.

Politic youth that he was, Wood helped himself generously, when there rolled out of the gravy upon his plate, a small, kitchen salt-cellar.

“Thunderation!” snapped the host, “so that’s where it went. I hunted half an hour for that thing. . . .”

“Papa . . .” protested Cécile. Nobody else could speak, and the faces around the board were crimson. Their host was known by his guests to take himself very seriously.

Wood tried again, this time exhuming what appeared to be a misshapen piece of rubber, but which a clever comparative anatomist might have recognised as the sacrum of a fowl with its muscular attachments.

“It smells delicious . . .” said the young man. He tried to cut the lump, which slipped from beneath his knife and bounded across the saloon. Wood’s face expressed polite disappointment at the loss of the relish. The suffering steward, unable to look at him, hurried on with

the dish, passing it next to Hermione, who ripped off a ragged piece of the "crust," which she proceeded to cover with a substance much resembling asphalt.

Mr. Poole, Wood's host on the *Arcturus*, came next. The face of this gentleman was painfully congested and his hand trembled so that he could scarcely hold the spoon. Bell watched him narrowly. It was at moments such as these that he was apt to form his friendships and enmities.

Hermione saw that Poole was not up to the ordeal and came generously to the rescue.

"Be careful . . ." said she, "papa lost his watch a few days ago, and he would never forgive you if you were to break it."

Even Captain Bell had to join in the roar which followed. But there was a fighting gleam in his eye which boded ill for somebody.

"That's right, laugh . . ." roared Bell. "Funny, ain't it . . . and you girls know perfectly well that this is the first dish o' mine that's gone wrong since . . . since . . ."

"Since the casserole blew up and we had to raise the cook's wages," said Hermione.

"It's all the fault of that infernal Pilot-fish

and his swab-headed, swivel-eyed Finn . . .” stormed Bell, oblivious to all attempts at restraint. “How in the deuce am I goin’ to cook a dish requirin’ care and watchfulness with all hands, cook, scullion . . .”

“ . . . and yourself . . .”

“ . . . and myself, then, breaking for the rail every time some square-head for’ard sights a fishin’ boat? That’s the way the salt-cellar got . . . lost. I set it down on the crust for a second to take a look, and it got drawn in, like . . . like . . .”

“Like it might have in any other quicksand,” supplied Hermione.

No fear nor respect of the host could drown the roar which followed and stifled echoes of which appeared to come from the pantry, whither the steward had fled. Bell was, however, furious.

“Steward . . .” he bawled. The unhappy man appeared, saddened, to judge by the funereal expression of his face, and the tears still brimming in his eyes.

“Take this dish forward,” said Bell, with great dignity, “and present it, with my compliments, to Captain Heldstrom and the mate.”

“How about the corroded top of that salt-

cellar, papa?" asked Paula. "Might not that be poisonous?"

"It doesn't need the salt-cellar . . ." Hermione whispered to the writhing Mr. Poole.

"That may be so . . . that may be so," Bell assented. "Wonder none of the rest of you had the wit to think of it. Steward . . ."

"Sir . . ."

"Carry the blamed thing up and heave it overboard." Bell glared savagely about him. "There's a whole morning's work and two fine chickens . . . no, three . . ."

"Three!"

"Yes. The first one I accidentally dropped overboard while looking for the Pilot-fish. Curse the Pilot-fish . . . I say, curse him. It's all his fault. He has got this whole ship's company going all ways at once like a school o' galled whales. I'll fix him. I'll lead him a^achase. I'll wear him out, confound him, or know the reason why. Wants to follows us, does he? Right-o! I'll keep him on the trot till his tongue hangs out."

"How?" asked Cécile.

"By keepin' him on the move. We'll lead him a chase from Cape Race to Key West and never

give him a chance to eat. Who wants to bet me that he'll be with us at the end of a fortnight? Come with us, Wood; you've got nothin' to do and I'll show you some fun; a sort of *chasse-à-courre*. Will you come?"

"Oh, do, Huntington," Paula cried. Wood glanced at Cécile.

"Do come, if it would amuse you," said she.

"Who wants to bet me that this chump will still be in the hunt two weeks from now?" cried Bell. "What! no takers?"

"Wait until we start," said Hermione.

CHAPTER IV

HERMIONE, that strenuous nymph, was in the habit of early rising for a row in her little skiff, finishing up with a plunge. After that, bed again, where she devoured bacon and eggs, coffee, and perhaps kippers or haddock.

Sometimes Paula accompanied her, but never Cécile. This luxurious beauty had no taste for cold and sticky Maine sea-water. She liked hers warm and fresh, in a tub at about ten. As for Captain Bell he never appeared on deck when in port until after déjeuner, which was served at twelve. None of the family got to bed before midnight, usually playing bridge until all hours. When there were no guests, Hermione and Cécile always played against Paula and their father. This may have been the reason why the eldest and youngest sister were not particularly devoted chums.

The morning after the dinner episode of the salt-cellar, Hermione was up as usual at about six. For these matutinal excursions she always wore her bathing-suit, a simple but exceedingly becoming costume of cucumber-green trimmed

with maroon and an apology for a skirt which reached to a little above her pretty knees. Her hair was snugly coiffed in a dark crimson kerchief, and, taking her, as sailors say, full and bye, Hermione was well worth getting up at sunrise to see.

As a general thing ladies are not supposed to appear on the deck of a yacht before eight bells, but the *Shark* was more of a home than a yacht, and Hermione sent the steward to prepare the way before her. Captain Heldstrom was always up, and Hermione was, under his strict injunction, never to go where she could not be sighted from the schooner.

Usually the girl contented herself with pulling about the harbour, taking her plunge alongside on her return. Sometimes, however, when lying in some wild and picturesque harbour, she would land on the beach to explore or perhaps have a try for snipe with her little 16-bore. Often she gathered wild-flowers for the breakfast table, and taking it altogether, these early morning rambles were the best part of Hermione's day.

On this particular occasion, she decided for a stroll along the shore on the eastern side of the bay, and as the place looked promising for birds,

she took her gun and a game-bag containing a few cartridges. As she went on deck the quartermaster told her that Captain Heldstrom had gone ashore on some business of the vessel, for Captain Bell had announced that the *Shark* was in for a couple of weeks continually under way, and it was generally understood that this was a sporting attempt to shake off the Pilot-fish. In fact, bets as to the success of the undertaking were already in process of registry.

Olesen helped her into her skiff, and Hermione pulled away in the direction of the beach, reflecting naughtily to herself that since Heldstrom was ashore she might take advantage of the fact to have a look at the salt marsh on the other side of a strip of dwarf pines growing almost to the water's edge. The night before she had observed flocks of snipe and plover circling this marsh, also a bunch of curlew, and being a very good shot, she did not see what was to prevent her from getting a good bag. True, the whole place was preserved by the Shoal Harbour Gun and Fish Club, of which her father was not a member, but to Hermione this fact merely added zest to her expedition.

Halfway to the beach she passed within about

two hundred yards of the *Daffodil*, at which she looked curiously. Nobody was in sight, and the dinghy was hanging out astern. "Lazy beast!" thought Hermione, with the contempt of the early riser for the sloths who are still in bed.

She fetched up at the beach, a good mile from the *Shark*, and leaped ashore, grapnel in one hand and her little double-barrelled gun in the other. The tide was well out, and on reaching a point whence she could look over into the little lagoon, with its encircling strip of marsh, Hermione could see several flocks of plover and big snipe weaving here and there, like motes of dust eddying in the breeze, while their clear whistlings reached her, sharp and sweet in the morning air.

She passed quickly over the crest of the beach and hurried toward a point some quarter of a mile distant, where the pine-scrub grew down to skirt the sedge. As the tide was far out, Hermione judged that, in all probability, the sedge was full of feeding birds, so she loaded her gun and started in to beat out the rim of the marsh.

Scarcely had she gone fifty feet when up sprang a big yellow-leg snipe, rising straight in the air as though propelled less by its wings than the spring from the long, powerful legs. He was not

to be missed under the conditions. Hermione's gun flew to her shoulder, her quick eye glanced along the shining barrel, and making quite sure, she fired. The very centre of the charge found the unfortunate bird, and down it dropped, straight as a plummet.

Another rose to the left. Hermione fired and missed. The two reports had aroused the marsh, however, and the air was filled with flying birds and their shrill, startled calls. A bunch of splendid golden plover, rising from the other side of the lagoon, began to circle the place, and Hermione, her breath coming quickly and her eyes like sapphires, drew back into the shelter of the pines. Straight toward her came the plover; then, within easy range, Hermione stepped suddenly from her blind and threw up her gun. The birds immediately bunched, as she knew they would, and for a moment appeared to pause undecided in their flight. Picking a plover in the centre of the bunch, Hermione fired; then, as the flock swerved, she fired again. It was a splendid opportunity, and for a moment Hermione held her breath at the results of her shot. Plover seemed literally to rain from the sky. Some were quite dead, others merely winged, and as they fell high

up where the grass was short, Hermione was very busy for a few moments, loading and beating about for the wounded.

One bird escaped into the tall grass. It seemed useless to look for him, so with her game-bag bulging with the prizes already secured, Hermione decided that, since she had been making a good deal of a fusillade and the place was, after all, a preserve, it might be just as well modestly and hastily to withdraw. Also, to tell the truth, the sight of the beautiful dead birds, their glorious plumage stained and blood-soaked, rather sickened her. It was quite one thing to shoot at a flying bird and another to pursue him with relentless ferocity when a wounded fugitive upon the ground, finally to secure his mangled and bloody corpse. Hermione found herself suddenly sickened with the sport. The thought of the wounded little plover hiding in the sedge, perhaps dying slowly of its hurts, gave her a very uncomfortable sensation in her throat. For the instant she felt a hot desire to fling her gun into the marsh and hunt no more.

"I'm finished . . ." she said, aloud. "Hereafter I stick to the clay-pigeon trap on the *Shark's* quarter-deck. This is a nasty business."

Filled with remorse she took one of the plover from her game-bag and stood for a moment looking at it as it lay in her hand. The tears sprang suddenly to her eyes. Here was a little creature which a moment before had been so joyously full of life, now a sad, bloodstained martyr to the lust of killing. Hermione stamped her small, sandalled foot.

"It's downright wicked . . ." she cried aloud.

"Yeah . . ." came a harsh, nasal voice from directly behind her; "it *air* daownright wicked . . . to shoot on posted graound."

Sadly startled, Hermione swung about and beheld a tall, bleak, forbidding figure, whose harsh, Yankee face was quite lacking in the dry, semi-humorous quality which is to be found in so many of his type, and which the irony of his words might have led one to expect. On the contrary, it was a cruel, sneering face, with small, swinish eyes and thin, straight lips, smooth-shaven and of the expression which one associates with the witch-burners of earlier days.

The man carried no gun, but held in one hand a stout cudgel. His costume was that of the vicinity, but above the visor of his battered ship's cap were the letters:—"S.H.G. & F.C." Her-

mione understood at once that he was a game-keeper.

The blood rushed to her face. It is always embarrassing to be taken in the act of conscious wrong-doing, but particularly so when one happens to be a young lady in a very syncopated bathing suit. Moreover, there was a quality in the man's regard which angered and embarrassed her; a sort of sneering contempt, such as a brutal officer of the law might direct toward some depraved unfortunate who was dead to all common decency. Hermione suddenly felt as one does in some silly dream where one finds one's self in the middle of a ball-room or addressing a public meeting in a night-gown. Worst of all, she knew that she was in the wrong.

The game-keeper looked her up and down, slowly and with insulting deliberation. Hermione felt her embarrassment and fright give way to anger.

"Well . . ." said she, "what do you want?"

"What do I want, hey? Wa'al, fust off I want that gun o' your'n and them birds. After that, I want you to take a leetle walk with me and talk a mite to the sup'tendent. That's what I want, young woman."

Hermione stared. She had had a vague idea

that, if discovered by any of the club people, the worst that could happen would be the indignity of getting "warned off." Even this, she had thought, would probably be done politely and with due apologies. But to be haled like a thief before the superintendent . . . and that in her bathing suit, was so extreme a measure as to arouse her ridicule and anger.

"Indeed!" said she, scornfully. "You don't want very much, do you?"

The man scowled. "I don't want no more than what I'm a-goin' to git!" he answered.

Hermione's eyes began to darken. The rich blood glowed through her clear olive skin.

"You think so?" she retorted. "Then let me tell you that you will get nothing but my name and address. I am Miss Bell, and my father is Captain Bell, of the schooner-yacht *Shark*. If the club wants to do anything about this it can go ahead and do it."

The game-keeper gave her a sullen look.

"The club is goin' to do somethin' abaout it," said he, "and it's goin' to do it right naow and through me. I'm the game-warden, and I got my orders. You'll hev to come along o' me to the sup'ntendent, and that's all there is abaout it.

Like's not he'll let ye off with a warnin' . . . that's none o' my affair. So hand over that gun and come along, quiet and peaceable."

"Look here," cried Hermione, fiercely, "do you think I'm going to be taken in like a thief?"

"Wa'al . . . ye air a thief, ain't ye? Them birds belong to the club."

Hermione stamped her foot. The man's ugly manner was beginning to get away with her temper, never any too docile under provocation.

"Take your old birds!" said she, and tumbled them out upon the ground. "And let me tell you that when I go back and Captain Heldstrom learns how I've been treated, he'll come over here and wring your neck as if it belonged to one of those snipe! And if you think I'm going with you . . . like this . . ."

Anger stifled her speech at the mere idea. The game-keeper hunched his shoulders with a sneer.

"If you can come ashore half naked to shoot the club's snipe and plover," said he, "it won't hurt ye none to go a mite further and see the sup'tendent . . ." His voice took an impatient rasp. "Come, I've jawed here long enough . . . will you come, 'r hev I got to drag ye tha'ar by main force?"

He took a step toward her. Hermione, light on her feet as a Spartan girl, might have saved herself by flight. But the sneering brutality of the man had torn from her the last, lingering grip she had upon a temper which had many times been the cause of her undoing. With an inarticulate little cry she sprang back, and scarcely realising what she did, threw the gun to her shoulder.

"You beast!" she cried, through her set teeth. "You try to lay hand on me and I'll blow your head off!"

Now, the game-keeper, surly brute though he may have been, came of stern and rigid Puritan stock, and once having decided upon what was his duty, meant to carry it out at all costs. He saw that the superb young huntress in front of him was beside herself with fury, and he fully realised that he was taking a terrific chance of being terribly wounded if not killed in his tracks. In spite of this, though the colour faded under his mahogany tan, his lean jaw set squarely, lips tightened, and he began to walk steadily toward Hermione.

He was within three paces when the girl heard a brushing noise in the pines, directly behind her. The game-keeper stopped short, and Hermione,

who had raised her gun to cover his chest, saw his eyes travel past her to fill with amazement at something which he saw beyond. Half-fainting and with knees that tottered under her, the girl turned to look upon a splendid, Olympic figure standing against the dark background of the pines.

“The Pilot-fish!” gasped Hermione, under her breath.

She lowered the gun, and stood with her legs swaying under her unsteadily, staring dumbly at Applebo. Vaguely, she felt that he had arrived barely in time to save her from committing a very terrible act, though whether or not she would actually have pulled the trigger is doubtful. The chances are that at the critical moment Hermione would either have flung aside the gun or else fired in the air, and then very likely would have had a fit of hysterics, which might have proved more alarming to the harsh longshoreman than a whole battery of weapons.

Applebo stood for a moment looking from the girl to the man, his eyebrows, which were very bushy for one of his youth, drawn down over his yellow eyes, and a straight line cut vertically between them. At first glance he gave the impres-

sion of a beautifully chiselled statue in light bronze. He was clad in a swimming costume which would have been quite *de rigueur* on any beach, but the material, originally some shade of yellow or sienna, had finally acquired the tone of the sun-tanned skin. Yet there was nothing startling or offensive in effect, for so beautifully was the strong, lithe body moulded that it suggested less a mortal man than some splendid, pagan demi-god.

Applebo stepped forward to Hermione's shoulder . . . and the group became complete. God and goddess they looked, she dark, tropical, vivid of colouring; he a sort of golden-hued Apollo. So striking was the effect and so beautiful that even the harsh, unlovely warden may have felt certain rudimentary stirrings of appreciation.

"Gosh-all-sufficiency!" he growled. "Thar's the he-on! Ain't it the fashion to wear clothes no more?"

"Shut your face!" quoth Applebo, unpoetically. "What d'ye mean by bothering this lady? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Huh! . . ." growled the keeper; "you're a *nice* one to talk about bein' ashamed, ain't ye? You and your fee-male critter . . ."

Hermione, still staring in a fascinated way at Applebo, caught the sudden flame in the amber eyes. Something swept past her with a rush like the charge of a Nubian lion. There was a flash of bare limbs, a snarl or two, the flutter of clothing, and a body which looked all arms and legs gyrating in the air . . . and there was the keeper rolling over and over grotesquely as a shot rabbit and, a little to one side, stood Applebo, his body half bent, big arms crooked, and the yellow mane hanging about his ears, watching the fallen man like a cat about to spring.

The keeper scrambled to his feet and stood for a moment pale and tottering, one hand on the other shoulder and a scowl on his deep-lined face.

“Pull your freight . . .!” said Applebo, in his deep bass, “or I’ll tear your ugly head off!”

Thus, no doubt, may Achilles have admonished Agamemnon, though Homer puts the speech in different words. The game-keeper was no coward, but neither was he a fool, and although his tawny antagonist had not struck him, the sensations of the contact were those of disputing the right of way with a rapidly moving motor-car. The keeper looked the situation over, but could

see no good in it. Moreover, he saw a sudden yellow flame in the blinking eyes fastened upon him. Without a word the man turned and slouched off into the pines.

Applebo glanced quickly at Hermione.

"Sit down!" said he. "You look white."

Hermione's usually robust limbs seemed to collapse beneath her, and she dropped to the pine-strewn sand.

"You got here just in time!" said she, tremulously. "I might have shot him."

"I doubt it," said Applebo, "your gun muzzle was weaving figure eights. It would have served him right if you had . . . and I'd have sworn to anything."

Hermione laughed hysterically, then glanced up at the poet. He was standing a couple of paces away, his arms folded on his chest, his eyes looking out across the marsh.

"It's silly of me to be so upset . . ." said Hermione, and covered her face with her hands. "I'll be all right in a minute."

"Did you know the place was posted?" asked Applebo.

"Yes . . ."

"Then you really haven't any kick coming."

"What . . .!" Hermione's hands dropped to her sides, and she stared at him in amazement. Applebo glanced back indifferently, and she scarcely recognised the sleepy face and blinking eyes.

He pointed to the birds which she had tumbled out of her game-bag.

"Taken with the goods . . . and I must say, you did pretty well for three shots. Do you like to kill things? It seems rather awful to me . . . especially in a woman, to slaughter little birds and animals for fun. And I suppose you would raise an awful howl about vivisection."

Hermione sat bolt upright. The colour came back to her pale cheeks, and her violet eyes began to darken with anger. All sense of faintness was swept away as if by magic. Applebo was not looking at her; he was standing straight as a young poplar, his shoulder turned to her, sleepily contemplating the marsh.

"If you feel that way about it," said Hermione, hotly, "I wonder you came to my rescue."

"I was rescuing the game-keeper. Besides, I am under obligation to you people on the *Shark* for letting me tag you around. What a lovely bit of colour over there, on the other side of the

lagoon! Sometimes I wish that I were a painter instead of a poet. However, if I can't paint it I can write an ode to it when I get back aboard my boat."

"Why don't you write a satire on women sportsmen?"

"That would not be polite. Besides, the idea is not an agreeable one. The thought of Diana has always been unpleasant to me."

"You are not very gallant."

"Gallantry," said the poet, "is the vain demonstration of superior effectiveness on the part of the male. It is more complimentary to accept a woman on the same footing."

"Do you call bombarding her with silly verses 'accepting her on the same footing'?" snapped Hermione, whose astonishment was giving way to irritation.

"Ah . . ." There came the slightest flicker from Applebo's blinking eyes. "So Hermione has told you that I have been sending her verses? I had an idea, for some reason, that she would keep it to herself."

He continued his contemplative observation of the marsh. Hermione gasped and stared. For whom did he take her?

"Hermione did not tell anybody," she managed to say.

"But you guessed? That is better. I am glad that Hermione did not tattle . . . even though she sent back all of my verses."

Hermione did not at once reply. She was busily trying to adjust to her mind the idea that this extraordinary individual, who for three months had been sending her impassioned love-poems, did not even know her by sight!

"Why did you write verses to Hermione?" she asked. "Because her name rhymed with 'sea' and 'thee' and 'lea' and 'me'?"

Applebo turned to regard her with a flicker of interest.

"You are rather quick on a rhyme yourself, aren't you?" he observed. "No, I wrote verses to Hermione because I was in love with her."

"Indeed . . .!"

"Yes, I fell in love with her at first sight."

Hermione leaned forward, clasped her hands in front of her shapely legs, and looked at the poet through narrowed lids. The colour had returned, and her violet eyes were beginning to dance mischievously. Mr. Applebo was not looking at her. Indeed, she had already observed this peculiar

disinclination on his part, and it puzzled her.

"Are you still in love with Hermione?" she asked.

"No; she sent back my verses."

"How did you happen to fall in love with her?"

"It was last winter. Walking down Fifth Avenue to my club for breakfast, I sometimes overtook her. An acquaintance who joined me one day told me who she was. You were all down south at the time, and Hermione was stopping with your aunt. I fell in love with her walk. *Vera incessu patuit dea . . .*" He threw her one of his brief glances. "Your walk is rather like hers; a sort of family resemblance."

"But less graceful . . .?"

"You are more of a mortal maid."

"Which is a way of saying more of a lump!" snapped Hermione. "Do you know which of the others *I* am?"

"That is too easy," said Applebo, sleepily. "You are Cécile, the beauty of the family."

"Thank you."

"And the flirt . . . so it is said."

"My reputation is as bad as that?"

"Everybody knows you smashed up Hunting-

ton Wood. He is one of the few men whom I care to claim as a friend. You have broken up others, too, have you not?"

"I wonder you dare to talk to me," said Hermione.

"I would like to be smashed up. It would help my verse. If you don't mind, I believe I will transfer my devotion to you. This entails no obligation on your part . . . except to read my verses."

Hermione stared up at him suspiciously. Applebo was standing as straight as a mast, his fine profile turned to her. Hermione made a little motion as though to rise. If the poet observed it he gave no sign, and she was obliged to scramble to her feet without the aid of the strong grasp which, for some peculiar reason, she craved. Up she sprang, a dark flush on either cheek and her red lips pouting. Hermione was not accustomed to such neglect. Her crimson-turbaned head came a little above the poet's shoulder. Still his eyes evaded her.

"I don't know that I am so keen for a cavalier who thinks more of his verse than he does of its object," said she.

"That's because you are a flirt," said Applebo.

"Really, though, it would be a good moral tonic for you."

"To receive love-poems?"

"From a man who was in love with you purely in the abstract."

"But where's the fun?"

"That's so . . ." Applebo assented, and looked at her with slightly more interest as at one suggesting a new idea. Something in Hermione's eyes seemed to catch his own and hold them. The sleepy lids opened a little wider and a golden flame darted out toward the deep violet ones so close to his own. Inflammable stuff it must have found, yet it did not tarry to set this alight, but coursed on until Hermione felt it tingling through every nerve and fibre. It was quite a new sensation, this, yet carried with it something anciently familiar, so that while startled she was not shocked, but merely confused and rendered slightly incoherent in her thoughts. And then, as though this were not liberty enough, here came Applebo's deep bass, resonant yet soft as the purr of a cat, stealing in to assault her reason through another breach, the auditory one. Hermione, for the second time that day, found her usually stable impulses all adrift.

"You are uncommonly lovely," said Applebo.
"What a pity that you must be such a coquette.
Is Hermione like that?"

Hermione stamped her little sandalled foot.

"Do you take everything on hearsay?" she snapped. "One would give you credit for more originality."

"That is the reason I am so surprised. You do not look ruthless. But then . . ." He glanced back at the lagoon, "one can never tell. No doubt, it is not your fault. You have probably been horribly spoiled. Most men would wait to spoil you."

"Would you?"

"As long as you were good."

"And if I were bad?"

There was a short silence. "I think," said Applebo, "that it is time that you were getting back aboard the *Shark*; your people might be anxious."

Hermione bit her lips with vexation. She had quite forgotten everything but the poet.

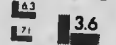
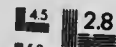
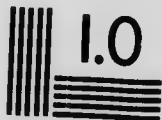
"You are quite right," said she, icily.

"I will walk with you as far as your boat," said Applebo.



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CHAPTER V

HERMIONE glanced down at the birds lying upon the sand.

"Since I have so wickedly and unfemininely slain them," said she, "I might as well take them along."

"Yes," Applebo assented; "besides, they are evidence against you."

Hermione tossed her head. "That makes no difference. I shall not deny having shot them. If I am a flirt and a poacher and a cruel and ruthless slayer, I am at least honest!"

"When caught," amended Applebo. He gathered up the plover, tossed them into the sack, and slung it on his shoulder, then took Hermione's gun from her slightly resisting hands.

"I can carry it . . ." she said.

"Let me," answered the poet. "It offends my sense of fitness to see you with a weapon in your hands. You do not need it; your eyes are quite enough."

"You have a singular gift for involved compliments," said Hermione.

"These are only truths, and the truth is al-

ways involved when told to a woman. That is the reason why so few of us tell it."

"Do you tell it?"

"In part. I find that more deceptive than lying." He turned, as though to walk back toward the beach. Hermione, newly-vexed that he should be the one to bring the interview to a close, took a pace which carried her past and ahead of him. The poet made no effort to catch her up. He strolled on, with the nonchalance of one taking a solitary ramble. Occasionally he paused to admire the early morning colours over the sea and marsh.

Several paces ahead of him Hermione paused and looked back over her shoulder. The poet was regarding her contemplatively. His eyes met hers and he smiled.

"You *are* spoiled, aren't you?" said he.

"In what way?" Hermione demanded, hotly.

"In every way, it seems to me." Applebo regarded her thoughtfully. "Let's hurry. I want to write a poem about . . . about . . . lovely, conscious things that . . ."

"Come on, then . . ." Hermione interrupted. "You make me tired. Let's hurry back and you can write your silly poem and go into ecstasies

over your æsthetic sensibilities . . . just as my father does over his cooking, and, Heaven knows, a worse cook never spoiled a broth!"

"What!" cried Applebo. "But that's not fair! Have you ever seen any of my verses?"

"No," replied Hermione, greatly exulting in the lie.

"Then you are not fair . . . naturally. But then, if you were, you would not be truly feminine. Never try to be. It is the secret of mondaine failure . . . to be fair. As you have probably felt, instinctively . . . being too young to have found it out in any other way. I will write a poem about you. I will call it 'The Petulant Poppy' . . ."

"Help . . .!" gasped Hermione.

"Don't you like the title?"

"But why 'Poppy'?"

"You look like a poppy . . . with your black head and red kerchief. There are other reasons . . . certain things connected with poppies. They are full of dope. How is it that you are permitted to knock around at this hour without a duenna?"

"I am not," Hermione replied. "This is strictly against the rules, and there is a bad time

in store for me when I have to face Uncle Chris."

"Who is 'Uncle Chris'?"

"He is our sailing-master. Uncle Chris Heldstrom . . . What's the matter?"

For the poet had stopped short in his tracks and was staring at her with an expression which Hermione found almost startling. The long eyelashes, which were several shades darker than his tawny hair, swept up, opening to their fullest width, and the yellow eyes blazed at the girl with a sudden, vivid intensity. Hermione, startled and fascinated, stared back in wonder, and under her inquiring gaze the blood faded from the face of the poet, to leave it of a distressing pallor.

But only for an instant or two did this last. Back came the rich, ruddy saffron; the eyelashes swept down, and the poet caught a deep breath and blinked at her, then smiled. The transformation was like that which one sees in a cat watching a canary, then suddenly surprised by some member of the household.

"What made you look like that?" demanded the girl.

Applebo blinked several times, then shrugged.

"Did I look surprised? It struck me as a bit odd that you should call your sailing-master

'Uncle Chris,' and be in dread of his displeasure. I have seen him. He is merely a Norwegian sailor, is he not?"

"He is that and more," retorted Hermione. "He is the most splendid man that ever lived! The sort of stuff that is sung of in old sagas . . ."

"What do you know about sagas?"

"A great deal. Uncle Chris has taught me a lot about Scandinavian legend and folk-lore. He is one of those big-hearted, big-souled men with the high courage of an early sea-king and the heart of a child . . . or better, perhaps, a mother. He has been a mother to my sisters and myself." She glanced curiously at Applebo. As if to evade her scrutiny, he turned away, but not before she had caught a sudden gleam from his amber-eyes, which had darkened again and were almost veiled, in their habitual manner. Hermione also observed that there was a dark, smoky flush, which extended up the strongly-muscled neck, to disappear under the clustering mane about his ears, and that the big chest was rising and falling more forcefully than their easy pace would seem to warrant.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked, curiously.

He turned to her slowly.

"Do you think," he asked, "that your 'Uncle Chris' was ever more than a common sailor, to begin with?"

"Christian Heldstrom was never a 'common' anything!" replied Hermione, with some heat. "But so far as that goes, he was born of a good, though poor, Norwegian family and went to sea because he liked it and had to do something. I know very little about his early history. He does not like to talk about it. Why does it interest you? Are you—like some other people whom I have known—so snobbish as to be shocked that three young ladies should have been nursed and tended and taught deportment by their father's Norwegian sailing-master? Let me tell you, his manners are far better than papa's . . . and papa is an F.F.V.!"

She looked at him truculently. Nothing could arouse Hermione to such quick and torrid resentment as any slight on her beloved "Uncle Chris." Wherefore, she turned her dark, violet eyes challengingly upon the poet.

"You look like a Scandinavian yourself," said she.

"My mother," replied Applebo, "was a cousin to the King of Sweden."

Hermione stopped short to stare at him. Her eyes opened very wide, also her carmine lips were slightly farther apart than strict deportment would approve.

"Really . . . ?" she cried. "And your father . . . ?"

"She married beneath her. It was an infatuation followed by a wedding and an elopement. Of course, she sacrificed her rank. They came to America. It is a long story, and both of my parents are now dead. Applebo is the name of an uncle who made me his heir . . . he was a Swede. I don't know why I am telling you all of this; perhaps it is because I don't want you to think that I am a snob. I would rather you did not tell anybody, if you don't mind."

"Of course not!" replied Hermione. "But I would like to hear more."

"Just now your own affairs are more important. You had better get back aboard as soon as possible or your sailing-master may put you in the brig. What would he say if he saw you walking on the beach with me? It's

rather a delicate situation . . . considering my unsolicited attentions of the past three months."

Hermione's piquant face took on a very rich tone of red. Without answering, she began to walk rapidly toward the beach . . . so rapidly, in fact, that the first few steps carried her on in advance of her companion, who seemed tranquilly determined to set the pace himself. Hermione glanced back over her shoulder.

"Since you are in such a hurry to get rid of me," she said, "why don't you hurry?"

"I was admiring your walk. It must be a family accomplishment . . . inherited from your mother, no doubt. Your father walks like a duck."

"Thank you . . . on the part of all of us. Does my walk remind you of Hermione?"

"Not in the least. Hermione walks like a gossamer borne by the breeze."

"And I stump along like a watch-officer."

"No. Your feet are coquetting with the earth. Hermione had no feet. She was borne by invisible wings. I rather fancy that every part of you coquettes with everything it touches. You were making love to the snipe you had just

slaughtered when the game-keeper collared you. I was watching from the sedge."

"You were!" cried Hermione. "And you never interfered . . .?"

"Pardon me . . . I did interfere . . . when I thought that there was a chance of your loading him full of lead. You see, I swam ashore to contemplate the early sunlight on the marsh in order to receive certain impressions which might lead to a poem. Then you came along and spoiled it all . . ."

"Thanks . . ."

"Please do not interrupt. If you don't like what I am telling you, just say so and we will talk of something else. I will tell you how beautiful you are. That is, no doubt, a hackneyed subject, but perhaps I can find a new way of putting it . . ."

"Please don't be silly. Go on. I came along and spoiled it all . . ."

"Utterly. I was chock-a-block with æsthetic appreciation. I was delighting in the smell of salt sedge and piny perfumes, revelling in the music of joyous bird-calls, loving the companionship of snipe and curlew and plover . . . free-winged sea-nomads like myself, exulting in my

human solitude, getting warm after my swim, chewing tobacco . . .”

“What!”

“The fifth sense. I had had no breakfast, and I am very fond of chewing tobacco . . . when alone. Please don't interrupt. Everything was perfect . . . and then *you* came . . .”

“And spoiled it all . . .” Hermione's small nose, already tampering sadly with the classic in its modernly rebellious tip, became even more artistically anarchistic.

“Oh, very well . . .” Applebo's voice expressed polite fatigue. “If you *will* interrupt. I love the shade of your bathing suit. It makes you look like a Nereid . . . who has found a copy of *l'Art et la Mode* chucked off *La Provence*, and got disconcerted with algæ. Shall I describe your ravishing face? Black storm-clouds your hair, and beneath the snow of your forehead falling into the ultramarine sea of your eyes; a sea so deep and fathomless that . . .”

“Shut up!”

“*Pardon . . .*”

“Close your face!” snapped Hermione.

“Very well. Only, it's not my fault. You would shove your oar in . . .”

"Do you think that is a nice way to speak to a lady?"

"I am not talking to a lady. There are lots of ladies. I am talking to a modern reincarnation of Artemis, who, as you probably do *not* know, was the ancient Greek personification of physical sweetness and purity, whom the brutal Romans had the cheek to degenerate into Diana, a bloodthirsty goddess of killing things . . . snipe or plover or game-keepers or pilot-fishes . . . or . . ."

"Oh . . . please . . ." Hermione looked as if about to break down. "Must I remind you that . . . that . . . I've had rather a trying . . . morning of it . . ."

"Cécile . . ." cried the Pilot-fish. "I'm sorry."

Hermione found no particular stimulant in his sorrows, but the "Cécile" acted very tonically. Up went nose and chin again.

"Then drop personalities and go on with what you were saying about the way I spoiled it all. Your æsthetic revels . . . and the tobacco and the rest . . ."

"Well, then," continued Applebo, "I was so content with everything as it was that when you

came and began to kill my little snipe, and spoil their music with a fusillade, and swamp the odours of resin and marsh with fumes of sulphur and saltpetre, and obscure the landscape with smoke and generally put things on the blink”

“That was easy for you”

The poet waved his hand. “I swallowed my little cud”

“What . . . ! Excuse me Pray go on”

“I was wild with indignation. Especially as I recognised you”

“You did . . . ?”

“I said, ‘Here is that pampered beauty, Cécile Bell, not content with breaking up all the men who know her . . . or ought to . . . must cor . . . over here and kill these little birds and smell up the marsh’”

“Oh, come”

“Well . . . that acrid powder, you know. Therefore, when I saw the keeper stalking you, I was tickled to death.”

“And you’d have let him run me in . . . ?”

“I felt like helping. But when he got nasty I sympathised with you. He was right. You were wrong all the way through”

"*Merci!* And you?"

"I was wrong, too. I should have let him take you to the superintendent. It would have done you good in so many different ways."

"Why didn't you . . .?"

Applebo gave her a quick look.

"I couldn't," he said, and looked straight into her eyes.

Hermione's heart gave a sudden, tremendous throb. In that quick little "psychological moment," which lasted only as long as it took their eyes to meet, wonderful changes were wrought. Or perhaps they were not changes, but only the crystallising of instincts and emotions some few thousands of years older than Hermione. At any rate, what scientists would call "empirical symptoms" were most pronounced. Every little dormant cell of the many millions which go to make a Hermione . . . or any of the rest of us . . . suddenly awoke and began to shout for something which was owed it, and for which it felt, for the first time, a strong and immediate need. This is a clumsy way of trying to express what sentimentalists call "love at first sight," which, when all is said, is really no more than the love of a pussywillow for the first promise of warmth to

come, with no consideration of intervening frosts. For good or bad, that was what happened to Hermione, and all of the many queer, complex emotions found their resultant in a quick, primitive impulse of which the keynote was to make the man beside her say, with truth, that nothing really mattered but herself.

This, Mr. Applebo politely declined to do. Having instincts of his own, and a decency peculiar to the cat family, he merely blinked at Hermione and waited for her to start that most ruthless of all duels which cynics have tried to misinterpret as "love."

"Then you only interfered," said Hermione, "because you thought that I might have shot the keeper. It wasn't that you wished to render a service to a woman. It was merely a general humanitarian desire to prevent bloodshed . . . a tragedy."

"Nope."

"What?"

"It wasn't that. You would not have shot him. Never! He would have dragged you weeping and half clothed . . ."

"Never!"

"Yes. That was what I wanted him to do.

But when the time came I changed my mind. At least, I changed my behaviour. My mind is still the same. You were quite in the wrong. The game-keeper was right . . . and meant to obey orders if it cost him his life. But you would not have shot him. I had no real fear of that, and theoretically, I wanted him to march you off and teach you a lesson. But when you threw that despairing look around, something brought me to your aid with a rush. I could have broken his neck without a twinge of compunction. He rather expressed my feeling when he said, ‘. . . tha’ar’s the he-one!’” Applebo laughed. “I felt like that . . . as though I were some wild creature and my mate was in trouble . . . I beg your pardon, Cécile . . .”

Again the rush of emotion, followed by the cold shower. Hermione’s pulses seemed filled with wine and her youthful body with that warm, intoxicating glow, incomprehensible as it was delicious . . . when there came that “Cécile,” and she felt like the hot iron plunged by the smith into his tub of water. No doubt, the tempering process was good for her, but she did not like it, and hissed a little, just as does the glowing metal.

"Then it wasn't chivalry," she snapped, "but a sort of primitive male instinct."

"Absolutely. A woman with a gun and a lot of slaughtered little plover is no inspiring object for chivalry . . . which is, after all, principally a masculine pose. But she may awaken other sentiments. That is what you have done. I no longer regret Hermione and my rejected verses . . . and that reminds me that you have not yet told me that I migl.^t transfer my attentions to you. I think that you are the most lovely creature that I ever saw, and you might awaken lots of tenderness, if you would. I am sure that I could write exquisite things to you. I would feel them, too . . . which I never did toward Hermione . . ."

Poor Hermione! The poet was snatching her from one emotion to another in a manner most upsetting. Pique kept her from telling him then and there that she was not Cécile; that she was Hermione . . . the object of three months' poetic effusion on his part, unrecognised in her true personality and unjustly vilified as a heartless coquette. Instinct told her, however, that the more he abused Cécile and deplored Hermione's heartless conduct, the worse he would feel when

he learned the truth, and Hermione meant that his punishment should be thorough. A full-natured woman inherits from her primitive forbears a good deal of antagonism for the heart-compelling male, and so far Hermione had not struck back. She meant to do so effectively, when the time came. Applebo was awakening her to many new sensations, but she was very far from being conquered.

So she tossed her pretty head and remarked:—

“Verse does not appeal to me except in an impersonal, purely mental sort of way. If that contents you, go ahead and write it by the running foot. Like Hermione, I am not very keen about long-distance devotion. If you transfer your attentions to me, there will be certain responsibilities attached. The first is that you call and meet my family in a purely conventional way.”

Mr. Applebo looked scared.

“Oh . . . in that case . . . perhaps . . . do you suppose that your sister Pauline . . .”

“Paula,” corrected Hermione, icily.

“Paula . . . quite so. I wonder if Paula would mind if . . . if . . .”

Hermione stopped short and stared. The colour flooded her face. She was suddenly the prey of a violent desire to do the man beside her a

physical damage. She felt that she would like to snatch the gun from his hands and bang him over the head with the stock. Applebo looked at her and blinked.

"Don't be angry," said he. "I would never have the nerve to go aboard the *Shark*. I'm an awful coward about most things. Besides, I hate the idea of being listed on your collection. I wonder what you would label me . . ."

"'Fool's gold,'" snapped Hermione.

"That would be unjust to yourself, if I were yours," answered the poet, sleepily. "All love is pure gold . . . but often there is a lot of base metal alloyed. I love you, Cécile." He blinked.

Hermione laughed.

"Then go and smelt out the alloy," said she. "That consists principally of a deep and sincere affection for Mr. Applebo."

She turned to look at him, her head critically aslant. The poet looked back. Hermione's heart began to misbehave again, and a delicious colour burned warmly through her clear, olive skin. Her deep, violet eyes looked almost purple in the crimson sunlight pervading the early morning air. Her chin was slightly raised, and her red lips invitingly apart as she waited for his reply. With-

out in the least suspecting it, Hermione looked like a girl who defies the kiss which she fully intends to get.

Had the poet acted like a man . . . or a scoundrel, as one prefers to look at it . . . and kissed Hermione then and there with that enthusiasm which her prettiness and the situation as a whole appeared to warrant, there is absolutely no telling what might have happened. Instead of which, Mr. Applebo's face grew sleepier, and his eyes blinkier than ever, while the look which he threw at Hermione was full of appreciation of a purely impersonal character.

"Huntington Wood smelted out his alloy," he observed. "Instead of bewailing his ill-fortune and howling for sympathy, he went off and started a Home for Sick Babies. Now he is back again . . . pure metal. Do you suppose that it will do him any good?"

Hermione felt that she would like to employ some of her father's forceful sea-going expressions. Here was Cécile popping up again to spoil everything at the most interesting moment! Yet not for the world would she point out to him his silly mistake. She intended that this disillusionment should come as a *coup de théâtre*, which would

leave the poet in a state of collapse. So she swung smartly on her heel and shrugged.

"Huntington Wood no longer offers his gold . . . and nobody can blame him," said she, and resumed her walk toward the beach.

They skirted the pine-scrub, passed along the edge of the marsh, then crossed the strip of sand and rock to the beach. The tide was at the last of the ebb, and as she glanced toward the spot where she had left her boat, Hermione gave a little cry of dismay.

"Look . . .!" she cried; "it's gone . . .!"

What had happened was so plainly sketched on the open page of the beach that one could run and read. Several yards above the water's edge was indicated the place where Hermione had grounded on landing, as was shown by her own tracks, left from the spot where she had stepped ashore. From farther down the beach came another trail, a man's, running to where the skiff lay, while a long furrow and some deeply gouged foot-prints showed where he had run the skiff down to the water's edge. Here, before the present rim of the tide was reached, all vanished, as though boat and man had taken flight into the air.

Hermione threw a frightened look at Applebo.

The poet was standing straight as an Indian, his bushy eyebrows drawn down, and his lips puckered.

“That swine of a game-keeper . . .!” he growled, in his deep, though husky, bass. “I wish that I had broken his neck. Why didn’t I think about his swiping the boat? I *am* a fool!”

CHAPTER VI

"WHAT shall we do?" asked Hermione.

Applebo looked at her and blinked.

"Can you swim as well as you can row and shoot and walk?" he asked.

Hermione looked out across the dancing waters of the bay.

"It must be a good mile and a half to the *Shark*," said she, slowly. "The yawl is about half the distance, but" . . . the colour flooded her face . . . "even under the circumstances, I should hardly care to swim to her."

"No," said the poet, "that would not do. It is very perplexing."

"Couldn't you swim out to your boat, and come back with the dinghy?" asked Hermione.

"My Finn is ashore with the dinghy, and I have no other boat. I would swim to the *Shark*, but I do not like to leave you here alone. That pig of a keeper probably thinks that he has got us penned, and may be back at any moment with reinforcements. He knows that we would not care to take to the back country in our bathing suits, and besides, this is a promontory and probably

wire-fenced on the side of the mainland. Perhaps the best thing for us to do would be to go straight to the club and see the superintendent. I would enjoy talking to that gentleman."

"No . . . no . . . no!" cried Hermione. "Think of how it would look!"

"You might wait here and let me go alone."

"No . . ." Hermione looked at him thoughtfully. "Are you a very strong swimmer?"

"I am quite at home in the wet."

"Then, let's try for the *Shark*. If I get tired you can take me in tow."

"What distance do you think that you are good for?" asked the poet.

"To the yawl, at least. The chances are that we will be sighted from the *Shark*. In fact, we might make them see us here . . . but I would rather start back. If I play out, you can put me aboard the *Daffodil* and keep on yourself for the schooner."

"All right. It *is* ignominious to be found this way on the beach. I'll hide the gun and game-bag in the bushes at the foot of that tree."

This was quickly accomplished, when the two walked side by side down the sloping beach and

waded slowly into the cold water. Knee-deep, the poet, who was in the lead, turned to Hermione.

"Take it easy," said he, "and don't try to talk. If you feel tired, put one hand on my shoulder and keep paddling. I could tow you all of the way, if need be, but you must swim as far as you can, so as not to get chilled. The water is like ice in the channel."

Hermione looked at him and nodded, and again there swept through her the warm little tingling which defied the chill of the sea. Quite a new sensation this, and one which Hermione was at a loss to comprehend, for the poet irritated even while he attracted her. He had a most vexing manner of talking to without looking at her. One indifferent glance and his yellow eyes were wandering beyond, anywhere except in her direction. Now, apparently waiting for her to take to the water, he was staring sleepily down the beach, interested apparently in a flock of gulls circling about some stranded object. The warm sunlight smote on his yellow mane and threw soft shadows on the bare, saffron-coloured skin, of the texture of velvet, and glowing richly in the high lights. He splashed a little water on his powerful arms, and the long, clean-cut muscles formed shifting

contours to delight a sculptor's eye. A life-sized statue in dull gold looked the poet, beautiful as a demi-god and no more human, for he carried a curious atmosphere of detachment to his surroundings, as though the *milieu* were alien to him and he might, at any moment, betake himself away to his own place. Even for this lovely mortal maid beside him he seemed to show a polite disinterestedness not usually to be found in his ancient prototypes, if we are to believe the classics. Hermione felt this, and it aroused in her a sudden fierce perversity. Again there came that swift desire to waken him out of his sleepy indifference by a physical violence. There were also the traitorous thrills.

"Come on . . ." she said, with such sharp impatience that the poet turned and blinked at her inquiringly. Hermione's blue eyes flashed, and with a sudden spiteful motion of her hand, she sent a shower of the icy water spraying over him. Applebo gasped, laughed gurglingly, and flung himself forward to swim, Hermione following.

Side by side they thrust forward through the clear, cold water. Hermione was swimming prone; the poet lounged along on his side, his head half buried, the floating hair swirling about his ears,

his eyes almost closed. To Hermione he looked as though he were asleep and propelled onward by some involuntary mechanism within. For a hundred yards neither of them spoke. Hermione turned on her side, facing Applebo. The thinnest of amber gleams between the double fringe of eyelashes told that he was watching her.

"You could swim all day, Cécile . . ." said he.

"What right have you to call me 'Cécile'?" snapped Hermione, tired of the constantly recurring error of identity. "Even if I were . . ."

"I call you 'Cécile' and not 'Miss Bell' because the latter is the conventional name, and I do not know you conventionally . . . and never will. Fancy my writing verses to 'Miss Bell'! As we shall never meet, in all probability, after this hour, what does it matter?"

Hermione did not reply. The water seemed to strike her with a certain chill.

"Don't you want to see me again?"

"No. My life now is happy and tranquil. If I saw more of you my fate would, no doubt, be that of so many others. No, Cécile . . . I do not want to see you again."

"But perhaps *I* might care to see *you*."

"You will have the best of me in the verses I shall send you . . ."

"Oh, *hang* the verses . . .!" cried Hermione, and turned on to the other side.

At the end of a hundred yards, she rolled back again. The poet was harmlessly entertaining himself by taking large mouthfuls of water and spouting them into the air. Hermione burst into a ringing laugh. Applebo regarded her with sleepy inquiry.

"You look like a Triton . . . with your cheeks puffed out that way," said she.

"Don't talk," replied the poet. "It adds to the effort of breathing. You look rather like a mermaid, yourself."

Hermione did not answer, and they swam on in silence through the golden August morn. The sensation of cold had passed, and it seemed to the girl that she was of one substance with the sea; of the same essence, the same elemental property, feeling neither warmth nor cold, nor fear, nor fatigue, nor anything that was alien or individual. She found herself a mermaid, at home, and felt that when it pleased her she could leave the surface to explore mysterious green depths far beneath.

He, her companion, was of it too. They were sea-mates; Triton and Nereid, subjects of the great god Poseidon, owing no fealty to any lord of the land, knowing no trammels but the wide boundaries of the ocean, that greater dominion of the world. She looked at Applebo. He appeared to be under the water, rather than upon it, and the yellow eyes rose from the swirl of brine to blink at her with comradeship. Hermione wanted to take his hand that they might plunge together to explore unknown depths . . . never guessing, innocent girl, that she was well on the road to explore depths just as deep and redoubtable.

Well offshore, with their sea-world all about, a sudden odd vibration smote against their vigorous young bodies; a vibration that suggested a sound, felt rather than heard.

"Morning colours . . ." said the poet.
"That's the gun from the Reading Room.
Look!"

He flashed from the water an arm of gleaming gold from which sprang diamonds. Hermione turned upon her face to look toward the yacht flotilla. Down from the trucks of the anchored fleet fluttered the "night-caps," little tongues of black, while pennant and burgee passed them on

their race aloft, and the national ensign, the Stars and Stripes, unfurled lazily from the taffrails. To their ears came, with sweet faintness, the shrilling of the sheaves as the halliards spun through them, while from a big steam-yacht, nearly a mile away, came the merry whistle of a bosun's pipe.

Hermione looked toward the *Daffodil*, then at Applebo.

"Rotten lack of etiquette," said he, and grinned. "I haven't any bunting."

"Why not? Are you a member of no clubs?"

"Oh, yes . . . the New York and the Atlantic. There is bunting below, but I do not fly it because I am merely a parasite . . . a pilot-fish."

Hermione did not answer, for their pace was a smart one and she had need of breath. Presently she asked:—

"How about the tide?"

"It is running flood out here," said Applebo, "otherwise I would not have let you swim. We are in the deep channel now, and the tide is helping. I've been gauging our drift on the shore."

The thought of the cold fathoms beneath sent no slightest chill through Hermione. She was too much a part of it all. Neither was she tired

in the least. They were nearly abreast of the yawl, but seaward. Neither had suggested stopping there. Hermione looked at her companion and wondered how far he could tow her if required. Seized by a sudden impulse, she said:—

“I think that I will rest a little, please.”

He was close to her in two powerful strokes that sent the water swirling in his wake, as though he had been a porpoise. His eyes gave her a swift, questioning look.

“Take my shoulder,” he said. “Do you want to go to the yawl?”

“No,” replied Hermione, and laid her hand on the bare, flashing shoulder offered her.

“Paddle a little so as not to get chilled,” said Applebo, and started unconcernedly ahead. The tug of the heavy muscles under her hand reminded Hermione of the sensation one gets in laying the palm upon the shoulder of a galloping hunter. There was the same iron contraction, tense and quivering, to be followed by the quick relaxation, the whole evenly spaced and rhythmic as the throb of an engine. It seemed impossible that the splendid, human machine could ever tire. For several minutes she clung, resting and revelling also in the sense of being borne onward without effort. But

she was not actually fatigued, and presently released her hold.

"Rested . . . ?" he asked, looking back.

"Quite."

"Good for the rest of the voyage?"

"Yes . . . and if I am not, you are. Why did you never go in for athletics?"

"They do not interest me. Games always made me feel like a performing lion."

It occurred to Hermione that they must have made him rather look like one also.

"Football?" she asked.

"I tried it . . . but I used to get thinking and forget to play. Besides, I do not like to get banged about . . . that is, merely for vanity. If it were to get something I wanted, it would be different."

Hermione did not reply. She watched him curiously as he lounged along. Applebo looked back and smiled. His eyes reflected the swirling green; his hair was the colour of the golden-brown sea-weed and suggested this substance as one sees it trailing from a rock in a clear tide-way. He looked more than ever like a Triton, thought the girl. All he needed was a shell-trumpet and a trident. She wondered if so pagan a

creature could possess the elements of real, human feeling. At least, she confessed a little ruefully, he could arouse them!

She herself seemed to be imbued with an unnatural strength. Her long, athletic limbs smote the water with unflagging vigour . . . more than that, with an exhilaration.

Just what might have been the reaction from this physical exertion had she swum the whole course, one cannot say, for the last third was destined to be uncompleted. Applebo's trained ear, buried in the brine, caught the rattle of boat-falls and the whine of sheaves, and he raised his dripping head to stare toward the *Shark*.

"Rest . . ." said he to Hermione. "Here comes your gig. They have sighted us. It's just as well; you might have got overtired."

"Bother!" said Hermione. "Now you will see me catch it from Uncle Chris." She looked in Applebo's face, which was close to hers, and laughed. Then her blue eyes opened very wide.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "You look frightened to death!"

"Do I? Put your hand on my shoulder and rest . . ." Hermione thought the voice had an odd, strained note. She took his shoulder,

then looked at him curiously. The poet's face, naturally a little pallid already from the immersion, had suddenly become of a sickly, bleached-out pallor, which suggested the belly of a dead fish. Hermione was seized by a sudden alarm.

"Are you tired . . . ?" she asked, and loosed her hold of his shoulder.

Applebo gave a rather forced laugh. The colour began to return again. Then, just as Hermione expected, he assumed his sleepy, blinking expression.

"What *was* it?" Hermione demanded.

"A little cramp in the sole of the foot. It's gone now. Did you never have one?" He reached for her hand, and placed it on his shoulder again. "They are very painful . . . but not dangerous," said he.

Their faces were very close, each to the other. Hermione looked at him questioningly. The poet smiled, and something in the flash of the strong, even teeth set Hermione's heart to thumping in the same undisciplined manner that she had previously experienced on the shore. Applebo pushed the wet hair back from his forehead. As Hermione looked at him, his amber eyes seemed to darken.

"This is 'good-bye' . . ." he said.

"It is your own fault."

"No . . . my misfortune. There are reasons . . . besides the silly ones I have given you. This is good-bye."

Hermione was conscious of a sudden fatigue. It was as though she had been under the effect of a stimulant which was suddenly withdrawn. The chill of the water struck suddenly through her. Applebo saw the light fade from the deep, violet eyes, and the sweet mouth droop a little at the corners.

"I'm *so* tired . . ." said Hermione, in a plaintive little voice.

He took her free hand and placed it on his other shoulder. Both were slowly treading water, though depending more for buoyancy on their splendid young lungs, trained to the exercise. The boat was coming on rapidly, not over three hundred yards away.

Their eyes met and clung for an instant. Those of the poet were like aquamarines, but in Hermione's there was a mistiness not of the sea. They faltered, dropped, then raised to his as if drawn by some subtle force.

"Good-bye . . ." said the poet.

"Good-bye . . . and . . . and thank you very much for . . . for your kindness . . ."

She paused, startled at a sudden clear flame, the same amber light that had been in the yellow eyes when Applebo had turned to her after flinging to earth the game-keeper.

"You darling . . . !" cried the deep, throaty voice, and before Hermione knew what was happening, she felt herself drawn closely to him, and a pair of wet, salty lips were crushed for the instant against her own. Her head fell back; her eyes closed; the water swirled about her ears. Then she felt two strong arms supporting her beneath the shoulders, raising her bodily from the jealous grip of the sea. Blindly she took a stroke or two, then looked dazedly at the poet.

"You . . . you kissed me . . ."

"Yes, Cécile . . . it was only good-bye."

Hermione could find nothing to say, but indeed there was no time. Up crashed the gig under the powerful strokes of the crew. Heldstrom's anxious eyes had noted the drooping of the red-coiffed head, and his thunderous, "Pull, you lubbers . . . pull!" reached the swimmers from a distance. Fortunately, the kiss could not be ob-

served, the two heads having been directly in line during this indiscreet performance.

The boat foamed alongside. "Vat's dis . . . vat's dis?" cried Heldstrom. He leaned over the gunnel and lifted Hermione aboard, when she sank down on a thwart, a limp, dejected mermaid, gazing mutely at the poet. "Vere is your boat?" demanded Heldstrom. "Vat you mean, swimmin' ar'round in der vater mit dis feller . . .?"

He turned to glare at Applebo . . . and his jaw dropped. Hermione saw him pass his hand across his eyes in a dazed sort of way. The poet blinked back at him inscrutably, but it struck Hermione that his face was very white, and she wondered if he had the cramp in his foot again.

"You vas . . . der Pilot-vish . . .?" said Heldstrom, in an odd, tremulous voice.

"I am Mr. Applebo," answered the poet, in his silky bass. "The game-keeper yonder confiscated Miss Bell's boat. He sneaked around and swiped it. You had better get her aboard before she takes a chill."

Heldstrom was still staring in the same dazed, bewildered way.

"Vere . . . I seen you . . .?" he demanded.

"Have you seen me . . .?" retorted Applebo.
"I don't remember *you*."

Heldstrom seemed to recover himself with an effort.

"You comin' mit us?" he asked of Applebo.

"No, thanks. I am not tired. I will swim to my yawl."

"You won't take a cramp . . .?" cried Hermione.

"Oh, no. That will not return. Good-bye . . . and I hope you will be none the worse for your long swim."

"Good-bye . . ." said Hermione, faintly, and added, with the slightest catch in her voice, "and I'm not Cécile . . . I'm Hermione!"

But, alas! these words were lost to the Pilot-fish, whose yellow head was buried with his long, powerful overhanded stroke.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Mr. Huntington Wood, at luncheon aboard the *Shark*, had asserted that the real explanation for the extraordinary devotion of the Pilot-fish was a sentimental emotion, inspired by one of the Misses Bell, Cécile found much matter for her maiden meditation.

Not for one instant did it occur to this self-satisfied young lady that the cause of this infatuation might be one of her sisters. Paula was not the sort of girl of whom one would think in this connection, and Hermione was still regarded by Cécile as a mere child, though, as a matter of fact, the younger sister's superior height and dark colouring might readily have caused the careless observer to consider her the elder. Cécile was apt to be somewhat careless in her observation of anything outside of her own interests. Wherefore, she complacently appropriated Mr. Applebo in her mind as her own enamoured swain.

For all of her innumerable conquests, Cécile found, in the peculiar methods of the Pilot-fish, something singularly piquant. Here was a lover

who asked absolutely nothing in return for his passion. He merely desired to be in her general neighbourhood, to accomplish which he put at inconvenience nobody but himself. To be sure, many others had striven for this same result, but these had insisted on a gradual constriction of what might be considered a "general neighbourhood," eventually finding the length of a transome all too wide a separation. Where Cécile had previously been compelled to throw cold water on her all too ardent suitors, here was one who insisted on at least a half mile of this pure element, in varying depths, between them.

Thinking it over in the privacy of her room, Cécile decided that this point of view was just as extreme, of its kind, as that which demanded but a single deck-chair for two people. Moreover, for Mr. Applebo to choose his own line of conduct in the matter was not good discipline. Cécile was in the habit of herself outlining the régime to be observed in affairs of this kind, and she did not care to have it prescribed for her. In addition to this, Cécile had been very much interested in the distant views which she had got of the poet, and was curious to see him at close range. All that Wood had told them of his eccentric per-

sonality had served to sharpen this interest, and the girl found herself wondering if perhaps *he* might not be the one who was to take captive her heart and her desire. She had always felt that the man to do this would not be the ordinary individual. It gave her a very lively emotion to picture this fair young viking threading his way through fog and storm, reef and shoal, drawn onward by his unselfish, unchanging devotion to her ideal self. Cécile decided that such fidelity merited at least the reward of some slight token of her appreciation.

Wherefore, she decided to attach Mr. Applebo forthwith, to keep him on the end of her line until she made up her mind just what she wanted to do with him. She came to this conclusion shortly after awakening, and she was lazily studying out some plan for bringing the Pilot-fish within reach of her landing-net, when there descended through the skylight of her room the sound of the quartermaster's voice, as in low but excited tones he conveyed to Captain Heldstrom certain information regarding "der Bilot-vish . . ."

Cécile lay listening, and a moment later heard Heldstrom's gruff voice say, "Yoomp back in der gig . . . get a move on you, now . . . lower

away, dere . . .” followed by the squeal of the falls and the splash of the boat as it took the water just outside her port-hole. Cécile looked out, but could see nothing of interest. She was still looking when she heard Olesen growl something about, “Miss Hermione svimmin’ a r’race mit der Bilot-vish . . .”

Cécile was “brought up all standing” at the coupling of these names. She sprang out of bed, slipped on her kimono, and hastened to the companionway, where she thrust up through the hatch a very lovely face, flushed and still dewy with sleep, a heavy, opalescent chevelure which seemed to gather all of the sunlight in its vicinity, and two eyes of a deep, misty grey.

Even as she looked, the gig, with Heldstrom in the stern, leaped clear of the schooner’s side.

“What’s the matter, Olesen?” cried Cécile, alarmed.

The quartermaster turned, with a tug at his watch-cap.

“It vas Mees Hermione out dere svimmin’ ar’round mid der Bilot-vish. Dot’s mighty funny. She vent away mit her skiff, and here she comes back mitoudt it und der Bilot-vish. Dot’s awful funny.”

He handed her his glasses, which Cécile raised to her eyes. The faces of the two swimmers were quite distinct, but as she looked Hermione's head was eclipsed by that of Applebo. Cécile could see that they were apparently treading water and waiting for the boat.

"How very odd!" exclaimed Cécile, sharply. "What is that mad girl up to now, I wonder?"

Much disturbed, she laid down the glass . . . just in time to miss the cream of the performance! Had Cécile witnessed that good-bye kiss it would have changed considerably subsequent events, and have saved herself much wear and tear. But when she looked again, Heldstrom was lifting Hermione into the gig, and she caught the flash of Applebo's hand as he flourished it in farewell. Cécile then went below and waited impatiently for her sister's arrival on board.

A few minutes later she heard outside a light step and the swish of a wet bathing skirt as Hermione hurried to her room.

"Is that you, Hermione?" called Cécile.

"Yes." Hermione looked in at Cécile's door. Her face was quite pale, and her eyes looked almost black.

"What *have* you been up to?" cried Cécile.

"I'll tell you all about it when I've changed . . ."

"Can't you relieve my curiosity a little, at once? What became of your boat . . . and Applebo . . ."

"Oh, well . . ." Hermione gave a brief and rather impatient outline of her adventure. Cécile listened attentively.

"How dreadful!" she exclaimed. "I hope that this will teach you not to run about alone in that wild way. Now go and take off your wet things and get a pot of good hot coffee. You look very badly."

It occurred to Hermione that, since she looked so badly, her sister might have sacrificed her own curiosity and let her change before telling her tale. But she was feeling rather gone, and with very little fight left in her body, so she turned and hurried off without a word.

Her maid gave her a vigorous rub-down, then put her to bed, and brought coffee, with eggs and bacon, which Hermione devoured with great enthusiasm, despite the varying emotions through which she had so recently passed. Her breakfast finished, Hermione fell into a deep and refreshing sleep, from which she was awakened a couple of

hours later by a stamping and roaring overhead, which she recognised as proceeding from her father, and from which she gathered that he was being put in possession of the facts concerning her adventure. This was indeed the case, but in the meantime there had arrived from the diplomatic superintendent of the gun club a note of apology and regret for the too great zeal of his minion.

Wherefore, balked in his opportunity to raise a tremendous row, Captain Bell was working off steam in storming about and vituperating the club, Shoal Harbour, the State of Maine, the Pilot-fish, Hermione, and generally, as sailors put it, "cursing everything a foot high and a minute old."

This innocent pastime exhausted, it occurred to him that, after all, he owed a duty to the Pilot-fish, but for whom Hermione would have been subjected to great indignity. From the account given him by Cécile, Mr. Applebo had apparently done a hammer-throw with the game-keeper, then swum off to the schooner with Hermione trailing from his shoulders. Captain Bell was a stickler for etiquette, and therefore he decided to call immediately upon the poet and express his obligation.

"You say that you have seen him somewhere?" he asked of Heldstrom.

Christian Heldstrom shook his big, shaggy head. There was a distant brooding look in his blue eyes, usually so keen and alert.

"I am not sure. Dere vas somedings . . . like an echo in his voice. Like somebody I haf known . . . long ago, in Norway . . . or some odder place. His name, Applebo, vas Scandinavian, too. I do not know."

Bell shot him a quick, curious look. Heldstrom looked old . . . and it suddenly struck the choleric owner that his sailing-master was getting on in years. He observed that Heldstrom's thick, curling hair, formerly of a rich, lustrous chestnut colour, was grizzled almost to the point of being white, while the bushy eyebrows, heavy moustache, and thick, curling beard were fast becoming snowy. The big Norwegian's face was very deeply lined, and at this moment the creases looked like those of age and suffering, rather than the result of exposure to all winds and weather. Bell was a little startled, for Heldstrom was but slightly older than himself, and it occurred to the ex-naval officer that if Heldstrom were becoming an old man, then he must be doing the same.

"He seems to have given you a bad turn," said Bell, crossly. "You look as if you'd just come from a funeral."

"Und I feel like it, too . . ." muttered Heldstrom. "It is a long time since I have let myselluf t'ink of my old home. Someding about dis yoong man br'brought back der fjords und der midnight sun und der big fires on der heart' of my fadder's gaad . . ."

"You thin! he's a Scandinavian?" demanded Bell.

"No, zir; I t'ink he vas American like myselluf. But he is from Scandinavian stock. It is so t'at he can find his way ar'round in der fog . . ."

And his deep-set blue eyes roamed across the intervening water to where the *Daffodil* lay at anchor.

Bell ordered away the *guy*, and as he was about to set off on his formal call, he turned to see Cécile, fresh and lovely, in pink muslin, with a little panama hat wound about with a rose-coloured pugaree. In her hand was a tiny parasol to match. Cécile made it a point never to wear anything nautical.

"Huh . . ." snorted Bell; "where are *you* going?"

"With you, papa."

"But I am going to call on the Pilot-fish."

"So I imagined. As Hermione's sister I thought that I ought to go with you. You see, in a way, I stand *in loco parentis*."

Bell wrinkled up his nose. He was, on the whole, pleased with the idea, but he guessed that Cécile's object was less inspired by a sense of social obligation than a feminine curiosity to see the man reputed to be following them about through hopeless love of herself. He determined to tease her a little.

"Oh, it ain't necessary. I'm parent enough. It would only embarrass him if you were to go too. He's shy as a red-head duck."

Cécile bit her lip. "Very well," said she. "If you don't want me. I merely felt that I ought to go because the situation was a rather delicate one . . . those two wandering about at day-break in their bathing suits. My instinct told me that some official recognition of such an incident should be taken by a woman of the family; it seems scarcely the thing to be left for two men . . ."

"Oh, well, well . . ." interrupted her father.
"Come along then. I . . . eh . . . it had never

occurred to me in just that light. You are quite correct, my dear, quite . . .” He ushered her to the rail with great ceremony. Yachting etiquette requires that the owner shall be the first one to board his vessel and the last to leave her. Bell invariably observed these details, which are, of course, modelled after naval etiquette. There was a little smile in the corner of Cécile’s pretty mouth as she descended the accommodation-ladder. These three girls were all quite able to manage their father: Cécile by guile, Paula by sweetness, and Hermione by violence. Heldstrom, on the other hand, managed all three by the same quality: quiet, dominant force of will which was, of course, backed by deep affection.

Off they started then, crisply and with four lusty oars. Bell would have no “chugging stink-pot” for a gig, although not disdaining power for errands and market work. His gig was a beautifully modelled, diminutive man-o’-war’s whaleboat, with the official arrow on the bow, the insignia of a gig. She slipped through the water like a barracouta, light, easy-pulling, buoyant and dry in any sea-way, and swift under sail. The distance to the *Daffodil* was quickly spanned, and

they drew close aboard to find Mr. Applebo, immaculately clad in ducks, regaling himself with tea and macaroons in the cock-pit.

As the gig shot alongside, the poet arose and saluted. In response to his deep-toned order, the Finn squeezed out of a small hatchway up forward in a way that suggested a crab coming out of a hole, and sidled aft, boat-hook in hand. Cécile observed that the bow-oar, an Irishman, crossed himself.

Mr. Applebo's manner was dignified and polite, but had he been discovered sitting atop of an iceberg in Davis' Strait he could not have been more cool and distant. His leonine features betrayed no hint of any sort of emotion, and the deep, amber eyes, half hidden behind his long, dark eyelashes, blinked sleepily at his guests.

"Good-morning," said he, and bowed again. Seeing a little hesitation on the face of Captain Bell, he added, "Will you do me the honour to come aboard?"

Had the words been rather, "Will you do me the honour to clear out and not bother me," the hospitable desire behind them could not have been more distinctly expressed. Bell was sadly taken aback. He had expected to be met with

embarrassment, which he would graciously seek to allay. While himself the heart and soul of hospitality, he always clung to a certain punctilious formality and detested the social negligée of the Corinthian sailor, in spite of which it was a little discomposing to be received aboard a little two-by-six shallop with this, "Sir, I have the honour to request . . ." manner. If Cécile shared his surprise she did not show it. Leaning slightly forward she regarded the poet with that expression of polite inquiry which one might bestow upon an unfamiliar entrée served at the table of a friend.

A person familiar with good form, however, need never be more than momentarily embarrassed. Captain Bell arose as though there were but three joints in his body, only one of which was needed for his bow. "Thank you," said he, and turned to Cécile, who floated up from her cushions and gave the tips of her fingers to her father. Bell preceded her aboard, using two joints in the manœuvre, and shook hands with Mr. Applebo, whose expression suggested a person roused from a beauty-sleep. "H'm . . . h'm . . . daughter, permit me to present Mr. Applebo . . ." said Bell to Cécile, and added, turning to the

Pilot-fish, "My daughter, Miss Bell . . . h'm
. . . huh!"

With the face of one oppressed by the recollection of a sad dream, Mr. Applebo assisted Cécile to the deck of the *Daffodil*.

"Pray, come below," said he, "the glare is rather intense."

A one-and-a-half-jointed acknowledgment from Bell, and a swift, curious look from Cécile, were the receipt of this invitation. The Pilot-fish shot back the sliding hatch, and led the way down, the others following with something of the manner of people who inspect an apartment still occupied by a polite but greatly bored tenant.

On entering the cabin, the two guests were forcibly struck by its peculiar atmosphere of warm and immaculate emptiness. One does not, as a rule, associate warmth and emptiness, but the former quality was, in this case, conveyed by the peculiar rich and mellow light which pervaded the place, and which Cécile quickly discovered to be due to the sun shining through amber-coloured skylights and reflected from the yellow enamel of the paint-work. It was a peculiar effect, but, unlike that of red, blue, or green lights, extremely restful and agreeable.

People whose homes are on the wave usually like to surround themselves with personal trinkets suggestive of the land, which is, after all, their natural element. Cécile's room aboard the *Shark* was a sans-souci of delicious luxury in exquisite taste. But here in the *Daffodil's* cabin, aside from a vase of yellow roses, there was not one single object which did not have its distinct and practical use. Not a picture, not a curio nor knick-knack of any sort. Books there were, no doubt, in the double row of lockers on either side, but nothing of ornamentation. There were two big nickelled lamps set in gimbals, one over a gravity table, the other over the head of the single bunk. A large watch hanging on the forward bulkhead furnished noiselessly the time; above it were a telltale compass and a small aneroid barometer, while a battered and archaic-looking sextant was jammed against the bulkhead under a yellow leather strap.

The poet produced a couple of camp-chairs, which he opened and offered to his guests.

"I hope that you do not object to yellow light," said he. "Yellow is my colour. I find it intellectually stimulating."

"It is said to be the mental colour," observed Cécile.

"In France," Bell remarked, "they say that it is the symbol of a *mauvais ménage*. But since you are not married it does not matter."

"I am wedded to my Muse," said Applebo, "and it is true that we sometimes quarrel. Perhaps that is the reason."

Bell shot his daughter a glance which said as plainly as words, "There! I said that he was balmy!" The poet looked sleepily unconscious. The dreamy expression of his eyes would have led one to believe that he was dreaming of meadows sown with asphodel. Bell made noises in his fat throat.

"H'm . . . huh . . . huh . . . my daughter and I have called to thank you, Mr. Applebo, for your services rendered this morning to an indiscreet member of our family . . . h'm . . . huh . . ."

The poet made a graceful, undulating motion with his hand, expressive and deprecatory. Cécile, regarding him intently, decided that he was quite correct in saying that yellow was his colour. Her eyes clung to him, fascinated by his odd, unusual type. The yawl swung a trifle on her cable, and

a golden shaft of light which struck diagonally through the skylight, travelled slowly across the bulkhead and bathed the leonine head of Applebo in a golden effulgence, wreathing his wavy hair with a true aureole. A golden man he looked. Cécile was unable to take her eyes from him.

"My sister is much to be congratulated," said she, "in finding a champion at the critical moment."

"Oh," said the poet, "the one to be congratulated is the keeper. Miss Bell was about to fill him full of shot."

"What!" cried Bell, much startled.

"Quite so. He meant to drag her off by force and she felt differently about it. When I arrived she had him covered and was promising to blow his head off." He blinked.

"What!" cried the horrified Bell.

"How terrible!" exclaimed Cécile.

"It would have served him right," said the Pilot-fish. "If she had done so, I would have dug a hole in the sand and buried him and we would have said nothing about it."

"But . . . but . . . Bless my soul . . ." cried the horrified Bell. "It would have been . . . eh . . . manslaughter!"

"This fellow deserved to be slaughtered," observed the poet. "However, he was so fortunate as to escape. I persuaded him to go away. Then, while Miss Bell was recovering from her agitation, the scoundrel stole her boat. Unfortunately, my man was ashore with my only boat, and as I did not like to leave your daughter alone, and she assured me that she was a strong swimmer, we decided to swim. There was no great risk, as I could have towed her the whole distance at a pinch."

All of this in a sleepy voice, while the screened eyes blinked drowsily from Bell to Cécile. The girl's scrutiny was more intent than she realised, and her soft cheeks were slightly pale. Little lines had appeared, running vertically between her brows. One would have said that she was agitated at thoughts suggested by the recital of her sister's adventure, but that was not the case. Cécile was inwardly stirred at something in the quality of the deep, monotonous voice, low and vibrant as the purr of a great cat. The personality of Applebo had upon her an odd, exciting influence.

In rather ridiculous contrast to the effect he produced on the inner emotions of this accomplished coquette, the poet was sitting in the most

uninspiring manner possible to conceive. He was perched on the extreme rim of his bunk, which, being rather low, brought his big knees chest-high. His feet, of generous proportion and elegantly shod in rubber-soled buckskin, were "toeing in," his forearms rested across his thighs, and his back was domed like the shell of a tortoise, so that the long, wavy hair clustered about his shoulders as he turned his head from one guest to the other. Add to this a sleepy, blinking face and a wide mouth, which seemed ever ready to yawn, and it seems odd that Mr. Applebo should have caused any acceleration of the pulses in a young lady who had successfully weathered many an impassioned declaration. As a matter of fact, it was the suggestion of swift, latent force masked in this somnolent pose which was discomposing. There was a deep, slumberous gleam in the amber eyes which told of a very wakeful spirit within, while the muscular contour of the inert limbs promised an output of tireless strength which their present laxity sought in vain to conceal. Both Captain Bell and Cécile felt the existence of this masked vitality, the former with the admiration of a man who had himself been athletic in his youth, and Cécile with the aforesaid

stirring of some new and unclassified emotion.

"Fancy your being able to drag a big girl through the water for a mile or more!" said he.

"You must be a very powerful man."

"It would be easier for a good swimmer to carry a person for a mile in the water than on the land," said Applebo. "The water takes most of the weight. Besides, one could never tire in performing a service for so charming a girl as your daughter."

Bell looked startled. "H'm . . . huh . . ." he began, but Cécile interrupted.

"If you find a service of that kind so stimulating, I should think that you would lend yourself oftener to it."

There was the least touch of sharpness in her tone. Applebo eyed her inquiringly.

"I do," said he, "but in spirit rather than in body. Thus, following you" . . . there was the faintest emphasis on the "you" . . . "about all summer has been a sentimental though unasked service. All services should be unasked; otherwise they are obligations. It has been a service . . . and I have never tired of it."

Bell's jaw slightly dropped. Cécile's glance was very intense. Applebo blinked.

"Huh . . ." said Bell. "It seems to me that the service was on our part, seein' that we were doing your thinkin' for you."

"The leader must always do the thinking for the one who follows," murmured the poet. "The stray dog who attaches himself to your heels follows blindly where you lead because of his unasked and often undesired devotion. The pilot-fish does not dictate his course to the shark."

Bell looked confused, then turned a slightly richer shade of pink. The idea was slowly permeating his intelligence that Applebo was chaffing them, and that so subtly that one hardly knew how to reply. The same idea had entered the head of Cécile. To this pampered beauty the idea that a young man should deliberately amuse himself at her expense was maddening. Cécile had plenty of fight in her and she was active-minded as well, and she did not propose to be set dancing on a string like a marionette for the pleasure of this sleepy-eyed enigma.

"After all," said she, "one might consider that we were quits. You furnish us with some idle amusement which otherwise we might lack while we furnish you with some of our mind, which otherwise you might lack."

"Precisely," drawled the poet; "a fair exchange."

Bell cackled outright. The colour flared into the face of Cécile. Applebo blinked. Captain Bell came to the rescue of his daughter.

"Aboard the *Shark*," said he, "you are a sort of benefactor. You instil our monotonous lives with a great excitement. All hands make bets on how long after us you will arrive in port."

"In that case," said Applebo, in a tone of dreamy regret, "I must sometimes have thoughtlessly spoiled the game by carelessly permitting myself to arrive before you. Hereafter, I will not follow you out so soon."

Bell's face grew rather purple. While obliged to admit the dull sailing qualities of the *Shark*, he had never particularly relished comment on the topic, but to have it so "rubbed in" by a little sixty-foot sword-fisher was infuriating.

"Of course," he snapped, "on these short runs it's not difficult for you to pass us. But I am afraid that you may not find it so easy to stay with us for the next fortnight or so. We're tired of mud-holing and rottin' around with the small fry."

"If you are tired of *me*," observed the poet,

"you know that you have only to say so. Not for worlds would I persecute you with undesired attentions."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Cécile. "We find you very amusing. The question is, whether you will find your occupation so amusing from now on. As papa says, we are planning some good offshore runs. I do hope that you will not find your duties too arduous."

Here was a challenge directly thrown down. Applebo looked as if the mere thought of it made him overtired.

"Come, come . . ." said Bell, with an assumption of his hearty manner. "'Fess up now. What is your real object in trailin' us around? Wood says you find the proximity of three pretty girls stimulin' to your poetry. Is that true?"

"Quite." Applebo looked slowly at Cécile. "Huntington exaggerates. The proximity of one of them would be quite enough. The focus of so many romantic and sentimental aspirations must, by its mere juxtaposition, inspire by repercussion the acme of poetic expression."

"H'm . . . huh . . . hough . . . I don't precisely understand . . ." said Bell, with perfect truth.

Cécile drew back with a little sniff. Applebo showed actual signs of awakening. He leaned toward Bell and spread out his large, well-shaped hands.

"We poets," he said, "are souls highly sensitised to extrinsic emotions. We are less sentient beings than æsthetic interpreters of the passionate vibrations of art or nature. Like the æolian harp responding to the dalliance of a zephyr, thus do we translate soul-talk of alien origin."

He beamed at the agonised Bell, who was panting for air.

"Just as the compass swings to meet its electric affinity," pursued Applebo, in a rapt voice, "so doth the spirit of the Muse within us react to the atmosphere of Love, that divinest of all motive force. It is thus that I find your aura so stimulating" . . . he looked at Cécile . . . "like tabasco on an oyster." He gave her a celestial smile.

"I see," she answered. "You use us as a sort of stove."

"Less for its warmth," said Applebo, "than for the fuel with which it is fed."

Captain Bell mopped his brow. "I am a practical sort of person myself," said he, vaguely.

"Why don't you accept our invitations and get your inspiration at short range?"

"To do that," said the poet, "would be to sacrifice my sacred Muse upon the altar of my own selfishness. No. All that I ask is merely to continue as I am, a humble and devoted little pilot-fish."

Bell and Cécile both cast him glances of quick suspicion, but the face of Mr. Applebo expressed no more than a sad and somewhat sleepy resignation. Bell rose to his feet, and Cécile, somewhat reluctantly, did the same. She felt that she was quitting a considerable loser.

"Well," remarked Bell, a little snappishly, "keep on being a pilot-fish, if that suits you better. As far as following us is concerned, you can do that and welcome. Follow us till . . ."

"Oh, papa . . .!"

"H'm . . . huh . . . h'm . . . but I'm afraid you'll find that you've got some swimming cut out for you that will wear the brisket off you."

"Where the *Shark* swims," said Applebo, "the Pilot-fish will follow."

"We will see . . . h'm . . . we will see," said Captain Bell, oracularly.

CHAPTER VIII

It is sad to chronicle the fact that, on the way back to the *Shark*, Captain Bell's language was not such as a maiden's ears should hear. But it is doubtful if Cécile's ears did hear it, such paternal explosions being somewhat too common of occurrence to command attention. On the other hand, the treatment which she had just received at the hands of the poet was an entirely new experience, and, in consideration of what Wood had told her, one that puzzled her mightily. There was naturally no way of poor Cécile's knowing that the poet took her for her sister Hermione, and was working off a little artistic pique, due to the return of verses, which had cost him gallons of tea and many pounds of macaroons.

Bell was going off at intervals, like an automatic fog-horn.

"The — fool!" he stormed, to the expressionless delight of his crew, which pulled away with stony faces. "Is he a wild ass of the desert, or does he think I am, or both? What in thunder did he mean by all that rot about Hermione shooting the keeper and he standin' by to bury him in

the sand? Was the fool tryin' to josh *me*, I'd like to know? And all that slush about percussion somethin' and poetic interpretation by an æolian harp crackin' on . . . Did you ever see such a cub-faced, swab-headed guillemot? Soul-talk! I want a drink . . ."

These and other winged words were lost upon Cécile. She was trying to hit on some solution of Applebo's treatment of herself. Certainly there had been some hidden meaning in the looks which he had turned upon her; something which suggested a motive for his peculiar behaviour. Cécile, who found it quite impossible to construe any situation as unflattering to herself, decided that the behaviour of the poet was nothing less than sheer "bluff." Either he was trying to disguise some deep, inner emotion, or else he had wished to mislead Captain Bell as to the true reason for his constant attendance. Cécile did not for an instant take seriously Applebo's sentimental effusions about the effect upon his poetry produced by the propinquity of the *Shark*. She was quite convinced that there was a very deep and subtle method underlying his apparently foolish pose. Heretofore she had been divided as to whether he must be considered as a really smitten

lover or merely as a sort of half-witted loon, which, like all of its species, was quite at home on the wave. She had even thought it possible that he might be a fool of whimsical ideas who had actually attached himself to the *Shark* from sheer lacking objective. This theory had been overturned by Wood's revelations, and she had accompanied her father to call on Applebo with the secret determination of discovering what was really underneath his eccentric behaviour.

The sleepy quick-wittedness; the supine manner of attempting to disguise a fierce forcefulness beneath; the deep, resonant voice, silky and warm; the inscrutable, leonine face with its mane of tawny hair; the *tout ensemble*, had deeply impressed Cécile, though she was not yet conscious of how deeply. But she knew that Applebo was very far from being the pilot-fish which he claimed to be. A chunk of pork on a hook, perhaps, but a pilot-fish . . . no! Cécile had a vague instinct that she was shortly to be more fully informed in the matter.

Notwithstanding which, she arrived at the schooner in a state of extreme irritation, while her father had subsided into a sub-acute exasperation expressed by grunts and growls. A certain

curiosity had backed up the real motive for the call aboard the *Daffodil*, and this curiosity had been politely but effectually flouted, and both father and daughter much resented it. Especially the daughter, as much trifling with the affections of many young men is a poor way for a girl to get in training to have a young man treat her with *lèse majesté*.

On coming alongside of the schooner they found a boat from the *Arcturus*, and Cécile's temper was not improved at hearing the gay laughter from the deck, where Hermione, Paula, Huntington Wood, and Mr. Poole were having a very good time. Cécile was one of those girls who grow restive at the sight of attractive men in the possession of other girls, so she proceeded at once to break up the *partie carrée*, taking Wood away from Paula as one might deprive a child of some object with which it was too young to play.

All were curious to hear about the call upon Mr. Applebo, however, especially as the red and belligerent expression of Captain Bell's face showed that it had not been in all ways agreeable.

"Your friend Applebo," said Cécile to Wood, "is, without exception, the rudest man I ever met."

Hermione raised her eyebrows. Wood, always loyal to the absent, protested.

"Oh, no!" said he, "odd and eccentric and all of that, but not really rude. . . ."

"Call it what you like," said Cécile. "We had to board his nasty little boat practically by force, after which he did nothing but sit there and make sneering remarks."

"That was the only way he managed to keep awake," growled Bell, who was pacing up and down his quarter-deck with short, impatient steps.

"Apparently," said Cécile, "he was trying to be witty at our expense. You should have heard what papa said about him coming back. . . ."

"We did . . . from the time you left the yawl," said Hermione.

Cécile gave a mirthless little laugh. "Fancy your being so silly as to say that he was in love with me!"

"Huntington never said that," observed Hermione. "He merely said that Applebo was in love with somebody aboard the *Shark*."

There was a laugh, which was quickly checked, for Cécile's face became suddenly crimson. She bit her lip, and her grey eyes actually filled with

tears of sheer mortification. Wood went quickly to her rescue.

"Up to this time," said he, "Harold has probably fancied himself in love with an Ideal. Now that he has seen the Real, we may look for rapid developments."

"Huh . . ." grunted Captain Bell, whose promenade had brought him within earshot, "he's a balm, that's what's the matter with him. Said it wasn't Hermione he rescued, but the game-keeper. Said Hermione was about to assassinate him, and that if she had he would have dug a hole in the sand and shoved him in . . . huh . . . h'm . . . balmy as a spring dream. . . ."

"He's quite capable of it," said Wood, and glanced at Hermione. There was a vivid red splash in either of the girl's cheeks, and her eyes were like sapphires.

"By Jove . . ." Wood laughed. "Look at Hermione! I believe she would have helped him! What a pair of savages!"

Bell stopped in his beat and threw one arm around Paula. He made no secret of the fact that she was his favourite daughter; a preference which aroused no jealousy in the hearts of the other girls, as both appreciated fully Paula's

sweetness of disposition and invariable unselfishness. She was, in a way, the mean between the extremes of Cécile's calculating and Hermione's impetuous nature; also she acted as a sort of fender between her sisters and their father. On the whole, the family was an affectionate one, but high spirits and diverse dispositions made the offices of a peace advocate indispensable.

"D'ye know what I think?" snapped Bell. "I think that the scoundrel is secretly in love with Paula, and he ain't man enough to step up and say so!"

"What makes you think that?" Wood asked.

"Logical exclusion. Here he has performed a service for Hermione, and lets it drop there, and Cécile goes aboard his boat and he sits there and jollies her. What was it he said . . . that about the idle amusement he furnished bein' a fair exchange for the use of our minds . . . eh . . . what was it, Cécile . . .?"

"Some rubbish . . . I don't know . . ."
Cécile turned away, angrily.

"Besides," continued Bell, "Paula is the only one he has ever sighted close aboard. All right, old man" . . . he glanced toward the *Daffodil* . . . "we'll see how much of a test you can

stand. Wait 'til I romp you up and down the coast from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Hatteras a few times!" He glanced at Wood. "Come with us, Huntington. You'll see some sport. The beggar means to follow, if he can."

Wood hesitated. Cécile was looking at him, ready to give a little sign of affirmation, but to her extreme surprise, Wood glanced, not at her, but at Paula. Cécile's eyes followed his. Paula was looking at Wood, and as he hesitated, her face grew suddenly pale.

"Do you all want me?" asked Wood, smiling.

"Of course we do," answered Hermione. "Do come."

Paula echoed the invitation, a little faintly, and Cécile, in a cool, indifferent way. She was wondering at the peculiar expression she had caught in Paula's eyes as they met those of Wood.

"Then I'll go with great delight," said Wood. "But I don't think that the chase will last very long, when it comes to offshore work. You can hardly expect a little yawl like that to keep up with a schooner of this size."

"I'll back him," said Hermione. "The *Shark* is about as speedy as an oyster-float."

"Just the same," snapped Bell, "I'll make you

a bet, young lady, that we will have lost our pilot-fish at the end of ten days."

"For what . . .?" asked Hermione.

"For a month's allowance. Double or none. Come now, do you take me?"

"Done with you!" said Hermione, promptly.

Huntington Wood was giving a dinner party ashore that night, and Cécile, according to her custom when dining out, spent the late hours of the afternoon in repose. Her room aboard the *Shark* was as big and luxuriously furnished as though it had belonged to a modern country-house, and she slept in a brass bed securely bolted to the deck. Adjoining was a boudoir and bath.

In a flowered kimono, her bright hair unconfined, Cécile was taking her beauty-rest and turning in her mind the events of the day. Piqued as she had been at Applebo's behaviour, she was by this time angry . . . and a little startled to find how insistently his personality occupied her thoughts. She would have resented this more had it not been that this retrospect was by no means disagreeable.

The startling feature of this obsession was the vividness with which she could recall every detail.

Cécile had only to close her eyes to see again the big-framed, loosely-held figure, the sleepy, leonine face with its mane of wavy hair, sun-bleached on top of the head to the colour of old oakum, but holding rich, coppery tints in its depths. Facial features were shockingly vivid; the high, wide cheekbones, the cheeks themselves cut out to a degree which gave the mouth an appearance of being slightly pushed out, the upper lip slightly raised in the middle. Most distinct was the set of the eyes; the leonine "bumps" with the bushy eyebrows, the eyes themselves of a clear, deep amber and fringed about with lashes that looked black, but were not.

She thought, with a gust of irritation, of the poet's blinking, indifferent expression and of the sudden gracious change in the cat-like face when he smiled. The smile humanised him, it was so kind. And it reassured one, in revealing teeth that were straight and white and even, and not feline. The recollection to most stir Cécile's pulse was that of the deep, resonant purring voice, which seemed to have left its echoes in her ears, as the voice of the sea leaves its murmur in a conch-shell.

"If it weren't for that catty, mocking pose,"

thought Cécile, "how attractive he would be!" She pictured him as open and frank and sincere . . . looking into her eyes with no veil across his own . . . Cécile's heart beat furiously. She wondered if she were going to make a fool of herself and fall in love with the only man who had ever treated her with disrespect.

Perhaps the factor which made Applebo's memory so intrusive was his enigmatical position. From thinking of him Cécile would ponder, until her head ached, upon what could be his real motive. She was now convinced that his attendance was not aimless. She was also sure that if it were due to a sentimental emotion toward herself she would very soon know of it, now that they had met. There had certainly been some deep meaning, some understanding in those regards which he had given her.

Thinking of these things she fell into a doze, only to be pursued by vague images of her waking thoughts. Then, just before fully awakening, she saw, as in a camera-obscura, the face of Applebo regarding her with a lazy, ironical smile. This was not fancy, but an actual vision, which faded slowly as she awoke.

"Bother the man!" cried Cécile, fiercely to

herself. "One would think that I were an ingénue of eighteen, haunted by visions of my first beau!"

Many men had called Cécile cold, unfeeling, heartless . . . all of which terms were, from the man's point of view, quite correct. From Cécile's, they were wrong. As she saw it, love was a game in which one must realise, just as in football, the possibility of getting hurt. A coward or cry-baby had no right to play it. If any man could hurt her, as she was said to have hurt others, he was quite at liberty to go ahead and do it. It was, perhaps, in the hunt for the person who could do this that she had ruthlessly vivisected so many hearts. Cécile felt instinctively that she possessed no lack of deep feeling, if the right man were to claim it.

But Cécile knew quite well that she was not "in love at first sight." She was momentarily fascinated, perhaps, but mingled with her sentiment there was not the least trace of sympathetic or tender interest. On the contrary, the thought of Applebo exasperated her. She felt that she would like to wake him out of his lethargy with a hat-pin or the butt-end of an oar. Something in his sleek, smooth complacency aroused the desire to do him a damage.

Tired at length of the changeless object of her fancy, she tried to put it from her mind, but in vain. Then, finding herself unable to stem the tide of her imaginings, she tried drifting with them, to arrive ultimately at the startling knowledge that she was quite wild to see the poet again. She was also forced to admit, for however much she might deceive others Cécile was always candid with herself, that, were he to exert his magnetic potentialities toward that end, it was very possible that she might wind up by falling very desperately in love with Mr. Harold Applebo.

Hardly had she arrived at this rather humiliating conclusion when the maid entered, handed her a note, and went out again. The post-mark was a local one, and the handwriting of the copy-plate regularity which one associates with bills. Nevertheless, Cécile's heart beat with a sudden increased force as she tore open the letter. Inside was a single sheet of corn-coloured note-paper covered by a fine regular calligraphy, which Cécile recognised at a glance as being identical with that in which some of Hermione's letters had been addressed. She held it to the waning light from her port-hole, and read as follows:—

TO CÉCILE

*Lips oft sing loudest when the heart is numb;
'Tis when Love enters there, though all unseen,
These scarlet courtiers, bowing to their Queen,
Knowing their hollowness, are stricken dumb.*

*Thus, ere Love reached me with his tiny dart,
Clamoured I vainly. Many a lover's moan
And sigh proclaimed a love I ne'er had known,
Vaunted a passion alien to my heart.*

*My soul has met with thine. Though I did wrong,
These lips are stilled. No slightest sigh is heard,
And all my poesy is prisoned in a word:—
"I love thee, Sweet." Herein lies all my song.*

The Pilot-fish.

Cécile read the verses twice through, then flung herself back amongst the pillows with a burning face.

The solution was not long in coming. Apparently, the poet had previously sent verses, from time to time, to Hermione. Cécile had seen the envelopes. It was very wrong of Hermione to have received them and said nothing to her about it. Cécile would reprove her for that later on . . . not just at present.

It was probable, she thought, that Applebo had seen Hermione at some time, found her attractive, and being himself of a sentimental and poetic nature, had fancied himself in love with her. Then, in their meeting of that morning he had, no doubt, been disillusioned, found Hermione a mere child and a bit of a hoyden. Later on, seeing herself, Cécile, he had been completely vanquished.

Certain parts of the verses appeared to bear this out. The theme of the poem, as a whole, was that formerly, when he really had felt nothing, he had been doing a lot of singing. Hence the verses which Hermione had from time to time received. But now that he had really fallen in love, he found himself deprived of expression.

Cécile put away the verses, rang for her maid, and proceeded to dress. At the dinner that night everybody who knew her agreed that she had never been so radiantly lovely.

“Lucky dog!” said Poole to Huntington Wood. “You’ll win her before this wild-goose chase is over!”

Wood smiled, and his eyes followed Paula as she crossed the room to speak to an acquaintance.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER the departure of his guests, Mr. Applebo returned to his yellow cabin and remained, for some minutes, sitting upon the extreme edge of his bunk, his eyes fixed upon infinity.

Like many men who spend much of their time alone, Mr. Applebo had acquired the habit of audible self-communing, this custom rendered the more spontaneous due to his practice of reciting his poetic efforts for the sake of euphony and metre. Audible self-communing was also a favourite employment of the Finn, so that any one approaching the yawl at any time of the day or night might have been surprised to hear two monologues proceeding with the tireless monotony of a pair of phonographs.

As though to relax his mind after the lofty heights of poetic utterance, Mr. Applebo's unofficial soliloquies were very apt to be curt, colloquially idiomatic, which is a high-sounding way of saying "slangy," and even at times, profane. Mr. Applebo pouring out his soul over a sonnet or madrigal, and Mr. Applebo commenting to him-

self on topical events, was scarcely to be recognised as the same person.

On the present occasion the subject of his monologue was the visit just received.

“That must have been Hermione with the captain. She looked like a sassy young thing. If I’d seen her face I’d never have wasted good verse on her. The old man looks like a sun-blister in red paint-work. He’ll go ‘pop’ some day. So he’s going to try to lose me out. I’ll fool him. Since I’ve met Cécile I’d follow him over Niagara, whether I had a chart or not. Cecilia . . . Cécile . . .” he dwelt upon the name as if loath to leave it. “Doesn’t lend itself to verse like ‘Hermione,’ but the girl is a wonder. Harold, my son, I’m afraid you’ve got yours at last. . . .”

For some minutes he remained in silent contemplation of this reluctant admission, and to look at his face one would have thought that he had just discovered himself to be infected with malignant smallpox. Presently he gave a sigh which suggested a porpoise coming up to blow.

“She is a wonder, and I am not surprised that every man who sees her goes off his chump. It is their own silly fault for presuming to raise

their eyes to such a young goddess. I shall not raise my eyes to her . . . but I shall raise my voice and send her a drool. And this time it will be the truth. . . .”

One long arm went to the locker beside the bunk and drew out a writing-block of corn-coloured paper and a fountain-pen. For a few minutes Mr. Applebo scratched away industriously, then flung himself back on the bunk and read aloud and sonorously what he had just written.

“Pretty rotten . . . but I have no time to monkey with it. Her proud parent has given me a dare, and honour compels that I gird myself for the fray. He is going to lead me an offshore chase, I fancy. I had better get busy and grub up. I must fake the address of this drivel or Hermione might get sore. All women but one are cats.”

The note, addressed in an utterly characterless copy-plate hand, Mr. Applebo lifted up his voice in a melodious yowl, whereat the Finn came scuffling aft and stood in the cock-pit peering into the cabin like a gnome looking into a cave.

“Come down here . . .” Applebo spoke in Danish. The two always conversed in that

tongue, when they conversed at all, which was seldom.

The Finn hooked his strong fingers over the rim of the hatch and swung down his squat body to stand before his master, cap in hand, and with an expression of dog-like devotion in his great brown eyes.

“We are going on a long voyage. Fill the water-tanks and the ice-box, and take this list to the store. Bring off the stuff with you. But first mail this letter. No drink. Dost thou understand?”

“Yes, master.”

“The least sign of liquor and I leave thee on the beach and ship a clean man in thy place. Remember.”

“Yes, master.”

“Very well. Go!”

The Finn swung up through the hatch like a chimpanzee. Applebo sat for a moment thinking. Then he flung his great frame back on the bunk, and reaching into the book-locker, took therefrom a copy of Rostand's “Cyrano.” This was his favourite of modern poems. He began to read aloud, in sonorous tones, and with careful regard to the scansion:—

“ . . . *J'y t'aime, je suis fou, je n'en peux plus,
c'est trop.*

“ *Ton nom est dans mon cœur comme dans un
grelot . . .*”

Which, when one considers that the name at that moment tinkling in the heart of Applebo was the name of the wrong girl, made of his pleasure in the verses a delightful irony!

He was still half reading, half didactically reciting, when there came the splash of oars alongside and Applebo threw down the poem, arose, and shoved his tawny head up through the hatch to behold a small and frightened-looking boy in a boat. The youngster handed him a note and appeared loath to linger for the tip which the poet tossed him. Applebo tore open the envelope to find within a sheet of paper with the *Shark's* heading. On it were the words:—

Sailing to-night for Halifax.

CÉCILE.

The middle of the following forenoon found the *Shark* well on her course across the wide mouth of the Bay of Fundy. The schooner was almost

becalmed and smothered in a thick white fog, through which the sun was trying to burn its way.

On the starboard rail were leaning Paula and Huntington Wood, trying to look into the cottony blanket of mist. The yacht had been threading her way through a fleet of fishing-boats, and from all sides there came the faint or loud, but always muffled and elusive, *dong . . . dong . . . dong . . . dong . . .* of the fishermen's bells.

From the t'gallant fore-castle of the *Shark* there blared out at half-minute intervals the *honk . . . honk . . .* of her automatic fog-horn. A few minutes before they had heard the shriek of a steamer's siren as it ripped its way through the fog. Directly it had come again, appallingly close aboard; so close, indeed, that people could be heard talking on her decks, and a gruff voice, apparently from the bridge, had rasped, "Look-out, wha'ar d'ye make that fog-horn?"

The *Shark* had answered the question for herself, when the same voice aboard the steamer said in a sharp tone, "Starboard! He's plumb under our baows!"

Everything was a-drip. There was scarcely breeze enough to keep steerage-way, and the knowledge of the swift tides and eddies and the

treacherous southern extremity of Nova Scotia did not tend to have a soothing effect on the nerves of Captain Bell. He was standing on the weather side, just abaft the mainmast, muffled to the ears in a heavy ulster, with a deer-stalker's hat pulled down over his eyes and a very long cigar, which reminded one of a spinnaker-boom, sticking straight out from his damp, rubicund face. Altogether, he looked more like a discontented British tourist than an ex-naval officer conning his yacht through the fog. At sea, Bell always stood watch-and-watch with Heldstrom, and did his own navigating.

"This is the sort of weather that makes you more indulgent toward power!" he growled, waddling up to join Paula and Huntington. "I'll bet our bloomin' Pilot-fish wishes that *he* had some!"

"Do you suppose that he is out in this?" Wood asked.

"Sure. He took my challenge, so the chances are that he followed us out last night. If he'd waited until this morning, he'd have missed the tide."

"Poor little *Daffodil!*" said Paula. "It's no place for her out here! I hate to think of it!"

"She's all right," growled Bell. "Don't you worry about her!"

"How is the betting?" asked Wood.

Bell grinned. "The sailing-master is offering two to one that Applebo will be in Halifax harbour within four hours of ourselves. He used to bet against the Pilot-fish, but since he found out that he is a square-head, he backs him. The bosun offers even money that we get there first, and the cook has taken him on for a 'V,' but then the cook's a fool! In light airs the yawl can out-sail us, as unless there's half a gale, this tub is so slow that if it weren't for her sails they'd take her for a light-vessel. But I can out-navigate the chump, and we'll save on steering a truer course."

"Don't try to cut corners, papa," said Paula. "You might cut one off the schooner."

"No danger. I didn't serve for twenty-five years in the U. S. Navy for nothin'. . . ." He glanced forward, then raised his voice: "Lookout, there, why don't you report that bell? What d'ye think you are . . . the figger-head?"

"Bell on der poort bow, zir . . . !" bawled the lad.

"All right," snapped the owner. "I'm deaf

already from listenin' to it. Don't try to make me any deafer. Now keep your lugs buttoned back and see if you can't hear the next one before I do!"

Bell stumped aft to look at the taffrail log, then to the companionway for a peep at the barometer.

"Glass risin'," he announced. "This stuff will blow off before noon and then we may get a bit of a breeze." He went forward, pausing at the door of the galley to watch the cook, wishing mightily that his watch was over that he might get to work on a ragoût. Paula looked at Wood and laughed.

"Papa's wishing that he were inside there, warm and messy and spoiling good food," said she. "Why don't *you* get a fad, Huntington?"

"Cécile intimated last night that I was rapidly doing so."

"And what is that?"

"She declined to say, but I think that it had some reference to yourself."

Paula did not immediately reply. With both elbows on the schooner's high rail she stared into the grey-green water eddying sluggishly alongside. Wood watched her, and his fine eyes kindled. Ex-

periences of the past year had taught the young man many things about life and character, and he was beginning to be able to tell the pure from the alloyed metal. Never in his life had he known Cécile Bell to be as lovely as the night before at his dinner-party, nor had he ever found her so sweet and sympathetic. But not one flash of the old emotion had been rekindled. His eyes had been so evidently filled with Paula that in the end Cécile had grown slightly piqued and turned her attentions to Mr. Poole, whom she speedily reduced to abject slavery.

Paula was sufficiently pretty, when it came to that. Her charm was of a sweet, gentle sort, which was destined to grow with her character. She was fuller of figure than either of her sisters, with a great abundance of chestnut hair, which held deep, auburn tones. Like the other two girls her complexion was clear to transparency, and the general type was Keltic; French or Irish. In repose, Paula was as quiet as a nun, but when she became interested in conversation to the point of self-forgetfulness, the change to a vivid animation was almost startling. On these occasions the rich colour flooded her face, her words were rapid and vehement, and she gestured as freely as a

Frenchwoman. Paula was a continual surprise to those who knew her but slightly.

She raised herself from the rail and let her clear, jade-coloured eyes rest thoughtfully on Wood. There was a faint tinge of colour in her cheeks, damp from the fog.

"I was wondering how long it would be before Cécile became jealous," said she.

"Cécile has no reason to be jealous," Wood replied. "I offered her all that I had and she very graciously declined it, but desired to be a sister to me. I accepted the honour with gratitude. *Eh, voilà!*"

Paula looked into the fog. Wood gave a little laugh.

"Of course," he went on, "it is one thing to offer to be a sister and another to consent to be a sister-in-law."

"Don't speak in that flippant way, Huntington."

Wood stepped to her side and laid his hand upon her gloved one as it rested on the rail.

"My dear," he said, "I do not mean to be flippant. Of course, you know, Paula, that I was very much in love with Cécile and took it very hard when she told me that she did not care for

me in the same way. I did not try to argue the matter, but started in to forget my own troubles in trying to interest myself a bit in those of other people who were much worse off. The result was most successful, although all of my friends seem to find it very amusing. . . .”

“You mean your charity? That was splendid, Huntington. . . .”

“The motive was originally selfish . . . but I don't think that it is so now. Because I am cured.”

He paused, as though thinking of how best to go on.

“What I wish to say now, Paula, is rather difficult. Perhaps I had better not try any complicated self-analysis. When Cécile refused me, I thought that my life was blasted and that I should never love again, and most of the things, I suppose, that young men usually think under these circumstances. I don't claim any originality. It has not been so. My life is not in the least blasted, and I do love again, and very, very deeply. I love you, Paula, and I want you for my wife. Will you marry me, dear?”

Paula appeared to have some difficulty with her breathing. Perhaps it was the fog, which, at

any rate, had very evidently got into her eyes. She turned slowly to Wood, her face very pale, and her sweet mouth quivering. They were standing near the main rigging, and Paula steadied herself by gripping a lanyard. This may have been due to the very slight heave coming in from the sea.

"Huntington," she said, "do you think that you are quite sure?"

"There is no longer the slightest doubt, Paula."

The girl did not seem able to speak. As if seeking counsel she turned again to the sea. Wood waited, his eyes upon her face. He was impressed by the sweet purity of her profile, cut like a cameo against the white fog. There was the family likeness to her sisters in the short, straight-bridged nose with its seductive tip; a frivolity of feature corrected by the straight, pretty mouth and decisive chin. Paula's face in repose had sometimes a touch of melancholy not to be found with her sisters. There was a touch of the Madonna of the Italian painters.

"Paula," said Wood, with the tone of one who offers not a compliment but a simple fact, "you are a very beautiful woman. You will grow even more beautiful as you get older."

She turned to him with a faint smile. "I am glad that I please you, Huntington . . . but . . ."

He stepped forward quickly and took her hand. She twisted it away, almost impatiently.

"Oh!" she cried, "if I could be sure! Cécile rejects you . . . and you come to me! *All* of Cécile's rejected suitors come to me. First they want sympathy, then . . . more! I'm sick of being *consolatrice!*" Paula had passed with startling abruptness from her breathless silence to an almost passionate vehemence, and as she talked she made fierce little gestures with her hands. Yet her voice was low in pitch and volume. "It is so easy for a man to fall in love with the woman who pets and pities him! Hermione has the right of it; I heard her say a few weeks ago to one of Cécile's despairing swains, 'You had better go to Paula and have your cry out. You can't weep on *my* shoulder; I've got troubles of my own . . . and besides, this is a clean shirt-waist!'" Paula laughed, semi-hysterically.

Wood looked rather hurt, but not at all irritated.

"That's not quite fair to me, Paula," said he. "I did not try to weep on anybody's shoulder,

nor am I coming to you for consolation. I don't need it. The want of it disappeared long ago. It is precisely as if I had never been in love with anybody. . . ."

"Oh, Huntington . . . are you sure . . .?"

"Positive."

"And you really love me?"

"I love you with all my heart, Paula. Can't you believe me? And don't you think that you could manage to care yourself just the least bit . . .?"

Paula threw a swift look forward. Her father, a bulky figure, half-swaddled in the fog, was rolling aft in their direction. Behind them, alas! was the ubiquitous man at the wheel.

"So you will tell me nothing?" Wood asked.

Paula turned to him quickly, caught up his ungloved hand, and squeezed it between her own so tightly that it gave him a stab of pain.

"I adore you . . ." she whispered, then dropped his hand and fled for the companionway.

CHAPTER X

WHILE these agreeable events were transpiring on the deck overhead, Cécile, warm and luxurious in her bed directly underneath, had been doing some very busy thinking, and had finally, aided to some extent by the muffled but pleasant tones of Wood's voice as it came intermittently through her ventilator, arrived at her decision.

This decision was that she had better be a sensible girl and marry Huntington Wood.

By this time she had come to fully realise that the undoubted attraction which Applebo could have for her came through an appeal made neither to the heart nor to the mind. It was purely a physical attraction, and its hold was upon her material senses. Cécile was, however, very much alive in her senses. If not the slave to them, she was at least a very indulgent mistress, and the things which they brought her she valued more than the higher attributes of mind. She revelled in all five; bright pageants of colour, exquisite perfumes, whether natural or artificial, music of any sort, from a gipsy band to Bach, a terrapin or canvasback and an old Amontillado, a cold

bath on a hot day or a hot bath on a cold one.

Her visit to the *Daffodil* had catered to these senses. Applebo was pleasing to the eye in colouring and contour; the odour of late roses perfumed the cabin of the yawl, for the poet loved flowers and always had them about when procurable; his resonant voice rang in the ears of Cécile and stirred more sympathetic chords than had ever an opera; the touch of his hand as he helped her into the gig had set her pulses pounding like old wine. As for taste, there had been certain moments when, in her vexation, she had felt a strong desire to bite him!

Cécile was no fool, and she was quick to realise that these were not precisely the emotions upon which to lay the foundations of future happiness. Moreover, Cécile was both luxurious and socially ambitious. Her husband must be a man with money and position, and she much doubted that Applebo had either. Wood possessed both, with many other desirable qualities. Cécile, though not in the least in love with him, liked and admired his personality. She found in him a great improvement over the idle and rather aimless young man whom she had rejected some months



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ago. His disappointment and its manly method of treatment, followed by a real, philanthropic interest in his work, had matured and sweetened him. Cécile thought it possible that in time she might grow really to care for him. Also, he would make such a creditable husband; clean-cut, good-looking, thoroughbred of type, popular with all who knew him, well-connected, and very rich. Cécile had observed a certain disposition on his part for her sister Paula, but she was too accustomed to seeing her rejected suitors turn to Paula to put much importance on the fact. She had not the slightest doubt that she could whistle Wood to heel whenever she so decided.

Cécile wanted to marry. She was twenty-four years old, a full-natured beauty with plenty of high vitality beneath her luxurious laziness, and she found herself becoming bored with her spinsterhood. She was tired of the *Shark* and her family as a steady diet, and she wanted the big world and a definite individual position in it. Which is to say, that she wanted the fulness of life, and she decided that, under the circumstances, Huntington Wood was about the most fitting and available person to furnish her with it.

Scarcely had Cécile arrived at this conclusion

when she heard the rush of light feet on the deck above, followed by steps flying down the companionway. The next instant the door of her room was thrown unceremoniously open and Paula dashed in.

“Oh, Cécile . . . Cécile . . . !” she cried, “Huntington has just asked me to marry him!”

Cécile raised herself in bed and stared wildly at her sister. It *was* a bit trying, and for the moment took her clean aback. Paula was far too excited to notice her sister's expression, which was changing from astonishment to a dismay not unmixed with resentment.

Paula's cheeks were like Jacqueminot roses and her eyes sparkled like the sun on deep green water. As was habitual when greatly moved, her speech was swift and torrential, and she gestured with quick hands, shoulders, and little nods and jerks of her head.

“He was *so* darling and manly; he said that when you refused him he was sure that his life was blasted and that he would never love again. Then, instead of moping or travelling, or drinking, he went to work with his charity and that healed the wound, and now he is deeply in love

again . . . with *me* this time . . . and oh, Cécile, I just adore him . . . and always have. . . .”

“What?” cried Cécile, sharply.

“Yes, dear. Even when he was in love with you” . . . Paula’s rich colour deepened . . . “because it was plain enough that you did not care for him in that way. If he had come to me at once for consolation, I would never have married him. Never, never, never! It might even have killed my love for him. But now that he has gone away and got over it and come back heart-whole . . . Cécile! Why do you look at me in that odd way . . .?” Paula’s eyes opened very wide. She stared at her sister, and slowly the colour faded from her face, leaving it white.

Cécile stared back without answering. In the course of Paula’s rapid recital she had made up her mind. Wood had told her when she refused to marry him that he would love her always, nevertheless, and Cécile chose to believe him. Under these circumstances she did not think that Paula should be permitted to marry him. So she stared at her sister with a set, pale face.

“Cécile . . . !” cried Paula, her voice trem-

bling so that she could scarcely speak. "Do you . . . are you . . . do you . . . care for him . . . yourself?"

Cécile's eyes filled. The colour flooded her face. She was one of those natural actresses of whom the very reflex emotions lend themselves to the rôle. Paula was clinging to the foot of her bed, watching her sister with a white, anguish-filled face.

"Do you?" she cried, despairingly.

Cécile nodded. "Yes . . ." she whispered, then twisted upon her side and buried her face in the pillows.

For several minutes she remained in this position, during which time a choked sob and the rustle from Paula's rain-coat, followed by the gentle closing of her door, told her that her sister had gone. Cécile then raised herself, glancing instinctively in the mirror at the side of her bed. There was a hot flush on her cheeks; her hair was in disorder, and her grey eyes held a sullen look. Altogether, her appearance was not pleasing to her.

"I look like a pussy-cat!" she muttered, and slipped out of bed. Standing before the mirror, she gently massaged her face with her hands.

"And I rather think I am one, too . . ." she added, under her breath.

She rang for the maid, who brought her tea and toast. Cécile was thoughtfully making her *petit déjeuner* when there came a tap at her door, and Hermione, fully dressed in grey sweater and a green, homespun skirt, entered.

"What have you been saying to Paula?" demanded Hermione, abruptly. "She's in her room sobbing her heart out."

Cécile's face showed the keenest sorrow and sympathy.

"Oh, Hermione . . ." she began, with her mouth full of toast, and then went on to tell what had occurred. Hermione listened, with her black eyebrows drawing a straight line across her deep, violet eyes. Her vital face hardened in a manner not pleasant to see in so young a girl. Cécile, glancing at her, grew actually frightened.

"Hermione!" she protested. "Why do you look at me in that way? I did not tell Paula that she was not to have Huntington! No doubt, he is really in love with her . . . and no longer cares a snap for me! But when she asked me if I cared for him, what was I to tell her?"

"The truth," said Hermione, shortly.

"But I did, did I not?"

Hermione thrust out her chin. "No," said she.
"You told her a lie!"

And she turned abruptly on her heel and went on deck.

The first person whom she saw was Captain Heldstrom, he having relieved the owner, who was joyously disporting himself in the galley. Heldstrom was peering into the fog, which was thinning out on all sides. The big Norwegian's beard and moustache were beaded with the moisture, and he looked like a hero of Wagnerian opera.

"What are you looking for?" Hermione demanded.

"For der Pilot-vish. Der lookout reported a little yawl on der poort bow; den der fog closed in again. I hope it vas he."

"Why? On account of your bet?"

"No. Der bet is nodding. But ve haf a good offing, und der tide iss setting like a mill-r'race onto Cape Sable. Der glass iss dropping, und it looks like a sout'easter, und it vould not be vell to be much nearer in."

"First time I ever saw you worrying about the Pilot-fish," observed Hermione.

"That is true. Since I haf seen him in der

vater, svimmin' mit you . . . dere is somet'ing about that yoong man . . . I do not know."

He passed his hand across his eyes, as though to clear his vision.

"Well," said Hermione; "what about him?"

"That is yoost vat I cannot tell. But his face clings in my mind like a gr'een hand in der r'rigging." He glanced at Hermione, and something in the girl's face caught his attention and held it.

"Vat is der matter?" he asked.

This was exactly what Hermione wanted. She led him to the break of the quarter-deck, and there, out of all ear-shot, told him of the complication between Cécile, Paula, and Huntington Wood, frankly concluding with her own unmaidenly observation to Cécile. Captain Heldstrom listened, with his heavy brows knit.

"That iss goot und bad," he said, when she had finished. "I am glad und sorry. Q'varrels between sisters are very bad. But Mr. V'Vood is der von to settle der business. He iss in love mit Paula und he vill marry mit her, und dey will be very, very happy. Cécile does not care for him, but perhaps she t'inks she does, un' for that reason you haf done very wr'rong to say vat you

did. It vas unkind und unjust und unladylike . . . und you vill go down at vonce und ask her par'rdon."

"I won't . . .!"

"Go, Hermione . . .!"

And Hermione turned, without a word, to the companionway.

As she entered Cécile's room, she saw that her sister had been crying. This softened Hermione and made her apology spontaneous.

"I'm sorry, Cécile," said she. "I was angry and spoke without thinking. Will you forgive me?"

Cécile nodded, and her grey eyes filled.

"You don't really think it, Hermione?"

"No. If you say you care for Huntington, I believe you. But I do not believe that you care one hundredth part as much as Paula does. Oh, Cécile, why don't you keep out of it?"

Cécile looked thoughtfully at her sister and nodded.

"I am going to," said she. "I have been thinking it over and have come to the conclusion that I was a cat. I will tell Paula so. Don't let us talk about it; I'm awfully ashamed. What is going on above?"

"Fog and calm," said Hermione, pleased at getting off the topic. "Uncle Chris is worrying about the Pilot-fish. So am I."

Cécile knit her brows. She had honestly determined to give up Huntington Wood, and had rather consoled herself by thinking that she would at least "take it out" of the Pilot-fish. And now, here was Hermione confessing to an anxiety for this self-sufficient young man. For Cécile felt that she was navigating shallow and uncharted waters.

"What are *you* worrying for, Hermione?"

"I don't like to think of Applebo out here in that little tub. We are in a silly business, *I* think."

"No sillier than he is."

"It's undignified. Papa gives him a dare and he takes it. Suppose he were to come to grief, how would we feel?"

"I don't see that we are to blame if a silly young man in a sixty-foot yawl tries to stay with a big sea-going schooner. It's rather cheeky of him, *I* think."

"It's a game" . . . Hermione knit her brows . . . "and not one that I care for. I like Applebo. Besides" . . . her tint deepened

a trifle . . . "he's the only man I ever met to give me a thrill."

"Hermione!"

"It's nothing to be ashamed of. He fascinates me, and I like him, too. He is something between a tiger and a great boy. When he leaped on that pig of a keeper he was the tiger, tawny and fierce, and swift and strong. . . ." Hermione's eyes kindled, and the light in them found its reflection in those of Cécile. Her breath came more quickly.

"And the boy?" she asked.

Hermione laughed, and her colour spread to the tips of her little ears.

"When he kissed me good-bye . . ."

"What?" cried Cécile, honestly scandalised. With all of her coquetries Cécile had always drawn her dead-line before the kissing stage.

"He kissed me good-bye out there in the water," said Hermione, smiling. "I couldn't help myself. I'm not sure that I would have done so if I could. It was a very diluted kiss and finished under water. . . ."

"Hermione! You ought to be ashamed . . .!" Cécile looked as if she had just been kissed herself. "Well . . .?"

"It wasn't much pay . . . considering the service recently rendered. To tell the truth, I was rather crazy about it. I've been kissed under the mistletoe, and under the ear, and under protest, but to be kissed under water is distinctly sensationai. Another like it and I would have drowned happy. . . ."

"Hermione! . . . hush! You shameless hussy!" Cécile was laughing in spite of herself, but she was agitated also. Oddly, in spite of her disapproval, she was conscious of a sudden envy of her younger sister's unaffected naturalness. Hermione had been kissed under circumstances which she found most agreeable, and she did not mind saying so. But Cécile knew well that Hermione would put up a very prett^v little fight before she would submit to the same sort of thing again. Still, as an older sister, she felt that she ought to read Hermione a little lesson. In which sophistry there was a certain element of ironic humour which Cécile, being a very feminine woman, was quite unable to appreciate.

"You surprise me, my dear," she said, sedately. "Of course, you are merely a child and, as you say, you couldn't very well help yourself. But I wish I had known that this undesired appendage

of ours had collected his pay. I would have told him what I thought of it. You seem to think that it was quite right and a gentlemanly sort of performance and all that. But if a man had done that sort of thing to me”

“Rats . . . !” said Hermione, and went in to console Paula.

It was two days after these unpleasant incidents that the *Shark* sailed into Halifax harbour, arriving at about noon. Exactly four hours later the *Daffodil* was sighted, blowing in with a damp breeze which had backed into the east and smelt of trouble.

“Get under way!” growled Bell. “Keep the scoundrel on the move. . . .”

The *Shark* had already left her forwarding address for Old Point Comfort, a little run of eight or nine hundred miles. She got her anchor shortly after the *Daffodil* had dropped her own. It is probable that Applebo followed her out and hung on her heels through the night, which was sufficiently clear, for at daylight the news spread over the schooner that the yawl was on the starboard quarter, a mile astern, and as the day advanced, she hauled up abeam, about half a mile distant.

All of that day the two vessels were in sight

of each other. Toward evening the breeze dropped light, and Bell was wild.

"We could leave him with a bit of wind and sea, but this sort of thing is just his weather. Wait, though. The race is not always to the swift!" Which was lucky for the *Shark*.

At midnight the wind dropped to almost a calm. Daylight showed the *Daffodil* wallowing drowsily on the long, oily rollers, almost in the same position as of the evening before. She was under her mainsail and forestaysail only, the jib and mizzen being dropped.

Captain Bell's language would be barred by the censor.

"It's an insult!" he raved. "Shortenin' sail to keep from leavin' us! Just you wait, you peroxide blonde! I'll make you wish you were in the Adirondacks!"

As if to help him to fulfil his threat the breeze sprang up freshly from sou'west, with the promise of plenty to follow. Bell tacked inshore. The Pilot-fish stood out to sea.

"Now, what is the chump doin' that for?" Bell demanded of Heldstrom.

"He t'inks der vind vill back into der sout'-east . . . und I am not sure but he vas r'right.

It iss late of der season, und der vind iss a little crazy."

"It's more apt to come nor'west . . . and hard, with this risin' glass!" Bell retorted.

But before the following morning the wind *was* southeast, thus putting the *Daffodil* well to windward.

Bell's prophecy was true, though a trifle belated, and a hard nor'wester gave the *Shark* the weather gauge for the finish of the run. Early one morning the old schooner pushed in sluggishly against the four-knot tide racing out between Old Point and the Rip-Raps, and came to anchor just beyond the can buoy opposite the hotel, on the far side of the swash-channel leading to Hampton. There was no sign of the *Daffodil*, and Captain Bell was anticipating a pleasant, if unhygienic, sojourn with certain whiskey-drinking, poker-playing friends from the cruisers and battleships lying in the port when, to his intense disgust, he received a letter from his lawyers, requesting an interview for the current week.

"Marblehead!" he snapped to Heldstrom. "I've got to be in Boston the end of this week or early the next."

So the *Shark* got her anchor, scarcely wet,

hoisted sails still unfurled, and slipped out with the same tide which had so stubbornly contested her entry. Saddened eyes from the men-o'-war followed her departure. An old crony, with three lovely daughters and a taste for vintage wines, is a serious loss to his friends.

"Never mind," Bell observed, philosophically, to Huntington Wood. "I never got off so easily in all my life. That gang would have got me tanked at my expense, drunk up all of my brandy, smoked all of my good cigars, cleaned me out at poker, and finished the job by telling me that if it wasn't for the nose-pole on the old *Shark*, they'd make bets on which way she was going! I know 'em! Rotters all! My only revenge is that Cécile usually leaves three or four bayin' at the moon!"

Which was not a pretty speech for a number of reasons, chief of them being that the man to whom he spoke had been left in that same lugubrious position some few months previously. But Captain Bell was possessed of his full share of shrewdness, and it was already apparent to his rheumy eye that his guest was in a fair way of being consoled.

Halfway across the mouth of the Chesapeake

that same rheumy eye, which was one of the quickest aboard to pick up objects at sea, discovered a diminutive fleck on the drab wall of the sky.

"Here comes that infernal Pilot-fish!" said he. "I thought we'd lost him!"

Wood, sufficiently keen of sight, marvelled. There had been no question in Bell's voice; he was merely stating a fact. Wood's glass revealed it as a fact. Like most men who have certain talents which excel and some lacking faculty which can never be more than an object of ridicule, Bell was unconscious of the former and fought hard for recognition in the latter. In the same connection, he was a profane man, yet an authority on the Bible. At heart he was religious.

The news of the Pilot-fish brought all hands on deck more quickly than might have done an alarm of fire. The wind had got into the north-east, and Bell, scanning the weather conditions with an experienced eye, told Wood that it looked to him as if they were in for a hard "easter," and that the following morning might find the *Shark* behind the Delaware Breakwater, there to wait until the weather improved.

The *Daffodil* was coming up with the fresh

easterly breeze, valiantly bucking the strong ebb tide. As the two vessels rapidly approached, a peculiar quiet fell upon the deck of the *Shark*. The little yawl looked very tiny and very much alone upon that broad expanse of grey water, and the knowledge that she was coming in from the sea at the end of a run of nearly a thousand miles inspired a sort of admiration.

As she drew closer aboard, they could see the ruddy-yellow head of Applebo projecting above the high coaming, and forward the dark, squat figure of the Finn standing by the mast.

“Stand by to give ’em a dip o’ the ensign . . .” growled Bell to the quartermaster of the watch.

The courses of the two vessels would bring them abreast of one another at the distance of about half a mile. Hermione glanced at her father.

“Why don’t you speak him and tell him where we’re bound?” she asked.

“Not a bit of it!” snapped Bell. “Let him find out for himself at Old Point.”

With everything taut and drawing, the *Daffodil* drew abeam, and through the glass Hermione saw the Finn scramble aft and run a small packet to the peak.

"There goes his ensign in stops . . ." said she.

"Dip!" ordered Bell. The *Shark's* ensign came slowly down. At the same moment Applebo broke out his at the main-peak. The *Daffodil* held straight on her course toward Hampton Roads.

"I'll bet he hasn't had much sleep!" said Bell, grimly.

From the forecastle of the *Shark* there came the subdued though vehement sounds of a lively altercation. Heldstrom came swinging aft, scratching his curly, grizzled head.

"Der bets is all mixed up, zir!" said he. "I don't know if I owe der cook ten dollars, or if he owes me fifteen!"

CHAPTER XI

FOR three days the *Shark* beat stubbornly back and forth against a hard head-wind and a short, choppy sea, into which she drove her bows like a wedge, completely to check her way. The wind never exceeded the velocity which sailors call "a fresh gale," but it held dead ahead, appearing with devilish persistency to follow the bow around when the schooner tacked, hanging fiendishly on the end of her raking jib-boom.

Nobody aboard particularly cared. The *Shark*, if slow, was the height of comfort, even in a sea-way, with very little angular heel, and no motion to speak of beyond the steady churning of her bows. In the cabin they read, and played bridge, and Bell went into the galley and made certain horrible messes which were, as usual, sent forward to the crew, but unfailingly fell overboard *en route*.

Her two sisters had convinced Paula that she was free to marry the man she loved, whereupon Wood had formally requested her hand of Captain Bell, who most cordially gave his consent. This occasion was made one of general celebration fore

and aft. At dinner, Bell grew genially mellow and made an excellent speech, after which the two young people appeared to fade gently from the popular view and find much service for secluded corners of the vessel.

"At any rate," Bell observed, on the third day of the stubborn blow, "if we are *not* gettin' to wind'ard fast, it's comfortin' to know that the Pilot-fish is doin' even worse. The chances are he hasn't tackled it. A little boat that size couldn't get north a mile a day in this chop!"

Had the worthy naval man known that at that particular moment Mr. Applebo was booming up the Delaware River with a fair wind and tide, bound for the entrance of the Raritan Canal, which would eventually drop him out at South Amboy, in the Lower Bay at New York, Bell's disgust might have led to an explosion dangerous to his health.

For the poet, on arriving at Old Point Comfort and learning that the *Shark* had sailed for Marblehead, Mass., took a careful survey of the weather, and decided to "go up inside." It was apparent that there was an easterly gale brewing, and the storm signal was already flying from the station at Old Point. Applebo knew that, under

these conditions, it would be a waste of time to go to sea, and determined to outflank his "host" by taking the inland route as far as New York, then, if the weather was still contrary, to keep on east through the sounds: Long Island, Block Island, The Vineyard, and Nan'ucket. This route would ensure still water the whole distance from Hampton Roads to Cape Cod, while the north-eastern, then blowing outside, would enable him to make one "long leg" of it, close-hauled, up the Chesapeake.

He was therefore nearly to the Raritan Canal before Bell had even laid Cape May abeam. Propelled by a four-mule breeze through the canal, and the ebbing tide in the Raritan River, the *Daffodil* was skimming around the end of Staten Island while the *Shark* was walloping about off Atlantic City, slatting and slamming in the calm which followed the blow.

The *Daffodil* caught a tow up the East River behind a blue-stone barge, and cast off at Randall's Island to catch the first of the ebb at White-stone. Here, in company with a hundred or more coasting schooners known as "the ebb-tide fleet," she was favoured by a roaring nor'wester which boomed her the whole length of the Sound,

from Execution to Fisher's Island. Holding on eastward through the sounds, she encountered fog and baffling breezes, in spite of which she rounded Cape Cod, crossed Massachusetts Bay, and dropped anchor off the Eastern Yacht Club at Marblehead, some thirty-six hours before the *Shark* was sighted.

A fresh southeast breeze brought Bell careening around the Cape and across the Bay, thereby doing much to eliminate his disgust with the weather encountered earlier in the run.

"Who wants to bet that we find the Pilot-fish at Marblehead?" he asked, jocosely.

"I do," replied Hermione.

"Huh?"

"I'll bet you that he's beat us out, in spite of the weather. Come now . . .!"

"You're crazy . . . huh . . . h'm . . ."

"Perhaps. But here's a chance for you to get square for that month's allowance that you are going to be stung for."

The others laughed, thinking that Hermione was having a little fun at her father's expense. As a matter of fact, she was having more than they realised. Offshore sailors that they all were, Hermione was the only one who had thought of the

"mud-hole" route, but once having thought of it, she was certain that Applebo would avail himself of it. In this case, it needed but a glance at the charts to show Hermione, herself a good practical sailor, how tremendous an advantage it would give him.

"Huh . . .!" growled Bell. "I can't take a fool bet like that! It's not within the bounds of nautical possibility that a little tub like that should have overhauled us through that head chop! Then that nor'wester was just our meat! All we could pack under our four lowers. What's the matter with you?"

"All right," said Hermione, coolly; "then take me on at odds."

"I'll give you ten to one . . . just to teach you a lesson!" snapped her father.

"Done with you. Ten dollars to a hundred. . . ." And Hermione made a note of the bet, and compelled her father to sign it, he muttering deep-sea blessings.

Wherefore one may picture the scene which followed when, at about four of a lovely August afternoon, the *Shark* came bowling into the little harbour of Marblehead to find the *Daffodil* lying serenely at anchor off the Yacht Club.

For an instant Bell was deprived of speech, through sheer astonishment, not unmixed with awe. When they had last sighted the yawl off Cape Charles, she had still sixty miles to do against a strong tide before ever she fetched Old Point. By that time the tide would have begun to flow again, so that by the time that Applebo had learned their next port, and taken the water and stores of which he must have been in need after more than a week at sea, he would have had another thirty miles of head wind and tide, or a six-hour delay. Thereafter was to be considered the easterly blow . . . the thing was obviously impossible!

Then, like a flash, came the true solution. Bell slapped his fat thigh and let out a roar like a bull cachalot.

“That’s it, by the jumpin’ John Rogers! The scoundrel sneaked up inside!”

“Of course he did!” cried Hermione. “Why the dickens wouldn’t he? That’s the reason I made my bet!”

“Huh . . . h’m . . . hough . . .!” Bell went off like a badly-made firework. “And you have the nerve to expect me to pay a bet like that? When he tows behind a jackass for miles!

Why not load his brute of a yawl on a flat-car and be done with it! I won't pay!"

"Yes, you ll, old boy!" said Hermione. "We bet on his being here; not on how he came!"

The others sided with her. Bell appealed to Wood, counting on support from a son-in-law elect.

"You are stung," said that young man. "All that you have got to do now is to pay up." Which Bell did, lamenting piteously.

"To-morrow," said he, "I must run into Boston to see the lawyers. The day after that we make a run for Bermuda . . . or St. Paul, or Tristan d'Acunha . . . I don't care where. But I'll lose that yaller-crested gillyflower if I have to lead him through the Northwest Passage!"

That night Huntington Wood invited his host and hostesses to dine at the Yacht Club. The place was very gay, for although the yachting season was on its wane, the hot weather had held and there were many yachts lying in the harbour. It was a lively room, a trifle more brilliant than select, as yachting contingents are apt to be, but rich in life and colour and gaiety.

The "Sharks" were scarcely more than seated

when Hermione, happening to glance toward the door, saw Harold Applebo.

"The Pilot-fish!" she whispered.

Applebo was quite alone. For a moment he stood in the doorway, sleepily surveying the room. From here and there people at different tables caught sight of him, then whispered to their table-companions, so that in that moment, brief as it was, the poet became the focus of every pair of eyes in the room.

One might have travelled far and failed to find so striking a figure. Applebo was in the regulation yachting costume for evening dress, the only eccentric feature being a somewhat voluminous black silk scarf of poetic or artistic pattern. His great mane of reddish-yellow hair fell in a wavy mass, almost hiding his ears. His skin was clear as the water of the Great Dismal Swamp, and tanned to nearly the same tea-colour, with its golden lights. Antique ivory would best describe its tone. The amber eyes, darkly-fringed, blinked sleepily from table to table, as though looking for a vacant place.

A peculiar silence had fallen on the room. Everybody was looking at Applebo, who, for his part, appeared as drowsily indifferent as a lion

in the Zoo. He was standing straight as a poplar, yet quite at ease and with no hint of stiffness or self-consciousness. As his slow scrutiny passed the table occupied by Wood and his party, it paused for a moment. He smiled and slightly inclined his head, then crossed the room and took a single table in a far corner.

At Wood's table, which was in the centre of the room, the captain was at one end, Paula at the other, Hermione facing the door, and Cécile and Wood directly confronting Applebo. Bell, as the poet entered, twisted about and gave him a goggle-eyed stare.

"He's thinner!" announced Bell, with satisfaction; "a thundering sight thinner! Good-looking fool, ain't he . . . huh?" He nodded at the others with the air of one discovering a new and surprising fact. "If you were to cut his thatch and poke him up a little with a sharp stick, he might be even handsome . . . huh . . . h'm . . ." He began to gurgle.

Cécile found it quite impossible to keep her eyes from Applebo. Try as she did, they kept straying back. For his part, the poet was looking dreamily into space, and when his dinner arrived it appeared to consist of a succession of melons,

which he devoured, one after the other, with infinite relish. Cécile estimated that he must have eaten at least six.

Occasionally he looked her way without appearing to see her. The melons were followed by snipe on toast. A considerable flock flew down the throat of the poet, in strange contradiction to his views on the killing of game.

From snipe, Cécile observed that his taste backed around the compass to fish. Bluefish were at their prime, and Mr. Applebo took advantage of the fact to quietly devour the best part of the amidships section of a big one. This accomplished he licked his lips, looked at Cécile, and blinked.

All of this took considerable time, during which Cécile's eyes were so constantly seeking Applebo that her companions began to notice it. Nobody said anything, however, until presently Hermione observed:—

“Don't try to hypnotise him 'til he's finished eating, Cécile. Think how long the poor fellow must have been on tinned rations.”

The others laughed. Bell glanced at the poet.

“Help!” cried he. “The chump is eatin' his dinner backward! He's on *hors-d'œuvres* now.”

Which was quite true, Mr. Applebo having caught sight of some anchovies at an adjoining table and conceived a relish for them.

In spite of Hermione's remark, Cécile found herself physically unable to keep her eye away from him. He fascinated her. Looking about the room she saw that others shared in this peculiar desire to stare at Applebo, who for his part was as utterly oblivious of those about as if he had been in the cabin of his yawl. The man was so strikingly singular. Cécile observed that he did not even sit at the table as did other folk. His back was arched like a bow, big shoulders hunched forward, chin thrust up so that the fringe of his long, shaggy mane swept below his coat collar, while his legs were bent under his chair, the toes hooked around the chair legs from inside out. Though one could certainly find no fault with his appetite, he picked at his food in a curiously dainty way. This mannerism also suggested a cat, which animal, while never appearing to eat, can get away with a prodigious amount of food. Occasionally he looked up and blinked about the room.

There were several attractive men, all yachtsmen, straight-backed, squarely set, good-looking

young chaps, but Cécile scarcely saw one of them. As the minutes passed and she continued to watch the poet, there began to develop within her the same peculiar obsession of which she had been the prey after her visit to the *Daffodil*. This time it was stronger and tinged with a warmer personal interest. At Halifax, Old Point Comfort, and again that afternoon, when the mail had come aboard, she had received an offering of verse. The Halifax poem, which had been mailed from Shoal Harbour, had impressed her deeply, less in its execution than in the thought conveyed, which was of an intensity that thrilled her. The realisation of the long sea-miles which the little yawl had covered, the long sea-watches which the man opposite must have spent, the fog, wind, rain, and calms . . . all of the details of an offshore voyage in a little shallop like the *Daffodil* . . . merely to be near the object of his adoration, herself. There was a mediæval romanticism about this steadfast devotion which took powerful hold of the sentimental side of Cécile's nature.

Before the dinner was half over Applebo's attraction for her had reached a point where it appeared to monopolise her whole consciousness.

She lost interest in her food; her conversation diminished, and what she said was abstracted. She was trying to get sufficient possession of herself to request Wood, in a casual way, to bring the poet over to their table, but was almost afraid of betraying the state of her emotions. These were such as most girls experience during their first season. She longed to hear the deep, resonant, purring voice, but felt that if he spoke to her she would make herself ridiculous.

Hermione, facing her, observed enough of this suppressed agitation to arouse her to an ironic amusement.

“Look at Cécile!” said she. “I warned her not to try to hypnotise the Pilot-fish. Now he has hypnotised her!”

Had Hermione known the actual state of her sister's feelings she would never, of course, have thus cruelly directed the general attention upon her. Instead, however, she ascribed Cécile's schoolgirl manner to curiosity and the mistaken idea that *she* was the object of the Pilot-fish's assiduity. Consequently she was a little startled at the sudden flame in her sister's cheeks and the resentment in her eyes when the others began to laugh.

Cécile, for the moment, lost her poise.

"It's all very well to laugh," said she, vexedly, "but if you had been bombarded by verse as *I* have by our friend yonder, you might exhibit a certain amount of curiosity also!"

Hermione's eyes opened very wide. She instantly understood the situation. Applebo, then, had been sending verses addressed to "Miss Cécile Bell," intended for herself, Hermione, and most naturally appropriated by her sister. She was filled by a sudden gust of anger.

Captain Bell, however, was staring at Cécile.

"What's that?" he demanded. "Been sending you verses . . .? Why, confound his impudence, how long has he been doing that? I never heard of such cheek . . . and I'll go aboard his boat and tell him so. . . ."

"Oh, hush . . .!" As usual, the good captain had raised his voice to its quarter-deck pitch. "There was no harm in his doing so. The verses are quite innocent, and some are rather pretty. It's merely his pose. . . ."

Bell began to eat and grumble. Wood laughed and glanced at Paula. Hermione, hot with irritation, lost her interest in the entrée. She wanted the verses which she knew had been meant for her,

and in her mind she anathematised the Pilot-fish for his fatuous blunder, Cécile for her self-complacency, and herself for being so silly as to let the man persist in his error as to her identity.

"You might let the rest of us see 'em," grumbled Bell. "Hereafter, tack 'em up on the mainmast. Don't know, however, that I approve of my daughter receivin' verses from a long-haired yellow tom-cat. . . ."

"Nonsense!" said Cécile, sharply, and wishing that she had not spoken.

Bell subsided, glared, and savagely crunched the leg of a sorarail. His eyes passed to Hermione.

"Bless my soul!" he cried. "I believe Hermione's jealous! Look at the jade!"

Hermione *was* jealous, and her vivid cheeks and sapphire eyes showed it. But more than being jealous was she irritated and disgusted as well at the whole absurd situation. She determined to abolish the poet as a pilot-fish, and that before she was twelve hours older.

Matters were in this nervous state when Applebo, having made his dessert of a plate of soup, arose suddenly and made his graceful and light-footed way toward the door. For a man of his size and weight he moved like a dancer. As he passed

Wood's party he bowed, with a quick, flashing smile. Bell, who was gobbling a *filet au cœur d'artichaut*, looked after him with a sort of resentful admiration. Being short and fat and red, and formerly black-haired, he found much to admire in the physical appearance of Applebo.

"Not a bad-looking chap," said he, grudgingly. "Looks rather as I should think Heldstrom might have looked when *he* was a youngster."

Hermione looked startled. She had never thought of it before, but what her father's keen eyes had discovered was quite true. There was a great deal about Applebo that suggested Heldstrom, and the voices of the two men were identical, barring the huskiness which many years of full-throated commands had put into the tones of Heldstrom.

"Have you decided on your next jump?" asked Wood, of Bell.

Bell glanced around the table. "What do you all say to Bermuda?" he asked. "It ain't the season, of course, but it would be rather good fun to see if he tackles it."

"Bad time of year," said Hermione. "There's always a West Indian hurricane in August or September."

"Can't feaze *us*," said Bell.

"It might feaze the Pilot-fish," said Paula.
"Suppose anything were to happen him."

"There won't. He knows his business. There's a lot more danger on the coast than offshore, anyway. If he follows us there I'll own myself outclassed. What d'ye say?"

"Bermuda!" answered Cécile, leaning forward on the table, her eyes very bright. Bell looked at Hermione.

"Bermuda!" said she, with a peculiar little smile.

"Paula . . . oh, Paula doesn't count. She's too much in love. Bermuda, Buenos Ayres, Hoboken . . . they all look alike to her. Wood?"

"Bermuda. I know of lots of things more to worry about than Harold."

"Bermuda it is, then!" Bell raised his glass of champagne.

"Here she goes south! The *Shark* and the *Daffodil*. Bottoms . . ."

"*Down!*" cried the laughing chorus.

CHAPTER XII

BACK aboard the *Shark*, Paula and Huntington did what Hermione called their "wonderful disappearing act." Bell had lingered in the club to play poker, at which he was very good, and to drink whiskey-and-soda, of which he stood in no need. Cécile retired, and Hermione went into the saloon, where she sat at a gravity writing-table, and after destroying some dozen or more sheets of expensive note-paper, with the *Shark's* insignia, she gave up her task in disgust and went to her room. Not being in the least sleepy, she curled up in a heap of cushions and tried to interest herself in a French play, but meeting with no success, she flung aside the pamphlet, one of the *Illustration* supplements, and gave herself up to the topic which so occupied her mind. Needless to say, this was Mr. Applebo.

Unlike Cécile's meditations, which were apt to be self-indulgent, pleasant, and profitless, those of Hermione were swift, ruthless, and followed by prompt and decisive action. Half an hour of concentrated thought and she had extracted from her reflections three opinions and a resolve.

Of these opinions, the first was that Applebo

was in love with nobody but himself and his Muse, that he found the situation piquant and amusing, and was having just as much fun out of it as were the "Sharks," which was saying a good deal.

The second opinion was that she, Hermione, had been very violently and dangerously attracted by the peculiar personality of Mr. Applebo, but that she had thoroughly overcome it (*sic*).

The third opinion was that Cécile was also violently and dangerously attracted by the peculiar personality of Mr. Applebo, and was very far from being over it.

And the resolve was that she would write to Mr. Applebo to say that they had had enough of him, and would he kindly clear out!

Action always followed hot on the heels of Hermione's resolutions. She was a mature-minded girl, and found no difficulty in crystallising her thought into words. This was, no doubt, because her thought was a saturated solution and not the dilute, strained-out, indecisive brain-mush of so many of us. Hermione whipped up her writing-pad and indited swiftly the following:—

DEAR MR. APPLEBO:—Permit me to compliment you upon the able way in which you have

demonstrated your admirable seamanship. It must be, and no doubt is, a source of great satisfaction to you to prove to us your capacities.

("That will cheer him up, if he has one grain of modesty!" thought Hermione.)

I must tell you, however, that, in the opinion of some of us aboard the *Shark*, the game has now gone quite far enough. We acknowledge your ability to cope with our vessel in soundings or out of them.

My father is planning to sail for Bermuda in two days, and I must request that you do not follow us. Your somewhat peculiar constancy is beginning to excite a little comment outside our immediate circle, and I think it better in many ways that it should be discontinued.

My father is inclined to resent your sending of verses to my sister Cécile, and perhaps it would be better to discontinue this attention also.

Sincerely yours,

HERMIONE CHESTER BELL.

Thought Hermione, having completed this hasty epistle, "There! Something tells me that he will read this, and curl up his six-feet-two in a manner to arouse the envy of a chestnut-worm!"

This heartless epistle achieved, Hermione decided for bed, but after undressing and snapping off her light, for the *Shark* had a dynamo, she found herself still wakeful. Wherefore, she re-illuminated, and attacked the French play with greater interest, other preoccupations being disposed of. This play was one which, had her mother been alive, Hermione would never have been permitted to read. But the maternal vigilance of a Norwegian sailorman can hardly be expected to ransack the lockers of nineteen-year-old young ladies, wherefore Hermione was perusing a somewhat tarnished story, with her red lip contemptuously curled, when the little ship's clock in the saloon rang sharply four bells.

Hermione shoved the play through her port-hole and was about to try for sleep again when she heard a rustling outside her door.

"Hermione . . .!" said a low voice, which she recognised as Cécile's.

"Yes?"

The door opened and Cécile came in. Hermione, glancing with surprise at her sister, was startled at Cécile's pale and tragic beauty. Her shimmering hair was drawn severely back from her broad, low forehead, and hung in two heavy braids well

below her waist. Her grey eyes, with their dark, encircling lashes, were like stars, but ringed about in a way that alarmed Hermione. Cécile wore her white, embroidered kimono, which hung straight from her shoulders like the sacrificial robe of a Druidess. There was a bright red spot in either cheek, and her bosom was rising and falling rapidly. Cécile reminded Hermione of Goethe's "Bride of Corinth" . . . that is, in appearance.

"Cécile!" she cried. "What is the matter? Are you ill?"

The colour flooded the face of Cécile.

"I am off my head, I think!" she answered. "I can't sleep; I can't think! I don't seem to belong to myself!"

"Cécile . . .!" Hermione crossed the room and dropped on the transome beside her sister, who had sunk down amongst the cushions. "What is it, dear?"

Cécile caught her breath and choked back a sob. Tenderness in Hermione touched her, where in Paula she would have thought nothing of it. She pressed her hands over her eyes, then dropped both arms, and looked intently at her sister.

"Hermione," she said, "are you in love with Harold Applebo?"

Hermione turned to her a very startled face.

"No!" she answered, emphatically.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am! I never met him but once in my life!"

"Nor I," answered Cécile, and sprang to her feet, "but I am madly, insanely, desperately in love with him! It's silly, I know! It's unreasonable, and unmaidenly . . . anything you like. But I can't think of anything but this man! What is it, Hermione? Am I crazy?"

She turned to her sister with a half-sob. Hermione saw that Cécile's hands were clenched so tightly as to drive the finger-nails into the delicate skin. Her face was colourless, except for two crimson spots on either cheek and the red line of her lips.

Hermione was not only startled, but tremendously surprised. She had always thought rather contemptuously of Cécile's possible capacity for deep feeling, and rather pityingly of Paula's, ultimately concluding that she, Hermione, was blessed,

or cursed, with all that there was in the family!

"But, my dear," cried Hermione, "you never spoke to him but once!"

"I know it," replied Cécile, wearily. "I'm a crazy fool! It's quite shameless of me, is it not?" She gave a bitter little laugh. "The man has put a spell on me! I can't close my eyes without seeing that yellow mane and those sleepy amber eyes . . . and they are not so sleepy, either, when you look closely! It's a possession! What am I to do? And the worst of it is, I know that he has some sort of a tender sentiment for me. Oh, why doesn't he come over here and say so, instead of keeping me on pins and needles with his everlasting verses?"

Hermione looked thoughtfully at her sister. For an instant she was on the point of telling Cécile bluntly that the verses were actually intended for herself. But she was quite aware of her sister's unconscious vanity, and felt that to do so would arouse her undying resentment. So she merely asked:—

"Do you really care for him? Or is it only a sort of infatuation?"

"So far, I don't see how it can be more than infatuation," replied Cécile, frankly; "but I think

that I might easily care . . . and care a great deal, when I came to know him. You can scarcely be said to be in love with a person you don't know. As it is, I sometimes feel as if I hated him! It is not even an infatuation. I am fascinated, I suppose . . . as you sometimes see a bird fascinated by a cat. There is something about his lazy, indifferent, cat-like look and manner that makes me feel at times like whacking him!" She laughed, nervously.

Hermione wrinkled her forehead and contemplated her sister in deep thought. Cécile watched her in that confident anxiety with which a patient might regard a very young but intelligent physician who has just been put in possession of a history of the case. In force of character and what is commonly called "strength," Hermione was easily the senior of the three sisters, for all of her trifling nineteen years of inexperience. Besides her natural intelligence, Hermione had a good deal of theoretic knowledge of the world, its men and women, and the psychology of love, from the reading of books written by folk who should have understood their subject, and had frequently obtained this knowledge at a considerable price. Wherefore, after a few moments of

thought, she observed, with all of the aplomb of forty years:—

“When a girl feels as you do toward a man with whom she is not really in love, it is time that he was told to clear out. Once removed from your life, you would very quickly get over it.”

Cécile looked dissatisfied.

“But I am not at all sure that I want him out of my life,” she said. “I would rather prefer that he came into it. The trouble is, he does neither the one thing nor the other.”

“Have you a clear idea of what you *do* want?” asked Hermione.

“No.”

“I have. What you would like would be to keep him dangling about, to be ultimately reduced to the same pulpy substance into which you have converted so many others. It can't be done. He's a different breed of cat.”

Cécile shivered. “Uncle Chris told me one day that this would happen to me.” She sighed. “What shall I do, Hermione?”

“Nothing,” said Hermione. “Leave it to me.”

“To you!”

“Yes. I will settle the matter” Hermione's

pretty mouth assumed the austerity of a schoolmarm's.

"What will you do?"

"I will request his resignation."

"Do you think that he will obey?"

"Of course. He is a gentleman, and he has assured us right along that whenever we got tired of him we had only to say the word. I will say it."

Cécile looked at her sister doubtfully. Hermione, returning the glance, observed that Cécile's eyelids were heavy. It was evident that she was feeling the reaction of her outburst and would now sleep. The recital of her woes had relieved the pressure within. But she was not entirely content with Hermione's solution.

"Do you think that he is in love with me, Hermione?" she asked, with an odd shyness.

"No. He is in love with nobody but himself. This thing amuses him. He is a natural-born seafarer with a soft streak in him, and nothing pleases him more than to sail around and lead a hard life and write mushy verse. He sent me fathoms of the same sort of harmless slush before transferring his delicate attentions to you. I chucked them back at him. Now go to bed."

Cécile arose, wearily.

"I knew that he had sent you verses," she said, "but I thought that maybe he had got our names mixed up."

The irony of this almost extorted a true statement of the case from Hermione. But she saw that Cécile had plainly had enough emotion for one séance.

"Go to bed, dear," said she. "It's nearly five bells. Papa must be making a night of it. You will sleep now, I am sure."

Cécile kissed her, then drifted, like a very lovely and dishevelled ghost, out into the dim-lit corridor.

A few hours later, when Hermione went on deck for her morning row, the fog was so dense that it gave her an impression of being under water, and very soapy water at that. Heldstrom, who never appeared to sleep, greeted her with a shake of the head.

"Not this morning, yoong lady," said he. "Go back to bed."

"Oh, please . . ." begged Hermione. "I love to row around in the fog."

Heldstrom assumed an expression of severity.

"Und I love not to haf you!" said he. "Vat ii you r'row str'raight out to sea, and keep on

r'rowing? Vat would your fadder say to me for losing der skiff?"

Hermione laughed. "You are not very flattering to yourself as a teacher, Uncle Chris," said she. "If I were to do a landlubber trick like that, I'd deserve to get lost! What do you take me for, a Sunday picknicker? Give me a dory-compass."

Heldstrom was evidently shaken. He took tremendous pride in Hermione's nautical abilities.

"You are forever saying that I'm a better sailor than anybody aboard," said Hermione. "Now prove it. You have sent the dinghy ashore. . . ." She glanced at the boat-boom.

Heldstrom grinned. "That proves noddng. If a square-head gets lost who gifs a hang? Dere are plenty more. Und dinghys, too. But dere iss only von Hermione in all der vorld."

Hermione saw that the old sailor was weakening fast. She slipped to his side, threw one arm over his shoulder, and raising herself on tiptoes, dropped a light kiss on the weather-beaten cheek.

"Please, Uncle Chris," she whispered, "or I'll think that all you say about my seamanship is just a bluff!"

Christian Heldstrom threw up his great arms like a drowning man.

"By Jingo!" growled he, "vat's der use? Take your boat. Take all der boats. . . ." He turned to the grinning and delighted quartermaster. "Miss Hermione's skiff!" said he, gruffly.

He himself placed the dory-compass in the sternsheets.

"Der landing bears sout'east by sout'," said Heldstrom. "So we bear from der landing . . . what?"

"Nor'east by nothe . . ." said Hermione, with a laugh. "Would you like to hear me say my letters?"

"You try to sass me? Ven you hear *dong* . . . *dong* . . . *dong* . . . steady like dis on der ship's bell, that iss we."

"And when you hear *bang!* and a square-foot of paint off the ship's side," laughed Hermione, "that am I. . . !"

"Off wit' you . . . !" growled Heldstrom, and made a feint to dash at her. Hermione's light oars took the water, and her laugh came back, merry though muffled, as she slipped like a wraith into the fog. There was really no

danger, as traffic was at a standstill and one could tell by the swell when opposite an entrance leading out to sea.

Hermione was wearing a green flannel shirt-waist and her green plaid homespun skirt. Hunting-green and deep shades of crimson were Hermione's colours, just as the yellow tones belonged to Applebo. This morning her colour-scheme extended even to her tam, while the reflection of the drab-grey water in her violet eyes did its best to carry out the prevailing tone. The only alien note was the crimson ribbon, wound like a fillet about her black hair, which she wore twisted around her pretty head, as tightly as she could draw it.

So dense was the fog that Hermione rowed slowly, fearful of bumping some of the many craft at anchor. From time to time she glanced at her compass, and occasionally she twisted about on the thwart and tried to pierce the opacity which appeared to hang like a soft, fleecy blanket directly before the bow of her skiff. Once she heard the *chug-chug* of a motor-boat, apparently approaching, but at her musical hail it sheered off and she heard voices talking loudly, against the din of the engine.

"If I don't look out," thought Hermione, "I will run slap into the *Daffodil*. She is hung up squarely in my course to the landing."

At the thought of this possibility it occurred to Hermione that, were she to run onto the yawl, she might leave her note in person, with perhaps a few supplementary words. This practical idea, while not particularly discreet, gave her a decided thrill. The heavy fog would prevent her call from being observed, and in any case she would conduct the interview from her skiff.

Wherefore, when Hermione estimated that she must be very close aboard the yawl, she rested on her oars and tried to stare into the enveloping fog. There was not a breath of air, and the moisture was not chill, but warm and humid like steam. It was so thick as to be almost palpable, following any motion in swirls, and making one's breathing slightly laborious. The little harbour was full of yachts, and from all sides there came to the girl's ears the muffled and random sounds of the floating community; a snatch of song, the creak and whine of blocks, the splash of a packing-box most slovenly thrown overboard, a laugh, the *chunk-a-chunk* of oars, and the hail of a voice calling out to locate the vessel sought. Hermione

felt herself to be in a mystic, sightless, and elusive world.

She altered her course slightly, and took a dozen strokes, then rested again. She was looking and listening when suddenly, out of the fog and spoken almost in her ear, there came a resonant bass, which announced to any who might wish to hear:—

*“ Her eyes are blue as the violet’s hue,
Her voice is a carol of bliss,
Her teeth are pearls from the deep-sea worlds,
Her mouth is the throne of a kiss.*

“To take her hand is to . . . to . . . to . . .” (sudden changing of the recitative tone) “to . . . oh, dammit . . . what is it to take her hand? Hanged if I haven’t forgot . . . hand, sand, fanned, land . . . *damned* . . . oh, poison! *What* is it to take her hand . . . ?”

“Fresh, cheeky, presumptuous, and undesired . . . !” supplied Hermione, invisible in the fog. “You might take her painter, though, if you don’t mind interrupting the lecture in anatomy!”

She heard a gasp and the sound of something which evidently dropped upon the deck, then bounced overboard, for there was a tiny splash.

"Oh, wap!" complained the resonant voice. "There goes my fountain-pen. . . ." The tone changed to one of invocation. "Cécile, is it thou or thy spirit out there in the mist?"

"Neither!" snapped Hermione. "Look out . . .!"

The high freeboard of the yawl rose suddenly before her bow; she held water with one oar, and the skiff came rubbing gently alongside. There was the scuffle of feet above her, and Hermione glanced up to see a figure in flannels and sweater, looming titanesque through the white fog.

"Cécile . . .!" said the rich voice.

"Take the painter," replied Hermione. "No, I'm not going aboard. It would be stretching my elastic conventionality too far to visit a young man aboard his boat at seven-thirty of a foggy morning. I have a note for you and a few words to add to it."

Applebo caught a turn with the painter and dropped into a primitive crouching position on the yawl's deck. Hermione observed that his face

had assumed its sleepy look, while the voice took on the lazy drawl which she so well remembered. His eyes, which looked yellower than ever in the colourless fog, blinked at Hermione almost with appreciation. Their swift scrutiny passed from her green tam to her costume of the same colour, vivid against the white mist.

"You look like an emerald packed in cotton," he observed.

"Always a poet. Am I all green?"

"No; you are set with rubies, coral, and a pair of rare sapphires. To fancy your being poetic also! You seem to be such a practical maid. I don't know whether I am glad or sorry."

"What are you talking about?"

"Your verses, of course. I wear them here." He laid his hand over his heart. "Just at this moment, however, they are below. Unfortunately, a sweater has no pockets. I was deeply touched, Cécile, and have already mailed you the answer. But, if you do not mind, I might point out certain technical errors . . ."

"What are you driving at, anyway?" Hermione demanded.

"Don't be piqued. Art should come before personal vanity. There are a few errors . . ."

of a trifling sort. That is nothing. I make them myself. But there are also one or two . . . eh . . . banalities. . . .”

“Banalities . . . !”

“Let me point them out. I am sure that you will agree with me. . . .”

Applebo plunged into his companionway, leaving Hermione completely mystified. A moment later he emerged, holding a piece of note-paper which Hermione was quick to recognise as the *Shark's*. To her amazement and disgust, she saw that this was covered by Cécile's stylish penmanship.

“I will read it through,” said Applebo, “and then point out to you what I mean.”

In his deep, sonorous voice he proceeded to read as follows:—

TO A PILOT-FISH

*The billows flee from the shriek of the wind
And the scud from the lash of the gale,
But the “Shark” swims away and naught behind
But one poor little tossing sail.*

*Tell me, surges, ere you go,
Should a Pilot-fish be treated so?*

*The sky-line darkens as night draws near,
From the sea strikes the East Wind's chill,
For the sturdy "Shark" there is naught to fear,
But how for the "Daffodil"?*

*Tell me, moon, from your heights above,
Sails the "Daffodil" to the Port of Love?*

*Is it for Love that my viking roves,
Or doth he despise the shore?
Shall we meet in the Port of Missing Loves,
Or shall we meet no more?*

*Tell me, breezes, ere you part,
Can true love warm a fish's heart?*

"Do you mean to tell me," cried Hermione, "that Cécile actually wrote and sent you that slush?"

"Eh . . . what . . . ?" Applebo appeared startled out of his habitual repose. His yellow eyes opened very wide. "What do you mean? Cécile?"

"Oh!" cried Hermione. "You make me sick! Both of you! If possible *you* make me the sicker . . . because you began the whole silly business! In the first place, if you *must* pose as an enamoured swain, and bombard innocent folk

with sickening sloop, why don't you take the trouble to recognise your inamorata when you see her? I am not Cécile. I never was Cécile. Cécile is my sister . . . the one who went with papa to thank you for helping me. I am Hermione!"

Applebo stared and his lean jaw dropped. He sank into a sort of heap upon the dripping deck. Mouth and eyes were generously open, and he stared at the angry beauty in the boat with an expression of such utter imbecility that Hermione lost her temper. She wished that Cécile could have seen him.

"You look like a fool!" she snapped.

Applebo gulped and shut his mouth.

"I have the perfect right!" he answered, sepulchraly. "But why didn't you tell me?"

Hermione's chin went into the air. "I suppose that when you told me in your naïve way that you were in love with Hermione, I should have put my finger in my mouth, dropped my shy head, plucked bashfully at the hem of my high-water bathing skirt, and murmured, 'I am it!'"

Applebo groaned as one in pain.

"Do you mind if I say what I think of myself?" he asked.

"Not in the least. I might even help."

"I am a blithering ass, idiot, fool, dolt, imbecile, chump, ninny lump, and I ought to put my head in a bag and jump overboard. A hydrocephalic child cutting out paper-dolls on the floor of an asylum is a font of intelligence compared to me."

"You are letting yourself off easily," observed Hermione.

"I shall die of this. And so your sister must have been receiving the verses intended for you!"

"Every mail adds to her vocabulary of soul-talk," replied Hermione.

Applebo looked very ill. All of the feline drowsiness had been swept from his face, leaving it of an actually human intelligence.

"I shall never write another poem!" said he, with solemnity.

"When you talk like that," said Hermione, "you make me believe that there is still hope for you. But there is still more that you must do. That is why I am here."

"What must I do?" asked Applebo, hopefully. "I promise to do it."

"Stop following us about."

The face of the poet fell. For a moment he regarded Hermione in gloomy silence.

"As bad as that?" he asked. "Very well. I have promised. I will start for New York as soon as the weather clears, lay up the *Daffodil*, and go into outlawry. Perhaps later, when I have done my penance, you may graciously permit me to meet your charming family in the conventional way." He looked at her eagerly.

Hermione dropped her eyes. "I will consider it," she answered.

"Are you offended with me?" asked Applebo.

"Not offended exactly," said Hermione, looking at him frankly. "But you have made an awful lot of trouble. Poor Cécile thinks that you are madly in love with her. Of course, she does not return the sentiment, but it has worked on her romantic sensibilities apparently to the point of inspiring the stuff that you just read. When she finds out that your delicate attentions were intended all of the time for my humble self, I'm sure I don't know what will happen."

Applebo stared at her wildly.

"Good Heavens!" he gasped. "Then she must never know! Oh, what an awful mess!"

Hermione, watching him with more intentness than her supercilious expression betrayed, saw an entirely new and unknown Applebo. All of

the indolent pose was swept away in the rush of sincere and honest regret for what had occurred. The poet, thus revealed in his true nature, became a very normal and penitent young man. Hermione was conscious of a sudden rush of liking for him, he was so sincerely sorry.

"What shall I do?" he asked. "Simply clear out? That's the hardest of all. Perhaps if I were to go over and meet your sister and let her see what an ordinary, every-day sort of ass I am, it might do some good. I'll do whatever you tell me to."

Hermione gave him a pitying smile.

"You need not feel so tragic about it," said she. "Cécile does not really care, of course . . ." She watched him narrowly. Applebo's face expressed relief.

"Of course she doesn't," he replied. "I can see just how it is; she was rather taken by the romantic idea of my rotting around in the wet, just to be near. Her verses show it. Or maybe she was just trying to get a rise out of me," he added, most unpoetically.

"No," said Hermione, "she *was* a little touched. It will do her no harm, and might even do her some good. She has been a bit of

a flirt, I'm afraid. You really haven't done anything so terrible. . . ." Hermione found herself getting a little bored with the subject of Cécile.

Said Applebo: "I would rather set fire to my tub, and sail her straight to sea . . . as my forbears used to do, than give unhappiness to any living soul. That is the beginning and end of my religion . . . at least of the negative side of it. To think that I should have given you this trouble! If you will accept her as a gift, I will present you with the *Daffodil* here and now, and shoulder my kit, and clear out on foot. I have never been so sorry."

Hermione was, for the instant, tempted to close with this extravagant offer, just to see what would happen. But a glance at Applebo's face told her. He was undeniably in earnest. Hermione began to feel sorry for him.

"It is not as bad as that," said she. "Once you are gone, Cécile will soon forget about you. Next time you play at knight-errant, take my advice and identify your damsels. Now I must go. Good-bye."

Applebo gave her a hopeless look. "Good-bye," he answered, in a dull voice, and threw off

the turns of the painter. Hermione handled her oars. For some reason she felt a disinclination to pull off into the fog, leaving him there, unhappy, alone, forsaken. It seemed so dreary an end to their peculiar association. She thought of the many weeks that the little yawl had so bravely and blithely followed them through rain and gale and fog and calm.

Her skiff drifted clear of the yawl's side. Hermione looked back at Applebo. He was sitting disconsolately on the sodden deck, back bent, shoulders hunched, his hands clasped in front of his knees.

"Good-bye," repeated Hermione, more gently.

"Good-bye," said Applebo, in a sepulchral tone, and without moving.

Hermione thought that he might at least have got on his feet. She dipped her oars for a lusty stroke, then did not take it. It seemed quite impossible to leave him there in that state of dejection. If he had been sleepily and blinkingly inscrutable in his habitual way, Hermione would not have cared. But the feline pose had been ruthlessly torn away, leaving only the direct, childish nature underneath. There was plenty of the maternal in Hermione, and Applebo, at that mo-

ment, seemed to her a big, unhappy little boy.

"I wonder if I can find my way back to the *Shark* . . ." she said, uncertainly.

"I'll send the Finn with you if you will wait a few minutes. He has gone ashore to mail a poem to Cécile."

Hermione bit her lip. Applebo slightly roused himself and reached for the blade of the oar which she extended to him.

"Before I go," said Hermione, "would you mind telling me your real reason for following us about? I am not such a fool as to think that it was because of a sentimental attraction to one of us girls" . . . she laughed . . . "when you did not so much as know us apart. Was there any other reason?"

Applebo's eyes narrowed. He gave her an intent look.

"Why do you ask? Curiosity?"

"No. Interest."

"That is better. Well, then, I will tell you. I am only too glad to be able to tell you and to ask your advice. But if you are really enough interested to care to hear all about it, you are in for the story of my life."

"I want to hear it," said Hermione, "but I

haven't a great deal of time. When we hear the *Shark's* bell, I will have to go."

"Then I'll make it short," said Applebo. "Do you remember my telling you that day at Shoal Harbour that my mother was a cousin to the King of Sweden? She married a Norwegian boat-builder; a good enough man, of a very respectable family. Her family made an awful row about it, and tried to have the marriage annulled, for she was almost royalty. The two left Norway and went to America. They were not happy, and shortly after I was born they separated. My mother would not return to Norway, but lived in Brooklyn, supported by a small annuity she had from a brother. My father enlisted in the United States Navy."

Hermione, listening, absorbed in this tale, let her eyes rest on the face of the narrator. She wondered that she had ever thought it feline and baffling.

"When I was ten years old," said Applebo, "my mother died. An uncle of hers, named Applebo, who had come to America years before, made me his heir. He was an old man and died not long ago. I was sent to school, and afterwards to college. In the vacations I always went

to sea, usually on sailing ships. It was on a ship that I met a man, the captain, who had known my father and who told me all about the affair, not knowing who I was. He told me that my father had left the Navy and was the sailing-master of a yacht, and that the yacht was the *Shark*."

Hermione's oars dropped from her hands. She gripped the gunnel of her skiff.

"Uncle Chris Heldstrom?" she gasped.

Applebo nodded. "There seems to be no doubt that he is my father," he said, "although he too has taken a different name. There goes your oar. . . ." He sprang to his feet, whinned a boat-hook from its slings, and rescued the oar.

Hermione watched him dumbly, but her thoughts were revolving fast. She had often suspected some romance in the life of Heldstrom, from slight things let fall now and then. Like a flash there occurred to her mind Heldstrom's remarks after seeing Applebo the day they had undertaken to swim out to the schooner. "An echo . . ." Heldstrom had said, of the young man. Again, it was only the night before that Captain Bell had commented on a certain resemblance between

Heldstrom and Applebo, and this Hermione had been quick to appreciate.

Her heart beat furiously and she felt the blood rushing into her cheeks. Applebo was rather pale. He had secured the oar and returned it to her.

"But why have you not declared yourself?" cried Hermione.

"Stop to think. The situation is extremely delicate. To begin with, he left my mother before I was born. I believe that their separation was conditional to her receiving this annuity, and they were very poor. I am rather a sensitive person and I find it embarrassing to go up to a strange, stern-looking man and inform him that he is my father."

Hermione gave a nervous, excited laugh.

"He might not care to admit the relationship," said Applebo, "and then think what a fool I would feel! And yet, I am certainly drawn to him. I have been following the *Shark* for no other reason . . . up to some time ago. Heldstrom seldom goes ashore, so I have not seen him many times. It seemed better not to act hastily. For all I know, he might be the very last person whom I would care to claim as a parent. I have been horribly perplexed."

"Then you needn't be!" cried Hermione. "Let me tell you that Christian Heldstrom is as splendid a man as ever lived. I don't know anything about his early life, but I know this much, that no kinder, braver, truer-hearted sailor ever walked a deck! And he is no common man! He is a gentleman! I don't know what your mother may have been like, but I hope, for your sake, that you inherit your father's traits!"

Applebo stared at her with shining eyes.

"You make me happier than I can say!" he cried. "But I have not worried about that aspect of the case. The question is, would he care to acknowledge *me*?"

"Anybody might be glad to acknowledge you if you would chuck your silly, mocking pose!" retorted Hermione. "Why do you not stand out in your true nature instead of blinking at people like a cat?"

Applebo smiled. "A sort of shield," said he. "It puzzles people, who might otherwise consider me an ass."

"Not always. But the question is, what are you going to do?"

"That is exactly what I have been trying to

decide for the last three months. What would you advise?"

Hermione hesitated. Applebo watched her, with an expression which the casual observer would not have ascribed entirely to his interest in an unknown parent. Hermione, in that moment, was very lovely. The romantic excitement of the situation had brought her warm soul into her face, which was radiant in the colourless light.

About them swirled the fog, thicker than before. It beaded Hermione's dark eyebrows and softened her brilliant cheeks. She was thinking deeply, when out of the mist came the distant *dong . . . dong . . . dong . . .* of a ship's bell, patient and monotonous, muffled and lifeless of note, yet with an insistence, partly anxious, partly peremptory.

Hermione looked at Applebo and smiled.

"What a situation!" said she. "Yonder is your father . . . striking the bell to guide me home!"

CHAPTER XIII

APPLEBO looked at her and nodded.

"My father!" he said.

His hand was lying on the yawl's low rail. Hermione reached up and touched it with her own. It was a quick, impulsive little gesture, friendly and sympathetic.

"Would you like to have me tell him?" she asked. "Because if so, I will."

Applebo's strong hand turned, caught hers in his firm grip, and carried it to his lips.

"That would be the act of a real friend!" he cried. "Will you?"

"Of course I will. In fact, I think that Uncle Chris would rather learn it from me than from anybody in the world."

"I'm sure he would! Tell him then, Hermione."

"When?"

"Choose the time as seems best to you. I will go away as soon as the weather clears. Write me to the New York Yacht Club. And you are sure that it's not asking too much?"

"No. You see, it is for Uncle Chris as much as for you. More, perhaps, for he is getting

on in years and must feel his lack of the ties of blood. Now I must go. Hear that patient bell! It reminds me of Uncle Chris . . . steady and constant and so dependable!"

She glanced up at him with her vivid smile. Applebo's face was transfigured . . . as Hermione thought, at the prospect of finding a father. It is more probable that his radiant expression was at finding something else. At any rate, all of the sleepy, baffling expression was absent; might never have been there. The amber eyes were wide and alert; clear, steady, looking into hers with a rich golden light in their depths which set Hermione's pulse a-tingle. In fact, Hermione was unconsciously aware of some peculiar rich, warm glow all about the poet, and, like a brilliant green moth, she found great difficulty in leaving it for the chill, surrounding gloom. But the patient bell was calling steadily, so she said, with regret:

"I should like to talk with you some more about all of this, but I don't want to worry . . . your father." She smiled; then, a sudden idea striking her, she added:

"Why not get in my skiff and I will row past the schooner and sing out to say that I am all

right, but not quite ready to go aboard. Then we can have a few minutes more . . . to discuss the matter."

"Very well," said Applebo, and stepped down into the skiff, placing the dory-compass under the sternsheets.

"We don't need that," said he.

"How about finding the yawl again?"

"We can find her. That is one of my f . . . natural gifts."

Hermione picked up her oars and began to pull in the direction of the bell. Applebo, lounging in the stern, watched her long, vigorous strokes. Her green tam was frosted with the mist; the thick black hair had also a silver rime, but cheeks and lips and sapphire eyes defied the sad grey of the humid world through which they drifted like alien spirits, seeking their own place.

Hermione, looking at Applebo as she pulled along, found him very pleasing to her eyes. He, too, wore the badge of the warm, comforting earth which claimed them both, however much they might adapt themselves to the sea. The colourless gloom, filtering out above all of the reds and yellows from the generous sun-rays, those in which the poet was so rich, glowed like autumn leaves

of a November day. His hair shone like a marigold and his skin was of the luscious tint of a russet orange. Also, there was a radiance of expression which Hermione ascribed to filial devotion, long suppressed. No doubt some of it was.

The steady ringing of the *Shark's* bell grew louder. Suddenly Applebo raised his hand. His trained eye had caught the straight, slim column of a mast rising into the thinner atmosphere aloft. Hermione caught the water with her oars and shoved vigorously astern. The way of the skiff fully checked, she rested on her oars.

"*Shark* ahoy . . . !" she hailed.

"Hello!" came the voice of Heldstrom. "So *dere* you are!" There was a note of great relief in the heavy bass.

"I am not coming aboard just yet," called Hermione.

"Yes, you must!" called Heldstrom. "Your fadder has yoost sent vord . . . 'Stop ringin' that bell!'"

"Stop it then," retorted Hermione. "I don't need it. The weather is clearing. I can see your spars."

"You can see noddin!" growled Heldstrom, "but I can see fere you go out no more ven der

vedder iss t'ick! Next time you get no boat, yoong lady!"

"I will be back in a few minutes," said Hermione. "*Au revoir* . . ."

She dipped her oars and pulled off into the fog, leaving Heldstrom growling impotently on the schooner's deck.

"My parent," Applebo observed, "appears to be a bit of a despot."

"He is a dear," said Hermione.

"You will catch it when you go back."

"No. He will say nothing, but wait until next time. Before then I will have told him why I prolonged my leave. Now tell me just what you would like to have me say. Do you wish me to tell him all that you have told me?"

For it had occurred to Hermione's practical mind that Applebo was doing, from his standpoint, a very loyal thing in claiming as a parent a man who, no matter how fine his personal qualities, was after all merely the sailing-master of a schooner-yacht. Viewed from a purely worldly aspect, Applebo was the social superior of Christian Heldstrom. Applebo was a blood-relation to royalty, independently well off, well educated, and a person to whom any society would be glad to

open its doors. His father, on the other hand, was an ex-enlisted man of the United States Navy, at present holding a position which, if not exactly menial, was not far from it. It were not as though Applebo were drawn to his father by a tie of affection or early obligation. Heldstrom had never laid eyes upon his son, nor did Applebo owe his father anything but the mere fact of his physical existence, which can scarcely be recognised as a debt of gratitude. On the other hand, so far as Applebo knew, his father was merely a poor sailorman, dependent on his meagre pay, already advanced in years, and a possible care and burden for years to come. Impressed as she was by the romantic aspects of the case, all of these things occurred, nevertheless, to Hermione's practical reason and served greatly to elevate her opinion of Harold Applebo.

To test him more thoroughly, she put forward, in a tentative way, a little of what was in her mind.

"You are quite sure that you want to establish this relationship?" she asked. "Of course, while Captain Heldstrom is a very splendid man, and all of that, you really owe him nothing. And, socially, there is some difference between you."

"Hermione!" Applebo's voice was actually pained.

"But what is the particular advantage of it to you?" persisted Hermione.

"Advantage! Don't you think it's an advantage to have a father? Especially, when he's as good a sort as you tell me that mine is? You surprise me, Hermione!"

"But you are a young man of fortune and education and high connections, while he . . ."

"Is my father," said Applebo, quietly.

The blood rushed to Hermione's face. Her blue eyes filled.

"Forgive me!" she cried. "I was just trying to . . . to . . . I wanted to see if you had any snobbery about you. . . ."

"But, my dear girl, how can one be snobbish about one's own father? That would be so inconsistent!"

"Some people are," said Hermione.

"Then I am not that particular sort of fool . . . which is lucky for me, since I am so many others! No. I want my father. You don't know what it means to me to find that there is somebody so close to me. Hermione, I have been the most solitary person you can imagine. . . ."

In rapid, graphic words he told her of his lonely, friendless boyhood; the long vacations, when other boys went to their homes and he remained at the boarding-school; the envy with which he was wont to listen to the recital of holiday sprees by his schoolmates. Later, at college, his peculiar personality had marked him as one apart, and, sensitive as he was, this aloofness he had accepted as a quality of his destiny. Always of a romantic, imaginative, and sentimental nature, expansiveness where his emotions were touched had brought only ridicule, hence the gradual adoption of the mocking, inscrutable pose.

"There were so many times," he told her, "when I couldn't help expressing what I felt. People laughed at me. At first I fought; then I learned that it saved a lot of wear and tear to laugh back . . . a little harder. So I took a pose that kept them guessing. People like to laugh at you, and they don't particularly object when you laugh at them, as long as they know what you are laughing at, and that you really are laughing. But when they are puzzled to tell whether you are really making fun of them, and if so at what, they get shy of you and leave you

alone. So I was left alone. How much alone, nobody will ever know. . . .”

The mist was in Hermione's eyes before he had finished. Applebo interrupted his own narrative to look up and say:

“Where are you going?”

Hermione came back to earth with a sudden shock.

“I'm sure I don't know,” said she. “To tell the truth, I don't even know where we are. Do you?”

Applebo dropped his head and peered into the fog, and raised his hand. Hermione stopped pulling and rested on her oars. Applebo slightly turned his head to listen.

“I hear the swash of water ahead,” he said. “That must be the far side of the inlet.”

“But I have been pulling more toward the mainland!” cried Hermione.

“I think that you have swerved a bit. There is scarcely any air stirring, but what there is strikes me on the other cheek. Pull ahead a little.”

Hermione did so. Presently the swash of water on the rocks grew plainly distinct, and, a few

minutes later, a dark, irregular outline reared itself through the fog.

"Rocks," said Applebo. "We are on the east side of the inlet."

"But I am sure that we are on the other side," said Hermione. She raised her hand. Listen . . . !"

From somewhere in the murk came the sound of eight bells.

"I must be getting back," said Hermione. "Which way?"

"Let me take the oars . . ."

Hermione nodded, and they shifted places. She was not tired, but she wanted to see the strong, lithe body in action. Applebo picked up the light oars and, without so much as a glance over his shoulder, pulled off apparently at random into the fog. As he rowed, he told her about his voyaging in pursuit of the *Shark*. Hermione was amazed to learn how arduous this had sometimes been. Secure and comfortable aboard the big, staunch *Shark*, it was not easy to realise the conditions to be sometimes confronted by a little boat like the *Daffodil*.

"You are like a gull . . ." she said. "Hello . . . there's a boat ahead!"

"The yawl," said Applebo, indifferently.

Hermione opened her violet eyes very wide.

"I must have been pulling in a circle!" she exclaimed.

"You described quite an arc."

"But how did you know?"

"I felt it. Some of us have that instinct of the hound and the sea-turtle and the gull. It's not subject to analysis. At sea, I never take a sight . . . but I use the lead a good deal." He laid the skiff alongside.

"Before I go," said Hermione, "I want to peep into the cabin. May I?"

"If you like. I'd be more hospitable, but something tells me that it is not convenable, and, since you are Hermione, you are still a mere child . . . how old . . . ?"

"Twenty."

"An infant in arms! However . . . so long as they are the proper arms . . . and I'm so much older that it doesn't matter. Come aboard."

He stepped out and extended one hand to Hermione, making fast the skiff with the other.

"How old are you?" asked Hermoine.

"Getting senile. I have been out of college four years; that makes me twenty-five. At such

an age there are no longer rules of propriety; one thinks only of the grave. How do you like my cabin?"

Hermione, with a delicious sense of wrongdoing, examined with rapture the cabin of the *Daffodil*. This inspection was brief to the point of being cursory, and, as she came up through the companionway, she heard the bell of the *Shark* again tolling its insistent summons.

"And to think," she cried, "that you should have followed us all of those weary knots on this little thing! And just because you knew that your father was aboard!"

"Hermione, filial affection was *not* the lure of the last two thousand miles."

"What was . . . ?"

"Get in your skiff and I will tell you."

Hermione's heart stampeded furiously. It was frightened less at these discreet words than at a sudden flash in the clear eyes of her companion. Every sentient impulse warned her to get immediately into her skiff and row away, just as fast as she could. But other and stronger impulses made this craven course exceedingly difficult. She did not want to row off into the cold, grey mist and leave new problems to be solved by the lonely,

romantic figure beside her. She felt that he needed her, and this need, to a person of Hermione's rich nature, was a far more impelling force than any need of her own.

She looked a little fearfully at Applebo. He was smiling at her with the air of one about to say a conventional farewell . . . or about to try to do so. Hermione thought of his loneliness . . . the Finn was still ashore . . . and the tears rose to her eyes. She lingered, and from afar the *Shark's* bell chided her.

"Good-bye . . ." said Hermione, tremulously, and held out her hand.

Applebo took it, raised it in his, and brushed it with his lips.

"Good-bye," he answered, almost brusquely.

Still Hermione did not go. Perhaps it may have occurred to her that inasmuch as she had been trying to go, without success, for the last half-hour, an additional half-minute would not particularly matter. This is feminine reasoning, and as sound as any such, and Hermione was exceedingly feminine. Perhaps, also, there flashed across her memory the recollection of another farewell, and of something which had happened, partly under water. At any rate, she lingered.

This was very wrong of Hermione, and if she had had a mother, poor girl, instead of an elderly Norwegian sailorman impotently banging a bell, it never could have happened. But she lingered. Some instinct advised her that there was still something to be told; that she had not heard the entire tale, and that there would be a singular incompleteness to the whole affair until she was told it. In which she was quite correct. Long-lost parents have an undoubted value, but it dwindles shockingly before that of new-found loves.

“Good-bye . . .” said Hermione, invitingly, and held out her hand.

Applebo had honestly meant to put her back in her boat and give her a shove in the direction of the patient bell. But there are limits to all human self-control, and Hermione at that moment stood outside them. There was a sad little droop to her shoulders, and to the corners of her pretty mouth, and the roses in her cheeks and violets in her eyes were blazing through the fog like flowers in a neglected garden. In that moment Hermione's sweetness was certainly not intended to expend itself on several cubic fathoms of fog, and, if Applebo permitted this, he would have been a fool and not worth the trouble of telling about.

He had been thinking not of himself, but of Hermione, and, when he saw that Hermione was not quite content, he forgot that she was a very young girl, and he a wise and world-worn man of twenty-five, of whom the motto should have been—*memento mori*. Wherefore, he said:

“Hermione, I have told you the truth, and nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. I followed the *Shark* because I wanted a father. But, since we met on the beach at Shoal Harbour and swam off together to the schooner, this splendid filial devotion has been quite eclipsed by something else. I have been able to think of nothing but a girl in a green bathing suit, and, when your father gave me that ‘dare’ to follow him all up and down the coast, I took it up because I did not want to lose her out of my daily life. The verses that I have been sending from time to time during this chase have been the only really sincere ones I ever wrote. . . .”

“Then the ‘Hermione’ ones that you sent to me were not sincere?”

“They are not *insincere*, but their sentiment was directed towards the Ideal. After I met you on the beach, they were offered to the Real.”

“And went to Cécile. . . .”

Applebo bent his bushy brows upon her in a way curiously suggestive of Heldstrom. Hermione wondered that she had never noticed the resemblance.

"Hermione," said he, "I have been a silly, careless fool and you do well to remind me of it. But do you remember having told me on the beach at Shoal Harbour that you had never seen any of my verses?"

The blood rushed into the girl's face and she dropped her eyes. Hermione had thought of that lie many times, but she was in the hope that Applebo had forgotten it.

"Since you didn't know me when you saw me," she answered, with a schoolgiri pout, "I did not intend to put you right. What made you send the verses in the first place?"

"The idea appealed to my romantic nature. I *had* seen you on Fifth Avenue and admired your walk. I saw you many times, but never face to face. I like to write verses, and one writes better when one has a definite object. They were harmless things, and I knew that you would not take too seriously such an act of unmasked devotion on the part of one whom you had never seen. Nor did you."

Hermione was silent for an instant. Then she said, almost shyly:

“And afterwards . . .”

Her violet eyes wandered fearsomely from side to side, aloft, into the fog, at her skiff, to rest finally on those of Applebo. The clear, amber ones, which seemed to have grown suddenly dark, were waiting for them. They telegraphed a message which so shook Hermione that she gave a little gasp and reached for the wire stay. The dense fog wrapped them about in its protecting folds.

“Hermione,” said Applebo, in his deepest voice. “I think that you had better get into your skiff and go back to the *Shark* and tell them to stop ringing that bell. The ‘afterwards’ will wait until another day.”

“I want it now!” murmured Hermione, scarcely knowing what she said.

Her long lashes dropped on the rose-red cheeks. Her heart was fluttering wildly and she gripped the wet wire with all of her strength. She scarcely saw Applebo as he stepped quickly to her side and took her hand in his big one, crushing it even more tightly to the iron shroud. Then she looked up in frightened questioning, surprised

to find him so close and marvelling at the breadth of the big chest. Her head came a little above its upper level, and Hermione was a big girl. Close as he stood to her, Hermione was obliged to give her face an upward tilt to look into his eyes, which she did, questioningly, yet with a swift, wild exultation.

One downward step and Hermione would be in her skiff, prepared for flight and the security of the chiding bell. But she could not take it. Her feet were glued to the deck; her body as though lashed to the wire stay. Applebo began to speak, and she scarcely knew what he said, even while she thrilled at the deep, organ-noted voice.

“Hermione . . . Hermione . . . you are still a little girl and perhaps I am doing wrong in telling you these things. I have loved you, sweetheart, from the moment I saw you that morning on the beach. I struggled against it, but it has been too strong. You are my Ideal quickened into life, and, though we scarcely know each other, all the nature that is in me cries out for you. When I say that I love you, I say it all. Now you must get into your skiff, dear, and go back. From this time on our attitude shall be the conventional one. I shall try to win you,

but first there are other things to do. Go, Hermione."

Just as when he had kissed her in the water, Hermione felt all of her personal volition leave her. She could only cling to the stay and stare at him dumbly with vague, dark violet eyes. So she looked up into his face, her own colourless, except for a crimson splash in the centre of either cheek, and her coral lips trembling. Her black hair was veiled in the grey, clinging mist. She suffered from no lack of strength, but her mind and body were filled with the pleasant lethargy which might come of a rare old wine, and which would quickly pass. Hermione felt no hurry for it to pass.

So she clung to the stay and stared at the poet, and muffled in the fog came the notes of the bell, querulous and complaining, with a hint of impatience in its quickened beat. Applebo looked at her questioningly . . . and Hermione's eyes shouted the exultant answer to this query. A golden flame leaped from the amber depths so close to her face, and, for some strange reason, Hermione felt the hot tears obscure her vision and the fog became a swirling chaos of grey. Her body swayed as she stood. She tried to say

"Good-bye," but the quivering lips brought no sound.

And then she felt a strong, encircling arm about her, while her yielding body was drawn close and her pale, tear-stained, upturned face fell forward against the man's broad chest. Her hand loosed its hold on the stay, of which she no longer had any need, and with its mate stole up to rest on the strong shoulders. Hermione gave a little gasp; her arms went about his neck. There was a torrent of words in her ears, crashing like deep, glorious chords, and she heard her own voice saying: "Yes . . . yes . . . I love you, I love you. . . ."

All was swift and wonderfully rapturous. Kisses smothered the words pouring from her lips, and these lips quickly found a far more potent manner of expression. Scarcely any time this lasted, if one is to figure time in moments such as these by stupid seconds, which might be each an eternity.

Hermione's scattered senses were rallied by the *chunk-a-chunk* of oars close at hand. She felt Applebo turn to glance over his shoulder, and looked up to see him peering into the fog. Hermione drew herself away and stood for a moment,

dazed and panting, for she had need of breath, poor girl.

"Here comes the Finn," said Applebo. "Now you must go, darling. . . ."

Scarcely knowing how she got there, Hermione found herself back in the skiff staring blindly at the compass which Applebo placed on the thwart again. "Good-bye . . ." she murmured, and thrust at the yawl's side with her oar. She held up her hand, and Applebo leaned far down to kiss it. Hermione dipped her oars, and was wafted into the swimming mist.

Applebo stood looking after her, his face like ivory, but his eyes like yellow diamonds. The fog swam and eddied in a faint puff of air, striking down over the high bank on the shoreward side of the harbour.

The sound of Hermione's oars grew fainter and fainter, until his ear could no longer follow it. Then, as he listened, the *Shark's* bell stopped ringing.

CHAPTER XIV

As Hermione came over the side of the *Shark*, Heldstrom stepped forward to give her a bit of a "dressing-down" for the anxiety which she had caused him. But, at sight of her face, he stopped short in his tracks and stared. The next instant he glanced quickly about, as though fearful that some other person might see what he beheld. Olesen, the quartermaster of the watch, was busy with the skiff, however, and none of the cabin party had as yet appeared.

For Hermione, an uncommonly pretty girl at all times, was transfigured. Her face was still pale, with the crimson patch on either cheek, but the treatment which they had just received appeared to have given a new and wonderful expression to her lips. The flagrant tell-tales were, however, her eyes, still shot with a flame which the damp fog was utterly unable to quench. They held, also, a warm tenderness and a sort of knowledge which is the distinguishing feature between the eyes of a girl and those of a woman.

"Heffens . . . !" rumbled Heldstrom, in a voice so like that to which she had just been lis-

tening that Hermione's pulse raced off afresh. "Fere you been? You look like a yoong br'ride!"

Hermione dropped the long lashes over her tell-tale eyes.

"I . . . I have been rowing around in the fog. . . ." She tried to slip past him and gain the companionway, but his big bulk was planted directly in her course.

"R'rowing ar'round in der fog . . . r'rowing ar'round in der fog . . ." he repeated, slowly. He shook his massive head and the deep-lined face was flooded with anxiety. The clear blue eyes bored like gimlets into hers.

"Hermione . . . Hermione . . . my little ger'rl . . ." the big voice was very tender. "You did not get dose eyes nor dose cheeks from der kiss of der fog! Do you tell me that you haf been r'rowing ar'round in der fog . . . *alone?*"

Hermione hung her pretty head. The colour on her cheeks deepened.

"No, Uncle Chris . . . I was not alone. I will tell you all about it . . . but not now. Let me pass, please."

There was an imperious note in the last words which brocked no denial. Heldstrom moved aside

without a word. Hermione walked to the companionway and went below, while Heldstrom stared after her. His eyes were lit with the blue flame of the sun on an iceberg and his forehead was ominous as a storm-cloud. He glanced quickly about to see that no one was lurking near, then turned with a fierce Norse oath, and shook his head in the direction of the *Daffodil*.

“Ah, I t’ink I understand! It’s that Pilot-vish! Ven I saw his yellow eyes blinking at me from der sea I knew dere vas no goot behind dem! It vas like . . . like . . . anodder face . . . I vonce knew . . . to my gr’rief!”

For a moment he stood stiff and silent, staring in the direction of the *Daffodil*. He cursed again.

Suddenly he raised his voice and hailed the quartermaster.

“Der gig at der gan’vay . . .!” said he.

The order was quickly executed. Heldstrom got into the boat and gave the order to “give way.” The fog was thick as ever, and, at the end of a few moments, he commanded—“Oars.”

The boat glided silently through the still water. Heldstrom turned his massive head slightly to one side and listened intently. On the star-

board bow there came the sound of voices. All at once he heard the somewhat peculiar remark, in Danish, which is to say, Norwegian, although a Dane would put it the other way about.

"Yes. Two days in every month you may get drunk. Between these periods, not a drop. . . ."

"Gif way, poort . . . !" growled Heldstrom.

As he drew near the yawl, the answering voice became suddenly muffled, and Heldstrom knew that the speaker had gone below, while still talking. There was an excited note to this voice which suggested the babble of a fever patient. Heldstrom saw his bow oar furtively cross himself. This man had one day encountered the Finn when both were the worse for drink, and the warlock had opened his lips and delivered himself of informations which had sobered the Irishman as a sluicing with ice-water might have done.

Close aboard the yawl, Heldstrom gave the order—"Way enough!" As the gig shot alongside, Heldstrom saw Applebo standing in the cockpit, staring down at him. The face of the old man grew stiff and cold as ice.

Applebo's features were like a clay death-mask and the only live quality was in the eyes, these

barely visible between the double fringe of dark lashes.

"Good-morning," said he, in a voice as expressionless as his face. "Captain Heldstrom of the *Shark*, I believe?"

"Der same," answered Heldstrom, and added: "I haf come to pay a visit. I am curious to see der little yawl vich haf followed me for so many miles of sea."

"Pray come aboard," said Applebo. "There is really not much to see. I am about to breakfast. Perhaps you will do me the honour to join me."

"T'anks . . ." said Heldstrom. He stepped aboard the yawl, then turned to the stroke-oar, who was shifting aft to take the yoke lines.

"Go back alongside," said Heldstrom. "I will ask you . . ." he turned to Applebo, "to set me back on my ship."

"Certainly."

The gig glided off into the fog. Heldstrom, standing by the main rigging, stared under lowered brows at Applebo.

"We have t'ings to say to each odder," he remarked, in a heavy voice. "Dis fella of yours . . . does he oonderstand English?"

"Yes," answered Applebo. He motioned to the Finn, who was eyeing the two with his shaggy head at its curious slant.

"Get in the dinghy and hang off and on," said Applebo, in Danish. "When I want you, I will whistle. Keep away. I do not wish to be interrupted."

The Finn appeared to hesitate.

"Go . . ." said Applebo, ". . . at once!"

The Finn tugged at his cap. Without a word, he stepped into the dinghy and pulled off into the fog. As soon as he was lost to sight, Applebo turned to Heldstrom.

"Come below," said he, and led the way.

In the cabin of the yawl, Applebo motioned his guest to a transome opposite. The old man was too great of bulk for one of the camp-chairs. For a minute the two men eyed each other in silence. Heldstrom was breathing heavily; Applebo was as pale as it was possible for his peculiar ivory tint to become, but, aside from the singular glow of his eyes, his manner was free of all emotion.

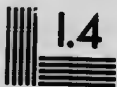
Heldstrom spoke first.

"I know you," he said, in English. "You are my son."



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Applebo slightly inclined his head.

Heldstrom gave him another piercing look. "You haf all of your mudder . . . und more!" he said. "You haf also somet'ing of me. Der vorst of me."

Applebo's brows came lower. He did not reply.

"I haf never said it to anybody," continued Heldstrom, "und I vould knock der man down vat said it to me. But I vill say it to you. Your mudder vas royalty, but she vas no goot. Und you are like her."

Applebo raised his eyebrows.

"If you were not my father," he said, "I would knock your brains out. But after all, when one stops to think, you are throwing mud principally at yourself."

Heldstrom's expression became terrible.

"I t'row mud at nobody!" he cried, and leaned forward, gripping the gravity table until his great finger joints creaked. "I tell you only vat you ar're!"

Applebo hunched up his shoulders, leaned back, crossed his strong hands in front of one upraised knee, and eyed his father through half-opened eyelids.

"When did you discover my identity?" he asked.

"That iss my affair! I knew always dere was a son. All my life, since your mudder left me. . . ."

"I beg your pardon . . . since you left my mother. . . ."

"Since your mudder left me . . . for . . ."

"Since you left my mother . . ." interrupted Applebo, in a voice which, for all of its silky tone, sheared its way through that of Heldstrom.

Heldstrom struck the gravity-table a blow with his great fist.

"Since your mudder left me. . . ."

"*Please* don't break my furniture! I need it. I don't need a father, particularly. . . ." Applebo's voice was smooth and yet appeared to overtone and undertone that of Heldstrom. "But I *do* need my table. I need certain ideals, also, that you are trying your best to break down . . . like any other coarse brute of a Scandinavian sailorman! You . . . you lived a whole lifetime in a few weeks, didn't you . . . *didn't you?* . . . Don't begin to glare! And now . . . you come over here aboard of my little boat . . . *to kick about the bill!*"

Few men would have cared to face Christian Heldstrom at that moment, but the one facing him was of the same fierce, viking breed. Applebo guessed at the motive for the visit, which was very far from being one of parental interest. There was no doubt in his mind that it had to do with Hermione, but of that, later. At present it had to do with himself and this father, whom for weeks he had followed through a deep-seated filial instinct of affection. He was very glad that he had waited before declaring himself. Applebo felt shame and a hot resentment in his heart that this father, about whom he had built so many splendid ideals, should thus prove himself merely a harsh and violent Norwegian sailor.

Heldstrom was glowering at him across the table. His eyes were like the blue tips of icicles.

"Pay der bill . . . ?" he rasped. "Vat do you mean?"

"Just that," answered Applebo. "You might have known what to expect, if you were not altogether a fool. My mother was a young and beautiful woman, the only daughter of rich and noble parents, a favourite of the King. You were

the son of a poor but respectable farmer, at the time engaged in the trade of boat-building. Is that not true . . . ?”

Heldstrom's lips moved, but no sound came from them. A terrible rage was gathering on his heavily bearded face. Applebo saw it, but continued in the same dispassionate tone:

“You were years older than she, and you should have known better. You sold her uncle a yacht and sailed her one season for your client. My mother was aboard the boat a good deal, and so you met and became infatuated with one another. Then you eloped and were married, and brought her to America as a poor emigrant. Do you consider that to have been an act of affection . . . ?”

“Stop!” Heldstrom's voice was choked and strangling. “Not anudder vord! Dis iss not your affair. . . .”

“Pardon me, it is very much my affair . . . seeing t' I was the result of the folly! Of your blind selfishness! Do you think that I have had a happy life? It has been one long record of loneliness . . . for I am not of the sort to make friends, readily! And there has been a good deal of terrible monotony about it, too! Not until Harold Applebo died and left me a small

income, four years ago, did I commence really to live."

Heldstrom's face was livid, but the devastating rage had left it. He swallowed once or twice.

"Und you say I kick about der bill!" he growled. "Vat you vant, den? Somet'ing froom me?"

A fierce gleam shot from the pale eyes of Applebo. Leaning forward, he shook his finger in Heldstrom's face:

"No. I want nothing from you . . . now that I know the sort of man you are! I *did* want a little paternal sympathy and interest and to feel that I was not entirely a stray spar washed from the wreck of two lives and left to drift where the current carried me! Now that I know you, I want nothing! Formerly, I thought that you might possibly contain a spark of paternal instinct. I thought, also, that you might welcome the thought of one of your own blood to be the companion of your declining years. It was for this that I have been following your schooner all summer long. . . ."

Heldstrom raised his massive head, which had been slightly drooping, and stared intently at his son.

"You tell me it vas for me that you haf followed der *Shark*?" he demanded, harshly.

"Yes. I wanted to learn precisely what I have learned this morning . . . but not exactly in this way!" Applebo smiled ironically. "That was my whole object in trailing you about!"

Heldstrom thrust himself suddenly forward.

"You are a liar!" he almost shouted.

Applebo slightly recoiled. For an instant it seemed as though the older man were about to hurl himself upon him.

"That iss vat you are . . . yoost like all your mudder's kinfolk! Dey vas liars all! Und you inherit froom dem; not froom me, t'ank God! You haf learned but a little part of dis history, und that wr'rong! I took your mudder away because her fadder vas going to marry her mit a man dot vas known to be der vor'rst blackguard in Europe, und she hated him, too. But I make me no excuses. . . ."

"Then," Applebo interrupted, "suppose you make me one for having so far forgotten yourself as to call me a liar. Otherwise, this interview must come to an end."

Cried Heldstrom, in his great bull-whale voice:
"Dis interview viil coom to an end ven I haf said

my say! Do not enr'rage me, yoong man, or, son or no son, you may haf cause to be sorry. I call you a liar, und you are that! If you follow de *Shark* because of me, vy do you not coom forward like a man long ago, and say, 'You are my fadder; I am your son!' I do not say that I would be glad . . . but, at least, I would dc my duty und you would do yours! Vy do you follow und v'vatch und look und peer und pr'ry like a yellow cat v-vatching der cage of a bird? Vy do you anchor off und neffer coom aboard, der more so ven you vas invited by Captain Bell und Mr. V'Wood? Vy do you send dose sickening worses to my yoong ladies . . . for I learn yesterday you do? Answer me, you fella . . . vy do you do all dis if it iss for *me* dot you follow der *Shark*?"

All of the colour faded from Applebo's face. He began to understand. But, while he caught the ugly reflection of what was in the mind of Heldstrom, he did not see how he was to answer him. How was he to make this rough sailor understand his silly sentimentality? And how could he explain his own sensitiveness in approaching him on the subject of their relationship? He hesitated, and Heldstrom, of course, took this hesita-

tion as a sign of guilt, and the endeavour to search for some explanatory lie. His face grew black and in contrast the piercing blue eyes appeared to pale. Perhaps they did actually pale as a consuming wrath contracted the pupils. He leaned forward and shook his heavy forefinger so close to Applebo's face that it almost struck him.

"I tell you vy! Now I understand! It was because of my little ger'rl . . . Miss Hermione! Dot mor'ning at Shoal Harbour! Dis morning in der fog! Und how many mornings besides, I do not know . . .!"

"*Silence!*" Applebo sprang to his feet. For all of his height, there was head room in the yawl's cabin to permit him to stand erect. The face which he turned to his father was bloodless, tense, with white teeth bared to the molars, while the heavy cords and muscle-bands of his neck stood out under the ivory skin.

Heldstrom, too, hove himself upon his feet, and, for an instant, the two big men faced each other across the little table. Then Applebo sank back to his seat.

"You are my father," he said, "and you are aboard my boat. Also, you are in the wrong, as you will discover when you talk with the lady

in question. I have seen her but twice: once by accident at Shoal Harbour; once this morning, when she came to ask me to follow you no longer. She will tell you the rest. As soon as the weather clears, I shall sail for New York, to lay up the yawl. This is all the explanation that you will get from me. In fact, there is nothing more to be said." He arose and, stepping up into the cock-pit, blew a wailing note on a siren boat-call. Almost immediately there came the sound of oars, and the Finn appeared propelling the dinghy over the flat grey surface of the water. It was apparent that the man had not been far from the yawl.

Applebo turned to Heldstrom.

"Here is the boat," he said.

Heldstrom gave him a fierce, questioning look, which Applebo did not appear to see. The face of the older man was haggard as he came up through the hatch. For an instant he seemed to hesitate, as if on the point of speech. Applebo gave him no opportunity.

"Set Captain Heldstrom aboard the *Shark*," he said to the Finn, who vigorously nodded his wild, dishevelled head.

Heldstrom glanced down at the boat, then at

his son. The old sailor had the expression of a very aged man who has overtaxed his waning strength and is about to bend beneath the weight of years and trouble. Again he hesitated, as if trying to speak.

"Good-morning . . . !" said Applebo, curtly.

The words acted like a bucket of cold water on Heldstrom. His great frame appeared to stiffen. He stepped down into the dinghy and seated himself heavily in the stern. Applebo raised his hand in salute. Heldstrom ignored it.

"Gif vay . . . !" he growled to the Finn.

The warlock dipped his oars. The boat glided off into the fog, which appeared to have suddenly darkened. A damp air was fanning in from the sea.

CHAPTER XV

For several minutes Applebo stood erect, arms folded across his chest, staring into the fog. Presently he shrugged, smiled cynically to himself, and, turning on his heel, went below, where he seated himself on the edge of his bunk.

"An interesting morning," he observed, aloud. "I am richer by one Ideal, and poorer by the loss of another. On the whole, however, I am 'way ahead on the break! If my father is a rough old brute of a pig-headed Scandihoovian sailor, then my sweetheart is the darlinest and loveliest of women, although she is scarcely more than a child. Nothing shall keep me from marrying her! I am mad about her! I would like to write her fathoms on fathoms of verse, but I will not!"

He opened the locker at the head of his bunk, took therefrom a large pile of manuscript, which he proceeded to tear into small fragments.

"I have sung my swan-song as a bard," Applebo observed. "Poetry can make a d—— fool of a man. 'Sickening verse,' quoth my paternal. I shall write no more sickening verse." He stared absently at the yellow bulkhead, then as absently

set about to steep some tea. "Perhaps, when I get something in my tummy, I will look with a less saddened retrospect upon my 'family quarrel.' What an old brute! I wonder why Hermione is so fond of him? There is a jolt coming to *him* when he learns that his accusations were all creatures of his prejudiced and unreasonable imagination. The old bear actually thought that I had been putting her up to secret rendezvous . . . when, as a matter of fact, upon the only two occasions when we have met, I have been the one to bring the interview to a close and send her home! Shucks!"

A quart or two of tea, with some dozen and odd macaroons, had a decidedly cheering influence upon the spirits of Mr. Applebo. This breakfast achieved, he wrote a letter to Hermione, telling her of his unfortunate interview with his father. After this, he took the Finn and went ashore, in quest of certain things needed for the run to New York. Most important of these was a fresh supply of macaroons.

At noon the fog had slightly thinned and there was a little air from the northeast. Nobody but Applebo would have thought of putting to sea in such weather, but he had an idea that his

father, after interviewing Hermione, might return to express his regret at certain things which he had said, and Applebo had, for the time being, completely changed his views in regard to the desirability of a paternal parent in the scheme of his careless life. Not only had the romantic anticipations of the poet been dealt a severe blow by this brutal introduction to his father, but, what was worse, his hypersensitive mind had almost immediately parodied it, so that, even while smarting from the interview, he was cynically laughing at it. Like many poetic natures, Applebo's had it in keen appreciation of the ridiculous, and it was because he was conscious that his sentimentality often enticed him out upon the thin ice of the absurd that he had, as a sort of self-protection, acquired the veiled, mocking pose which left the unsympathetic world in doubt as to whether he was making a fool of himself or of it!

In his interview with Heldstrom, Applebo had been quick to appreciate the futility of a pose of any sort. The sturdy Norwegian would have torn through it like a shark through a gill-net. Applebo had found himself always quite well equipped to meet force with force, and so, when his father had brought to the onslaught sheer

weight of personality, his son had met him with the same backing. The issue had been a draw, and Applebo felt that, if he had frankly won, he would be far less content.

Half an hour later he was feeling a secret admiration for his sturdy, one-ideal old father, and wishing that they had parted friends.

"After all . . ." said Applebo to his barometer, "the old coot was only carried into breaking water by his devotion to Hermione. What he thought, I'm sure I don't know . . . nothing very bad, or he would not have left me alive. It was apparently that I had been enticing her from the path of conventional behaviour. Dammit! I wish I knew what he really *did* think! I'll go to sea and dope it out under way. The narrow environs of this puddle constrict my intellectual flight." He raised his voice, and the Finn came squattering aft.

"Get the anchor," said Applebo. "We are going to sea."

Twenty minutes later the *Daffodil* stole wraith-like through the entrance and laid a course across Massachusetts Bay for Cape Cod. The wind was steady, if light, and its direction enabled Applebo to make a broad reach for the Cape. In the mid-

dle of the afternoon the fog blew off, while the breeze freshened, hauling steadily to east, then east by south. At dark Applebo sighted the Highlands Light and, soon afterwards, Race Point, and, as the wind was beginning to haul ahead and the general aspect of the weather was unpromising, he decided to run into Provincetown. This he did, dropping anchor in the midst of a fleet of fishermen who were trailing in, one after the other, as the night advanced.

At two o'clock in the morning Applebo was awakened by the hum of his main rigging, the hiss of driving rain, and the short, angry slapping of little waves against the bow of the yawl.

"Good thing we ran in . . ." he thought, contentedly, and went to sleep again. Two hours later he was again awakened, this time by a clanking and clattering up forward.

"The Finn is giving her the other anchor," he thought. "Must be blowing up. . . ."

At seven in the morning, when he awoke, Applebo shoved his tawny head up through the hatch, to find that it was blowing a southeasterly gale. Crowded close on all sides was the fishing fleet, many other vessels having run in for shelter dur-

ing the night. Fine, staunch schooners they were, with the big spars and sleek lines of yachts.

Applebo slipped on his bathing-suit and took a dive overboard, to the unconcealed amusement of the crew of an adjacent smack. Finding himself the target for many witticisms, Applebo decided to shorten the range and swam alongside, when, finding a sea-ladder down, he climbed sleepily aboard and blinked at the jovial crew.

"How's fishing?" asked Applebo, hauling his long, wet body over the rail.

The men regarded him with that swift yet searching scrutiny peculiar to their kind. Finding him a "college feller" and locating him at once aboard the *Daffodil*, there seemed to be nothing strange in his wandering half-naked through the wind and rain.

"Fishin's all right," replied an elderly man, who appeared to be the captain of the vessel, "but the weathure ain't. You off'n the ketch yander?"

"Yes. She may not look it, but she is my yacht."

The captain gave her a keen, assaying glance.

"Say," he observed, "that thing looks like the

critter we see last week at Hampton Roads. We was in there ketchin' crabs. . . ."

"I was there, too," said Applebo. "I sneaked back up here inside in that easter."

The men looked at him with interest. The captain—a lean, lanky citizen of the State of Maine—shifted his tobacco. He was politely dressed in a nautical costume befitting his rank and consisting of a derby hat with a dint in the left side, a rather tired-looking "biled shirt," a black vest . . . for he wore no coat despite the drizzle . . . a heavy gold-plated watch-chain, black trousers, and patent-leather shoes, whereof the "patent" was putting up a losing fight against the salt water. This costume would have identified him anywhere along the coast as the captain of something; at first guess, a coasting schooner. The men called him "Dave," despite the fact that he was captain and old enough to have fathered any of them.

"That boat o' yourn looks like a sword-fisher," said he.

"She was built for that," said Applebo.

"She won't never drowned ye. Might starve ye, though."

"She won't do that either," said Applebo.

"You will find a lot of yachts that are duller than that yawl of mine."

"I know one that's duller," said the skipper, "'n that's the old *Shark*. We come in abaout daylight this mornin'. It was blowin' toll'ble fresh. M'yeah . . . not so peart as what it is now, but there was wind a-plenty. Jibin' raound the Stellwagen Bank we nigh pitched onto that 'ere old wagon. . . ."

"The *Shark*?" cried Applebo.

"It was her. They wa'ant much light, but I seen that behind o' hern wallowin' off into the muck. There ain't no mistakin' *that* critter! She's been bangin' 'round this coast most as long as what I hev . . . 'n' that's consid'able time."

One of the crew, an Irishman, spoke up.

"'Twas the *Shark*," said he. "She was wad-dlin' out around the Cape like an ould duck. Phwat she was doin' in shwill like this I dunno!"

"We wa'ant lookin' fer nothin' goin' *that* way," said the captain. "Mercy o' hell we didn't spile her paint! Tearin' chunks off'n the sea, we was!"

"Funny that the *Shark* should have been out there," said Applebo. "I left her in Marblehead yesterday noon."

"'Twas her," said the Irishman. "There's no mistakin' the nose-pole av her. 'Tis like a pug-nosed girl wid a slate-pencil in her mout'. She was flounderin' to sea like a cow in a bog . . . just as graceful, sor. There was a big man wid whuskers a-shtandin' be the wheel. I know him. 'Tis ould Heldstrom."

"Who's the owner o' the *Shark*?" asked one of the men.

"'Tis a navy man . . . wan Bell. . . ."

"Wa'al . . ." said the captain, "likely he knowed what he was a-doin' on. Chances air he put into Chatham when he see what was goin' on. Ye kain't tell nothin' 'baout the weathure this time o' year. The day starts in ca'am 'n' peaceful, 'n' the glass nailed tha'ar, 'n' afore sundaown it's blowin' the paint off'n her. Got a heap o' respec' fer saou'casters this time o' year, I hev."

Applebo chatted for awhile with the old man, the crew regarding with much curiosity the nearly nude, beautifully muscled figure standing by the rail apparently indifferent to the gusty wind and the drizzle driving against his gleaming limbs. It was about the end of August and not cold, but a gale off Cape Cod is never really tropi-

cal in temperature, and the fishermen were in heavy oilskins over their working-clothes.

Applebo finally wished them good-day, then made a clean dive off the rail, and swam back to the yawl. He found the Finn squatting on the forward deck, staring straight into the wind's eye. A gale always excited this peculiar individual. The dangers of fog, tide, and reef had no apparent effect on the Finn, but as soon as it began to blow he underwent a notable change. It made no difference whether the yawl was hove to in a squall, riding to a sea-anchor, or safely moored in a snug, land-locked harbour; the result upon the Finn was the same. During a storm he had always the intent, expectant air of one awaiting some momentous event. Often he would pause in what he was doing, as though to peer and listen, always watching the direction from which the wind came, sometimes talking to himself, nodding his head, and at times bursting into strange, wild little snatches of song, chanted in a beautiful tenor voice. Applebo once asked him what he heard in the wind, and he answered—"The voices of the newly dead." This, and the peculiar and uncanny way the man had of cocking his head and peering suddenly with one of his divergent

eyes at some object either in the sea or sky, might have affected some people most disagreeably. Applebo was merely amused and found his behaviour rather entertaining.

As he swam alongside and hove himself aboard, the Finn did not appear to see him. The man was squatting like a frog against the windlass. He had on an old oilskin overcoat, but his head was bare, the long black hair tossing in the wind and the fine drizzle beating in 'o a face which was of the pale drab of the belly of a fish. The lips were muttering a steady patter.

"What are you doing there?" Applebo demanded.

The beautiful, lustrous eyes turned to him slowly.

"Praying, master," came the soft-voiced answer.

"For whom are you praying?"

"For those about to die."

Applebo dressed, and was refreshing himself with tea and macaroons when he heard a roaring sound close aboard, and poked his head up through the hatch to see a fisherman foaming in, her foresail in rags. Behind her came another, and a little later still another.

He wrote a letter to Hermior, and went ashore to mail it. The gale was harder than ever, and he wondered how the *Shark* was getting along. But he felt no anxiety, and decided that she had undoubtedly put into Chatham.

He went to bed early that night, in a mood of deep depression. About midnight he was awakened by a pressure on his chest and, as his eyes flashed open, for he was a light sleeper, he saw a dark figure leaning over him and felt the sudden disagreeable trickle of water on his face and neck. Springing up, he thrust at the dark shape, and that so violently as to send the Finn, for it was he, staggering back against the table.

"What do you mean by dripping water over me like that, you fool!" cried Applebo, thinking that the Finn had roused him to say that they were dragging, or something of the sort. A little standing-light was burning, and Applebo saw by its feeble flame that the face of his Finn was working spasmodically and his manner was wild.

"Master," he cried, "I have had a vision!"

"What sort of vision?"

"I saw a white vessel, dismasted and sinking. Her people were clinging about the decks and the sea was washing over them."

Applebo leaned forward, gripping the edge of his bunk.

"What was this vessel?" he cried.

The Finn shook his wet, shaggy head, and again the drops sprinkled Applebo's face and neck.

"I cannot say, master. She was buried in the smother and the vision was not a clear one. It was not like when I saw my father clinging to the bottom of his fishing boat in the Finskii Zalif."

"What happened then?"

"He was never heard of again."

Applebo moved uneasily. He had his full belief in much of the phenomena not to be explained by known physical laws and, therefore, dubbed "superstition." That night he had gone to sleep in a most unusual state of depression, and once or twice he had awakened to listen to the gale humming through the rigging. His first thought had been of the *Shark*, and he had been inquiet, even while his reason told him that to be so was absurd. Wherefore, awakened by the Finn with this lugubrious tale of a vision of shipwreck, his first thought was naturally of the *Shark*.

"What do you think this vessel was, and where?" he demanded, impatiently.

"I could not say, master."

"Then why do you come here and waken me and spatter me with cold water to tell me about it?" Applebo demanded, angrily.

"I thought that I ought to do so."

"But why?"

"God does not give us these visions for nothing, master."

"Then what do you want me to do? Go to sea and wait for an angel to take the wheel?"

The Finn did not answer. He knew quite well that, were the *Daffodil* at sea, she would be hove to under a storm trysail or riding to a sea-anchor.

"Well . . .?" snapped Applebo. "What do you advise?"

The man pushed back his dank hair and shook his head. Applebo lost his patience.

"Any fool might dream of shipwreck on a night like this," he said. "Now clear out and let me sleep."

The Finn muttered some excuse and hove himself up through the companionway. Applebo turned over and tried to sleep, but it was a vain effort. The Finn had quite banished all drowsiness for the time, and his little ship had

struck two bells, then three, then four and five before he lost consciousness again.

At eight bells . . . four of the morning, he awoke with a start. Turning up his lamp, he reached for his barometer and found that it had risen two-tenths. He slid out of his bunk and shoved his head up through the hatch, to discover that the wind had hauled southerly.

"Wind's going around . . ." he said to himself. "It'll be westerly in the morning and clear with a hard nor'wester. If it's any way possible we'll go out about eight."

For several minutes he hung through the hatch staring into the murk. Some hard puffs struck the yawl, swinging her a trifle on her hawsers.

"Wind's getting westerly now . . ." said Applebo. "It's not such an awful blow, anyway. We've been out in worse. . . ."

The rain had stopped and the air was comparatively clear. Applebo breathed it deeply. He cocked his head and stood for a moment listening to the roar of the surf on the beach across the neck.

"Some sea out there . . . this wind is hauling right around. . . ."

All at once he sprang up through the hatch.

and started forward along the deck. The fore-hatch was open and he saw the shoulders of the Finn, halfway through it. Then, the man's pallid face was turned up to him in the vague light.

"Heave in your chain," said Applebo. "We are going out."

CHAPTER XVI

CHRISTIAN HELDSTROM returned from the interview with his new-found son, shaken to the core of his strong but simple being.

On boarding the *Shark*, he went at once to his room, where he seated himself on a big, iron-bound sea-chest and remained for some minutes staring absently straight in front of him. The lines of his face were haggard; under its tan the weather-beaten skin looked drawn and faded as old leather, and there was a droop to mouth and eyes which told not only of fatigue, but a sense of defeat.

He was still sitting in the same position when there came a familiar little tap on the door. Heldstrom pulled himself together.

"Coom in, Hermione . . ." he said.

Hermione entered and closed the door behind her. For a moment she stood by Heldstrom's shoulder, regarding him in a half-shy, half-anxious way.

"You have been to see Applebo, Uncle Chris?"

"Yes," answered Heldstrom, heavily. "He is my son. He told you?"

Hermione clasped her hands and leaned toward him.

"Yes . . . this morning. Oh, Uncle Chris! Aren't you delighted?"

"Not altogedder. Vat else did he tell you?"

"He told me that his greatest dread was just this; that you might not wish him for a son . . . as he wanted you for a father. That was why he has followed the *Shark* all summer. He wanted to be near his father, but shrank from revealing himself before he could feel more sure that you would be pleased."

Heldstrom gave her a piercing look.

"Und you say it vas for that he has followed us? For that alone?"

The crimson came into Hermione's cheeks, but her eyes never wavered from his.

"Until we met, he and I, on the beach, that morning at Shoal Harbour. Since then it has been partly . . . for me . . ."

"Ho!" growled Heldstrom. "Because of *you!* Den vy has he been sending sickening verses to Cécile?"

"He got our names mixed and thought *I* was Cécile. Did he tell you that he had been sending verses to Cécile?"

"No. It vas your fadder."

"And Applebo told you this morning that he was your son?" asked Hermione, a little breathlessly.

"I haf suspected. Since I saw him in de vater I haf been t'inking a great deal. His face vas always before my eyes; den last night I had a dr'ream of der voman who spoiled my life, and her face was der face of dis yoong man. I vil show you her photograph; I haf not looked at myself since more dan twenty years."

He rose massively from the chest, unlocked it and rummaged in the many little drawers and lockers within. Presently he handed a small package to Hermione. She unfastened the ribbon which secured the faded yellow paper, and, as the portrait came to light, Hermione's blue eyes opened very wide. The face was that of a very beautiful and unusual-looking woman, but what startled the girl was the extraordinary resemblance to Applebo. There were the same wide forehead, flat cheeks, and straight nose, the mouth slightly pushed out, full-lipped but strong, while the expression was that of Applebo when he assumed his impassive, blinking pose.

"Were her eyes the same amber colour?" Hermione asked, studying the photograph intently.

"Like der eyes of a cat. Dey called her 'der tigress,' und she vas von, too. . . ." His tone changed, brusquely. "How many times haf you spoken to dis yoong man?" he demanded.

"Only twice. At Shoal Harbour and this morning." Hermione handed back the portrait. "That is unmistakable, isn't it? Oh, Uncle Chris! Why are you not happy? Isn't it comforting . . .?"

"Vat did he say to you dis morning?" Heldstrom interrupted, curtly.

"First I asked him to stop following us, which he promised to do. Then he told me about his being your son, and I offered to tell you myself . . . because I thought that it might be easier for you . . ."

"What did he tell you about yourself, Hermione?" Heldstrom's eyes were watching her steadily.

Hermione raised her head, proudly.

"He told me that he loved me."

Heldstrom, who was standing, thrust his hands into his side pockets and looked at her keenly.

"I t'ought so! Und how many times you haf

met? Twice! Und he tells you that he loves you
Der scoundrel!"

"You are not very flattering to me . . ."

"No! I am not! Und dis fella is! Und you
like it!"

"Yes," said Hermione, hotly, "I do like it
Harold Applebo is a splendid, big, strong, true
hearted gentleman, and, if I can love him after
seeing him but twice, I don't see why he shouldn'
be able to love me!"

"It is not der loving," said Heldstrom
slightly softening, "it is telling it out dere in
der fog."

"He wouldn't have told it if I hadn't dragge
it out of him. As it was he tried to put me back
in my boat. . . ."

"Vat!" Heldstrom wheeled upon her so sud
denly that Hermione shrank back, startled. "H
put you in your boat! Hermione, do you dare
to tell me that you haf been aboard dis fella
yawl?"

Hermione, having come expressly to give sym
pathy, rebelled against this utter lack of it. Th
hot blood rushed suddenly to her head.

"Yes," said she, "I *did* go aboard the yawl
. . . and I went below. I was curious to see

what it was like. A woman can tell when she is dealing with a gentleman, and Harold Applebo is all of that! No doubt he inherits it from his mother! You ought to be proud to have such a son . . . and proud to have me love him, too! You may have had a bad time of it, Captain Heldstrom, but so has he! As for me, I came here to try to help you, and you have all but insulted me! I am not a little girl any more; I am a woman, and I have a woman's feelings . . . and . . . if you think you can trample over them with your big sea-boots, you can . . . can . . ."

"Hermione!" Heldstrom's compelling voice silenced the outburst on the part of the girl. "I am sorry if I hurt your feelings, my dear little ger'rl," said he, very gently. "Dis circoomstance has given me a bad list to poort. But you are a very yoong girl und dis fella should know better dan to make love to you. Yoost der same, perhaps I haf not been so fair as I might be. I am sorry. I moost t'ink it over by myself. For der present, please do not say anyt'ing to anybody, my dear."

"Of course not, Uncle Chris." Hermione saw that he evidently wished to be alone, so she turned and stole qu' out, leaving Heldstrom sitting

upon the big sea-chest, his eyes fixed upon the bulkhead.

In the saloon Hermione found her father somewhat the worse for the wear and tear of his poker party, but ferociously devouring ham and eggs.

"Been thinkin' it over," said he, crossly, "and I've come to the conclusion that we've had about enough o' this fool Applebo. Folks are beginnin' to talk. The boys were joshing me last night about my pilot-fish. I'm goin' to tell him to chuck it."

"You needn't bother," Hermione answered; "I have already told him to."

"Huh . . ." growled Bell, staring at her over his plate. "When did you do that?"

"An hour or so ago. I ran into him out there in the fog."

Bell frowned, hesitated a minute as though undecided whether to be relieved at having the duty taken off his hands or resentful of Hermione's forwardness. Not feeling quite up to a row, intellectually, he said nothing, but attacked his eggs with increased savagery.

"Well, then," said he, presently, "there ain't any use in making the run to Bermuda. Let's g

around to Newport; I'm sick of this hole. I've got to run into town this morning, but I'll be out early, and, if the muck has blown off, we'll start right out."

Hermione agreed. Cécile was indifferent, and all places looked alike to Paula and Huntington Wood. And so it was that midnight found the *Shark* beating out across Massachusetts Bay against a fresh gale from the southeast. Slow she might be, but it had to blow very hard to keep the old schooner from getting to windward, while her great beam and high sides made her comfortable under any weather condition.

Rather to Bell's surprise, for he had expected opposition, Heldstrom made no demur about going to sea in what looked like the start of a hard storm. In fact, the old Norwegian seemed impatient to get under way.

"Yoost a little vind und r'rain . . ." said he. "Double r'reef der mainsail."

Daylight found the schooner snoring along well off the Cape. It was blowing hard, very hard, and many big fishermen had passed them, flying for the shelter of Provincetown, but so far the only shortening of canvas aboard the *Shark* was the two reefs in her mainsail.

"It does not look very goot," Heldstrom observed to Bell, who relieved him to take the morning watch. "Der fishermen are all getting in out of it."

"It's blowin' too hard to fish," said Bell, "but it's a fine breeze for a sail. This is just our meat. I'll keep on standin' out on this leg so's to make a reach of it into The Vineyard. It's clear enough."

Heldstrom went below, and Bell, toward the end of his watch, deciding that he was far enough to windward to make a good slant of it into Nantucket Sound, gave the order, "Ready about," and a minute later, when the scant crew had scrambled aft to trim the mainsheet and one hand was standing by to hold the forestaysail aback, Bell turned and made a circular motion with his hand to the quartermaster at the wheel.

"Hard-a-lee . . .!" he bawled, in his fat husky voice.

The schooner was by this time in a very nasty choppy sea-way, the tide setting her strongly against the hard southeaster and the water all about combing and frothing almost like a tide rip. The old yacht was plunging heavily, and altogether the conditions for bringing her partly about were far from favourable. To begin with

every pitch of her bluff bows checked her headway; again, the three reefs in her mainsail gave her a bit of a lee helm, while the watch was not strong enough to trim her mainsheet smartly, but merely gathered in the slack of it as she swung up to meet the wind. But, worst of all, the hand who was holding the forestaysail aback let it get away from him just as the sail was about to fill and swing the schooner's head. And so it befell that the schooner missed her stays.

Pitching and bucking and jerking her big, heavy spars, the *Shark* hung in irons, while the gale thundered through her slack sails and the breaking water all about roared and lashed and flung its wind-driven spray high into the volleying canvas. The big main-boom was lashing up and down in a terrifying manner, and the slackened sheet-ropes rattled and banged their big blocks as though to snatch the heavy iron travellers out by the roots.

Bell was furious. "Missed stays, by the eternal!" he roared. "Who's the scrub that let that headsail go?"

The uproar had brought Heldstrom on deck. There was no particular danger, beyond the straining to the gear one may always expect when

a big, heavy sailing-vessel gets in irons and thrashes around in a sea-way. But this has ways to be considered.

"Oop here, you lubbers!" thundered the Norwegian to the watch below. The hands were tumbling up when from forward there came the most appalling crash, and the next instant the horrified eyes saw the bowsprit jerked suddenly upward. The jib-boom was springing like a whip, then snapping its martingale-stays it followed the bowsprit. A sickening, grinding splintering roar followed.

Heldstrom's great voice rose above the crash and clamour.

"R'run forwards . . . all hands . . .!" roared. "Here's come der spars!"

Hardly had he spoken when the foremast swayed for an instant, drunkenly, and then came roaring down, the foresail ballooning under Heldstrom's warning had not been needed. What was happening was plain to every man on deck. The vicious plunges of the old yacht had carried away the bob-stay, from the terrific strain of jerking spars. The masts, left thus with no forward stay and no lateral strain from the s

to be shared by the shrouds, were doomed to destruction.

Heldstrom blared out afresh.

"Forwards! All hands r'un forwards . . . !
Forwards, zir!"

His voice was lost in the uproar. The foremast had fallen at a slight angle, which took it across the port rail, a little abaft the beam. Bell, as he watched its descent, had sprung to the starboard side. Olesen, the quartermaster at the wheel, stood fast. He was holding his helm hard up, nautical instinct telling him that, if he could only get the wind over the starboard bow, the wreckage would be carried clear of the hull.

"Leave der v'veel!" bawled Heldstrom, for the mainmast was swaying with every plunge.

Olesen, seeing his efforts of no avail, sprang clear. Even as he did so down came the mainmast, straight aft, its fall at first checked by the forward spread of the shrouds. It demolished everything on the quarter-deck, its upper fragment smashing from the lower across the stern.

A sudden hush followed. That is to say, the hush was a comparative one, for the fallen masts were rolling and grinding back and forth across the decks as the hulk wallowed in the sea. But,

while the wind was shrieking and the big combers crashing on all sides, there was no longer the thundering of slack sails nor the slamming and wrenching of heavy gears. And then, as the schooner began to broach to, a new menace arose.

The foremast had broken itself across the vessel's side and the upper fragment, held by a mass of wreckage and the attached sail, floated on the sea and with each successive roll began to batter at the schooner's side. Heldstrom saw that planking and frames could not long withstand such mauling. He rushed aft and secured an axe.

"Catch some turns on that spar!" he thundered.

The foremast, inboard, was quickly secured. The hull had swung slowly, the wreckage abeam acting as a drag. Heavy seas began to break over the port bow, while at each instant the battering of the floating fragment of the foremast became more appalling.

Heldstrom, axe in hand, swarmed out upon the spar. Heavy, crumbling seas threatened to carry him off bodily, and at times, when the schooner rolled into a combing wave, he would quite disappear from sight. In spite of this he continued to work himself out by inches until at the end of the broken spar, where, watching his

chance, he hacked through the tangle of ropes, when the floating wreckage drifted astern. His work was barely done when a brimming sea hurtled up abeam, tore the spar from its lashings, and, lifting it bodily, flung it across the schooner's deck.

Bell was the first to reach Heldstrom as he lay crushed beneath the spar. With the aid of Olesen and another man he carried him below, where, at the foot of the companion, he found the three girls with Wood, who was trying to reassure them.

"Dismasted!" panted Bell. "Heldstrom's badly hurt. Look after him."

He went on deck and told the carpenter to sound the well. The hulk, held by the wreckage which had drifted astern, was swinging slowly. All hands on deck were driven forward by the wash of the sea, finally taking refuge on the t'gallant forecastle, for, as has been said, the *Shark* was of old-fashioned design. Her stern foul of the wreckage and the high bows offering a purchase to the wind, she finally lay stern to the sea, which came in a little on the starboard quarter.

For the moment there seemed no immediate danger, so Bell went below again through the galley

hatch. He found Heldstrom unconscious, lying on a transome, his head pillowed on the lap of Hermione, who, very pale but quite composed, was wiping away the blood as it trickled from his forehead. Huntington Wood was talking in a soothing voice to Céline. Paula was crouched on the transome, her hands clasped in prayer, that of her lover. As Bell was telling them what had happened, the carpenter came in.

"She is leaking badly, zir," said he. "Under the boats was all smashed to splinters."

"Man the pumps," said Bell, briefly. "There is no danger," he added, in a quiet voice. "The yacht has enough timber in her to float us if she should have a flush-up."

All had occurred so quickly as to be almost impossible of realisation. Ten minutes before the ancient yacht had been ploughing staunchly to windward in the teeth of what had become a hard blow. The tearing out of a cubic foot of so of dry-rotted stem and she was become a masted, sinking hulk. Even her boats were gone, those not crushed by the falling spars having been torn to splinters by the writhing shrouds.

Of all her people it was hardest, perhaps, for Huntington Wood to appreciate this vicissitude of change of condition, the others having lived

of their lives afloat. Cécile, after her first frightened outburst, had got herself in hand and was huddled among the cushions of the transome, white but silent.

"You say she will float?" Wood asked of Bell.

"Yes . . . but she's goin' to be deuced uncomfortable, once she's a-wash. She must have spewed out her caulking from the wrenchin' on the maststeps, and like as not she's opened up along the garboard-strake. But we don't need to worry. Somebody'll sight us through the day. This place is like the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twenty-third Street. Cheer up, girls . . . and Heldstrom is goin' to pull around all right, you see. I'll take a peep below. Steward, push your eyes back into your head and get me a lantern!"

But nothing did sight the *Shark* throughout the day, and nightfall found her very deep. She was drifting sluggishly in a northwesterly direction, but, waterlogged as she was, this drift was very slight.

All hands had slaved unceasingly at the pumps. Bell, the grouty valetudinarian, was the pillar of strength upon whom all had come to lean. He had got a wipe across the forehead from a wire

shroud and this had plentifully bled him and done him a world of good. Certain ones of the crew had wished to knock together a life-raft, but Be answered:

"This hulk is the best raft. She'll float you till this place freezes, and then you can skua ashore. Carpenter, empty all the fresh-water tanks. The scuttle butt will last until I leave her and the tanks will float a lot of weight."

After dark Heldstrom regained consciousness. He was still lying in the saloon, and Hermione was crouching at his head. Heldstrom's first words were:

"Are ve filling?"

"Yes," answered Hermione, gently, "but there is no danger. Papa says that she will float."

Heldstrom fought for a minute to get his breath.

"She vill or she vill not. Your fadder figured it out, und he is a navy expert und dey are generally wr'rong. T'eoretically she might float, practically, she might not. Your fadder figured on der floating power of vood, not of punk. Tell him to fire some rockets. . . ."

And he lost consciousness again.

A little after midnight the water drove them from below. A shelter was rigged on the t'gallant forecastle and all hands took refuge there. The wreck was lying stern to sea and the combers were breaking across the waist. The gale had not abated, but the wind was hauling, and now and again there would come a lightening of the sky and a breaking in the scud, through which an old moon shone pallidly.

"Beginnin' to clear," said Bell, cheerfully. "Bet you what you like we will be sighted before first-drink time. Any takers?"

There was no answer. Captain Bell took a few turns on the slippery deck, then paused by the windlass to stare out into the storm-driven murk.

"Too bad the *Daffodil* went out ahead of us," said he, turning to Hermine. "If ever a shark stood in need of her pilot-fish, then this one does."

At the word "pilot-fish" there came a stir from the tarpaulin-covered figure of Heldstrom. Then the low but resonant tones of the dying Norseman reached the ears of Bell, who was still leaning against the windlass.

"What's that?" asked Bell. "What does he say?"

Hermione raised her pallid face and looked steadily into the gloom to leeward.

“What was that he told you, my dear?” asked her father.

“Uncle Chris told me something which I already knew,” she answered, in a steady voice. “We have only to wait a little longer. Our fish is coming.”

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Our Pilot-

CHAPTER XVII

THE glass was rising and the dawn coming faintly when the *Daffodil* stole from the shelter of Provincetown and headed out into the turmoil of Massachusetts Bay. The yawl was under her forestaysail, a storm gaff-trysail, and a scrap of mizzen. Applebo's plan was to reach out to sea, shaping his course around the Cape as the wind hauled, which he felt certain that it would, and not try to beat against the gale with its nasty swell.

For such a boat as the *Daffodil* there was no great danger. She was solid as a wooden shoe, with an uncommonly high freeboard, a generous beam, and deep enough to stand up against the sling of the foaming crests. Although but thirty feet on the water-line, she was "all boat" and the equivalent of much larger vessels of a different type. Also, she had been constructed for water of this sort, and had a low cabin-trunk and a small, shallow, self-bailing cockpit. Really, the only thing exposed to damage was the man at the wheel, and his first duty was to so handle her as to keep out of danger.

The scud was rapidly breaking away as *Daffodil* slipped down past Race Point Light headed out for the open. The wind was hard if anything, but as the yawl encountered the bad water the sun pushed over the horizon a long, rich beam of golden-yellow flashed out between the sea and the low-flying storm-cloud. It found the little scraps of sail on the *Daffodil* and bathed them in a golden light.

"An augury . . . !" said Applebo. "I like that. It cheers me up." And he called to Finn to take the wheel while he prepared some macaroons and tea.

Well clear of Cape Cod, the yawl got her taste of what was coming, when Applebo was greatly reassured at her splendid behavior. Luckily, the tide had turned and was running with the sea, which had lengthened out and, though of a dismaying size, appeared to be kindly disposed. A landsman and many deep-sea sailors would have said that every moment was fraught with great peril for the little *Daffodil*, but Applebo and Finn were of that species of human amphibian which lives in the closest and most intimate association with the sea—the offshore, small-boat sailor. Such know the sea as none other.

big-ship mariner knows it only as a sailor, but he who goes down to the deep in the little shallop knows it as does the gull; knows each flaw of the breeze as it strikes up from the flank of some mammoth surge; knows the cross-slap of a brimming wave and the upward throw as it mounts to comb.

The day lightened. Suddenly the sun blazed out again to reveal the wind-torn waste as a seething cauldron. The spouting billows leaped to flash their jewelled tiaras in the vivid brilliance of the streaming light. Storm gulls wheeled and wove and darted and screamed their greetings to the day. Petrels darted like swallows. The ocean grew joyous in a wild and lawless abandon, leaping with drunken frenzy, the billows playing like titan creatures of the deep, flashing and flinging their silvery scales, and their shoutings arose in a revel of hoarse clamours that might have been song or curse.

Through this wild carouse drove the *Daffodil*, and seemed to enjoy her rough handling by these sea-runners, as some buxom wench might take pleasure in a romp with rough sailormen. The wind roared more westerly and cocked aslant the white bonnets of the staggering seas. Spindrift,

glittering like gems strewn with a wanton hand, flew clean to the truck of the little yawl, and a rainbow blazed and faded and blazed again under her plunging bows. Brighter grew the sun and harder blew the wind, while back rolled the grey blanket of the storm and showed a patch of sky blue and purple and amethyst, still fringed about with a ragged veil. The sea suggested sapphire falling on a field of sapphires.

Now, the yawl wallowed in a maelstrom of water, while the day grew more and more gloomy. All in an hour's time.

Applebo had taken the wheel again, and Finn was crouched at the foot of the mainmast. He had taken the end of a halliard and caught a turn around his body and the spar, for several times the little vessel had been swept by the heaving crest of a comber. Applebo was at times sitting in water waist-deep.

Suddenly the Finn burst into a wild, inspiring chant and his beautiful, throaty tenor reached Applebo to send the warm blood coursing through his body. He knew the lay. The Finn sang often at sea when the wind blew. Rising as he did above the deep diapason, Applebo found good and lent his bass to the chant, and so,

the accompaniment of wind and sea, these two sang their chanty full-throated against the gale. They sang in the Norwegian tongue, and their pæan translated would be thus:—

*“ We have quenched our winter fires, and our faces
turned away
From the land of dead desires to a new and
glorious day;
Now the deep unfolds before us; cloud and sun-
band score the sea;
In our ears a wind-wave chorus, far astern a
darkening lea. . . . ”*

Seaward plunged the *Daffodil*, exulting as those she bore. Joyous and full-throated sang Applebo and his Finn, while the high west wind drove back the lowering storm-clouds, as Michael and his angels might have sent fleeing the hosts of Satan. Triumphantly sang Applebo, and, as he sang, a scant ten miles away his father lay dying while Hermione looked upon his death and wondered how long it would be before she met him, just beyond, and if her dear Uncle Chris would guide her steps in that Life as he had in this.

And the Finn, with his second-sight? Perhaps

the Finn, warlock that he was and dwelling a little in both worlds, knew that things were as they should be. Perhaps he knew nothing, and all was coincidence. At any rate, it happened that a little later Applebo's eye was caught by a flash of colour that had no part in the chromatic scheme of sky and sea. He saw a flash of red, then lost it, then saw it again.

"What is that?" he bawled, and pointed seaward.

The Finn looked at him, his head turned first to the side. Applebo noted his odd, flashing smile.

"It is a vessel dismasted and sinking, masted. Her people are clinging to her decks, and the sea is washing over them."

There are a number of nautical problems more simple than that of transferring passengers from a waterlogged hulk to a little yawl in a heavy sea. But Applebo and the Finn belonged, as has been said, to the gull breed, and they went about their task quite naturally.

On sighting the capsized ensign and the wreck beneath it, Applebo dropped down and hove to the yawl as close under the lee of the schooner as he dared. Olesen then drifted astern to the yawl.

buoy with a line attached. This line was fast to a snatch-block, riding the hawser and holding in its sister-hooks a bowline in a bight. When Applebo presently got the signal to haul in, there arrived a Swede in a life-preserver, slung in the bowline. The sailor had been sent first to test the apparatus, and from him Applebo quickly learned the details of the disaster.

"You say that Captain Heldstrom is badly hurt?" asked Applebo.

"He iss dying, zir," answered the man.

Paula arrived next, and then Cécile, both badly spent from strain and exposure, Cécile semi-unconscious from her ducking *en route*, so that, after she had been got clear of her lashings, two of the men had to carry her below. Hermione came next, her blue eyes blazing like sapphires from her colourless face and her high spirit undaunted.

"They tied me in this thing by force!" she cried to Applebo. "I wanted to stay with Uncle Chris. He is conscious now and refuses to be moved."

When only Bell, Olesen, and Heldstrom were

left aboard the hulk, Applebo swung himself in the bowline and signalled to Olesen to haul. The hawser led over the cat-heads, which were a-wash as the sea welled up under them. Applebo swung himself aboard.

Heldstrom was lying on a grating rigged so that it was clear of the swash across the deck. As Applebo looked over him he opened his eyes. They were bright and intent as ever, but it needed but a glance at the waxy face to see that the end was very near.

"My son . . ." he said, and closed his eyes again.

Bell, who thought that his mind was wandering, looked at Applebo.

"How are we to move him?" he asked.
"Every bone in his body must be broken!"

Heldstrom's eyes opened again.

"You moost not move me," he said. "I will go down wit' der schooner. It does not matter. Efery bone in my body iss broken, but I do not care, because my hear't vas broken long ago. Now leave me, for der wessel iss wery deep."

The three men stared at each other, perplexed. To lash a man in Heldstrom's condition into a life-preserver, sling him into the bowline, and dra

him through the sea to the yawl seemed a useless cruelty. Yet, how could they leave him?

"Are you floating or sinking?" asked Applebo.

"We've been like this since daylight. Olesen says she's still settling a little. . . ."

For several minutes they stood there, irresolute, unable to decide what they should do. As long as Heldstrom lived there was no thought of leaving him. To try to move him, on the contrary, would be merely to kill him outright. No doubt it occurred to all three that the wreck might suddenly refuse to rise from one of her slow, heavy plunges and that in that case there would be no time for them to gain the yawl! Applebo had thought of this when he went aboard her, and had instructed the Finn to stand by to slip the hawser if he saw the hulk about to sink.

"You two go aboard the yawl!" said Applebo.

"I will stay until the end . . . or till she sinks."

Bell turned to Olesen.

"Get in the bowline . . .!" said he.

Olesen hesitated.

"Obey orders, my man!" snapped Bell. Olesen, trained to discipline, climbed sulkily into the apparatus and, scorning the life-preserver, was

hauled aboard the *Daffodil*. Once aboard, Applebo hauled back the sling.

"You go, sir," said he.

"Go yourself!" snapped Bell. "Think I'm going to leave an old friend like that? Go yourself."

"He is my father," said Applebo.

Leaning on the windlass, with the fresh nor-wester roaring out of a sky like crystal, the spray flying over them, and the water swashing about their feet, Applebo told his story to Bell while the two waited for Heldstrom to die. And, as he finished and Bell was staring at him with round goggle eyes, his fat face haggard and colourless, there came from somewhere in the water-soaked hull an odd, jarring explosion and a mass of froth welled up into the waist.

"There goes one o' the water-tanks," said Bell. "I had 'em emptied and plugged, to buoy her up. She may sink now."

The concussion seemed to have aroused Heldstrom. He opened his eyes.

"Go . . . !" said he. "I t'ink she's settling."

Neither man moved. And then it seemed to hold Heldstrom for the first time understood.

"Ho!" he cried, and the strength came in

his voice again and the brightness into his eyes.

"So it vas because of me that you wait? Ha . . . that it is fine! But you must *not!*" He looked at Bell. "You have dose little ger'rls . . ." The blue eyes softened. "Go, my old friend. Gif me your hand und go . . .!"

Bell, the tears gushing from his eyes, took the bloodless hand in his, squeezed, then dropped it. Heldstrom looked at Applebo.

"Kiss me . . . my son," said he.

Applebo knelt and kissed him.

A sea broke in the waist and the wash boiled thigh-deep over the quarter-deck. It splashed over Heldstrom as he lay on the staging. The cold water seemed to rouse him. He hove himself upright and flung both arms aloft.

"To God . . .!" he cried, and fell back, dead.

Bell looked at Applebo.

"We've no time to lose . . ." said he. "She's going."

"I'll take his body with me to the yawl," said Applebo. "I suppose you want to be the last to leave your ship."

"Of course," said Bell, quietly.

CHAPTER XVIII

OUR saga closes far from the sea and the sad tales it has to tell. Here were fresh odours of moss and fern in place of the salt ones of brine and sedge. The murmur of the wind in the tall pines is sweeter far than wave-talk . . . but there were other murmurs of which we must take account.

At the foot of a tall pine were Hermione and Applebo. Behind them the late autumn woods and at their feet a small expanse of crystal water, smooth as a mirror except where broke by the rush of some avid trout. A glorious jewel of a lake was this, rimmed about with emerald and rubies, set in gold and reflecting an azure as pure as it is possible for an Adirondack sky to hold.

On the far shore nestled a little camp in a clump of beeches and a thin column of blue wood smoke rose straight into the still, spicy air. From the shadowed bank to the right came the flash of a canoe-paddle and a splash of crimson colour.

If Hermione and her lover were Nereid and Triton when we saw them down there by the sea

here, then, they were of the forest. A Diana in hunter's green was the girl; a little green felt hat with a partridge feather, green flannel blouse, short skirt, gaitered as to her shapely limbs, bright of cheek and eye, and the red ribbon in her glossy hair.

Applebo, for his part, smacked more of the Engadine than of the North Woods, being, as was usual with him, slightly overdressed. He had arrived at the camp but two hours before, driving a badly treated motor-car, of which the Finn was the inefficient mechanic. Nor did it appear to the occupants of the camp, watching them arrive, that there existed between the fabric and its crew that perfect sympathy to be found when they were aboard the *Daffodil*. The name of this voiturette was the "Cowslip," but as Wood, standing with his arm around Paula, whispered in her coral ear, a better name would have been the "Side-slip."

"Just what did papa say," enquired Hermione, "when you told him that you wanted to marry me?"

"He said: 'The . . . ' Well, you can imagine what he said . . . hand me the pepper; these trout are just *au point!*'"

“What did you say?”

“I did not say anything. I should have known better than to have tackled him when he was cooking. But, as he seems to do nothing but cook, that would mean to hang about indefinitely, and I’ve got to start back in two hours.”

“Well . . . what did he say, finally?” demanded Hermione, with impatience.

Applebo gave her his laziest and most maddening look. Hermione reached for her stick, and he proceeded more briskly.

“He said, after the trout were finished, ‘Huh . . . h’m . . . so you want to marry Cécile, do you?’

“‘No, sir,’ said I; ‘Hermione.’

“‘Why,’ said he, ‘Hermione! What are you talkin’ about? Why, you cradle-robber, Hermione’s only a kid!’”

Hermione snorted.

“I told him,” continued Applebo, with maddening languor, “that I quite agreed with him that you were a simple, untutored child, quite too young to know your own mind, impulsive, undisciplined . . .”

Thwack!

“Ow . . . !”

"What else?" demanded Hermione, ominously.

"I explained to him that, while in the majority of cases it was a very undesirable thing for a girl to be married as young as nineteen, yet in our case there might be certain advantages. . . ."

"Such as"

"Well" Applebo regarded her warily, edging a little away. "I pointed out the fact that, if a man ever expected to live in peace with a lady of such violent disposition as his youngest daughter's, it was of inestimable advantage to catch her young and then train her. . . ."

Thwack!!

"Ouch! Do you think that is a nice way to treat your fiancé?"

"What did papa say to that?"

"He heartily agreed with me. After that he gave his consent and we had a drink on it. He had several. Then he happened to think of a partridge that he'd left in the oven, and bolted off. I had a feeling that, if anything had gone wrong with the partridge, he might blame me and withdraw his favour, so I escaped and came here to tell you the glad news. And you whack me with a stick. . . ."

Thwack!!!

But the lady who tames lions must not forget that, after all, they are far stronger than she, the next second Hermione found herself in an embrace which left her not so much as the power to wriggle, while her breathing was momentarily suspended by certain processes which, while acting to the respiration, are never fatal, owing to their stimulating effect upon the heart.

And this no doubt was precisely what she wanted!

THE END

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