

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME-WARD BOUND.

But Harry was not dead, in fact, was almost uninjured. Though he had a very narrow escape, as the bullet from his opponent's pistol had grazed his head, cutting an ugly gash over the right temple and almost in the same place where Loffden's bullet had struck him; yet it was not serious and only stunned him for a few seconds.

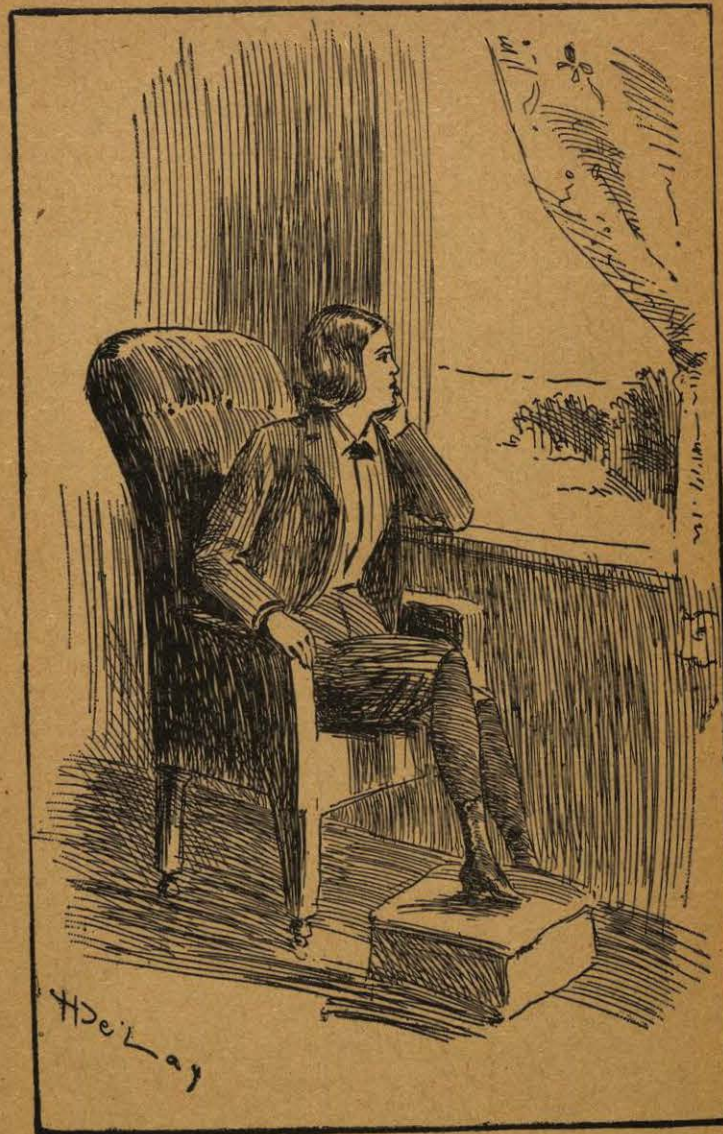
"O Harry, my darling, my darling," cried the girl, heedless of the vast crowd that had gathered around, heedless of the questioning, admiring glances of the rude, rough men, heedless of all save the joy of her pure, young heart as she saw that her lover was not dead; and throwing her arms about him, she kissed him again and again.

"Ask some one to bring me some water," whispered Harry.

"He wants water," said Tom, "please some one bring him some water."

"Give way, give way!" came in the stentorian tones of old Hans Grauerholty, the tavern keeper, pushing his way through the crowd. "Stan' beck poys und gifs us blenty of room. Here, here, missie," said the portly, good-natured Hans, as he brought the water.

"Here, Harry," urged Tom, holding the water to his lips, "here's water; drink and then I will bandage your wound."



TOM WAS LOOKING OUT OF THE OPEN WINDOW.

In a few minutes the ugly gash was washed and bandaged and then Harry was able to sit up.

"There," exclaimed old Hans, "dot ish besser as good! Now cooms mit meer and I gifs zee ain teener and zee rests."

Following old Hans into the dining room, they were greeted by the fat, jolly landlady and her buxom daughter, who were busily engaged with the dinner tables.

"Here," said Hans, leading Harry to a sofa, "zee lays down und rests vile mine frau he gets ine teener retty right away of kuick."

"Ohm Hans," said Tom, "we have no money to pay you now, but we will pay you sometime."

"Yah, yah, min frauline, dot ish all right—yoost you nefer mind apoudt dot monish."

And turning he entered the kitchen and said to his frau and daughter—

"By shiminy, I peliefs dot ish old Vinterstine's gals vot was shtole away mit her lofers und dot great, pig tiamondts. By collies, but dot was a prety pig shtories apoudt that tiamondts. Dey calls him de 'Shtar of Kimberly'. Chiminetti! I wonder mich if dey have got him now?"

After telling his old frau of his suspicions as to their guests identity, and bidding her prepare for them a good dinner, he returned to the bar-room to see after the removal of the dead stranger.

By this time the excitement had pretty well nigh subsided, for a shooting affray at the port was no unusual occurrence. Though this was a little out of the regular

order of such happenings, and created considerable excitement at the time, it nevertheless soon died out and all was quiet again.

Port Orange, settled by people from all nations and situated upon the very out-skirts of civilization, became the rendezvous of toughs of every description. Such a state of affairs prevailing, it is not to be wondered at that this affair created so little attention. Four entire strangers, who had not been in the town a half hour, met and fought.

Many were the comments passed upon the beautiful little girl, dressed in boy's clothes, and the brave, broad-shouldered young fellow whom she had called her darling. Everybody enquired of everybody else if they knew who they were, where they came from, or where they were going, what their business was, and what caused the fight; but no one knew—old Hans kept his own counsel.

"Yah, yah," he muttered, "I peliefs dot ish old Vinterstine's missie. If it ish, den it was moach besser dot de beeples don't know him, for efrybody knows apoudt dot great pig tiamondts und dot gals. Yah, yah, I yoost keep 'em outd of sight till deese crowds gets away mit here."

In a few minutes our two friends sat down to the first regular meal that it had been their good fortune to partake of for nearly two months.

Both were nearly famished and did ample justice to the bountiful repast spread before them.

"O my!" exclaimed Tom, as she pushed her chair back from the table, "this is the first time I have had

enough to eat since I can remember. I am ready now for another trip. But, o Harry! you don't feel good, I know—your head must hurt awful bad!"

"I don't care for my head; that ain't what I was thinking of; what interests me now is: How shall we get away from here? I don't like this town; we must get away from here just as soon as possible. I heard old Hans talking to his wife and, if I am not badly mistaken, he mentioned your name. Of course the story of that diamond is known all over the country by this time. I don't know that any one would bother us if they knew us, but I wouldn't like to chance it just the same."

"Oh, I don't believe that he knows me, Harry—how could he?"

"Qnite likely a description of you has been sent to him—but it don't matter. We will get away from here just as soon as we can anyway."

Returning to the sitting room they sat down upon the sofa, together.

Tom was looking out of the open window. There was an expression of deep thought upon her fair face; her wide, blue eyes were looking wistfully across the water; her soft, red lips slightly parted, while her fair cheeks glowed with a strange light that reflected the thoughts of her innocent, maidenly heart.

"Tom," asked Harry, and it aroused the girl with a start, "Tom, what are you thinking about?"

"Won't tell you, Harry," declared Tom, with a shy glance up into his honest, gray eyes.

"Taint fair, Tom," he returned, "I always tell you everything—I'll tell you what I was thinking of."

"Tell on, Harry; what is it?"

"It's just this: If that fellow that I laid out in the other room there has got any friends here, they may try to make trouble for us."

"But is it likely, Harry, that he has, or that they could do anything even if they were to try?" asked Tom.

"There's no telling, Tom, what they could do or what they might try to do. There are plenty of bad men here—just as bad as Loffden or those two Dutchmen and just as capable of doing us mischief. Because we are here among civilized people, guarantees us no great amount of safety. If any one should suspicion us—"

"But Harry, how could they? Besides we haven't got the diamond now."

"That's what I was coming to, Tom. We have got the diamond. I—"

"O Harry!"

"Yes, it's so—Iv'e got it. I saw it when that Dutchman fell. He had it tied up in an old handkerchief and tied in his belt. I knew what it was and that's why I fell on to him. I pretended to be stunned, but I wasn't. I was afraid that some one might have seen that I was up to something, but maybe they didn't."

"O Harry, I am so sorry. I thought that we were rid of that fateful stone. Oh, I am afraid of that evil thing. Do you know, Harry, that that man lying in there makes fifteen that I know of that have lost their lives on account of it?" said Tom, with a shudder.

"I don't care, Tom, the stone belongs to you—you found it and by the eternal, they shall not take it away from you!" said Harry.

"I would a thousand times rather that they should have it than for you to risk your life and suffer as you have for it. Risking your own life and taking the lives of others because of that miserable, glittering thing."

"Tom," exclaimed Harry, reproachfully, "do you mean to tell me that I have done what I have for that 'Devil's Eye?' That's the best name that I know for it."

"Harry, O Harry!" cried Tom, "I didn't mean anything of the kind. O don't think that of me."

"I don't want to Tom—it isn't like you to judge me so—it was for you Tom, that I have done what I have done and not for that bloody gem," said Harry, earnestly.

"I know it, I know it! I don't know what made me speak that way—I never thought—I didn't mean it—I—I—"

"Sh—don't cry—some one is coming," said Harry; and a moment later old Hans entered the room.

"Vell, vell, mine friendts," he exclaimed good naturedly, "I ish more a gladt dot ze ish besser now!"

"Thank you Ohm Hans," said Tom. "You are very kind to us and I hope that we will be able to pay you all back some day."

"Vell yah, dot is all right mine frauline. I yoost could do not any too mooch for ze. I knows ier farder once—yah, yah, peliefs dot ze are old James Winterstine's missie. Yah, yah, dot ish him!"

"O sir—Ohm Hans, if you know anything of us, for heaven's sake don't mention it to any one!" pleaded Tom.

"Nine, nine, mine leetle missie; fear ier not—ole Hans is no fool."

"Ohm Hans," does any one here know anything of us or that man in there?"

"Vell I tells you—efry pody knows all apondt dot tiamondst, vot day galls him de 'Shtar of Kimberly,' und day knows apondt dot missie vot vas shtole mit him away, und some dey tink dot she, he ish ier. Now I tolès ze yoost vot to do. I goes ze right away from here quick off mit dose tiamondts already. Dere ish mine vessel yoost reaty to shtart und ze goes mit her off und I makes him right mit de captains."

"Ohm Hans, exclaimed Harry, grasping the old fellow's hand and shaking it heartily, "we will remember you and some day we will pay you for this."

"Vell, vell, dot ish all right—I sees der captains right away, alreaty—you cooms mit meer."

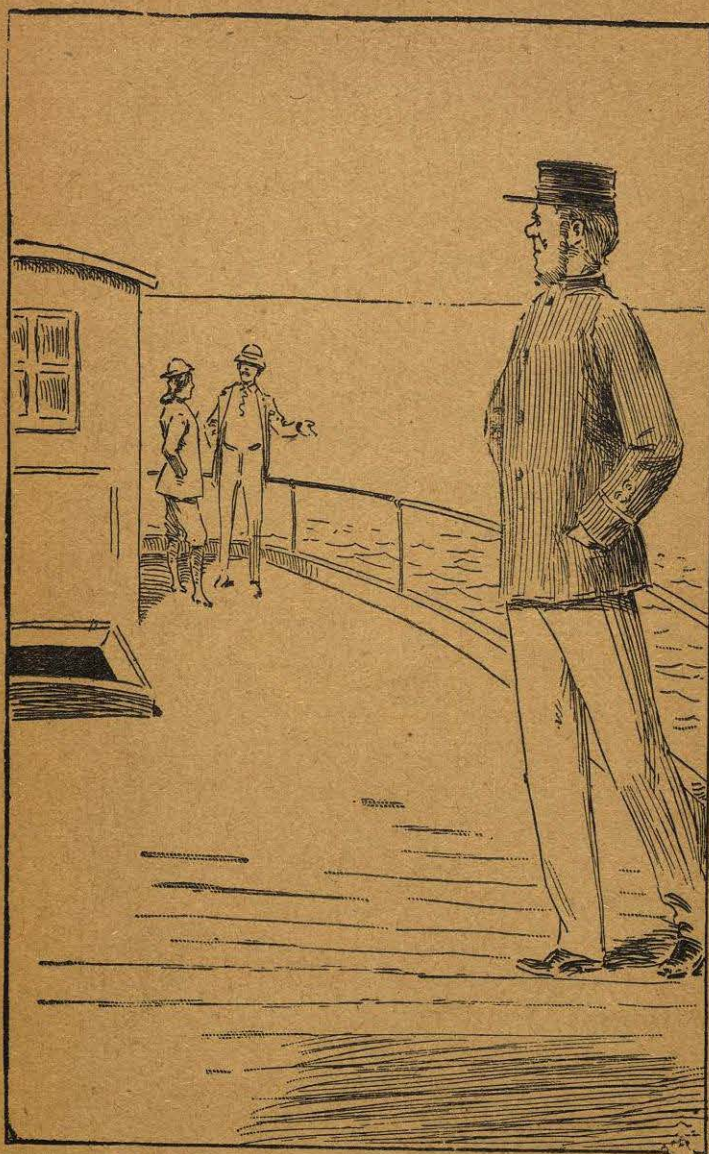
"Yes, yes," said Tom, "we are ready." And following him, they arrived in a few minutes on board the ship, Cape Town, and soon had the satisfaction of having everything arranged for the passage.

The ship, freighted with its cargo of merchandise and some twenty passengers, including Tom and Harry, soon weighed anchor and floated proudly out at sea.

O what a feeling of glad delight, of heart-felt thankfulness filled the bosom of little Tom as she realized that she was out of the dark, dangerous land where they had encountered so many hardships and dangers, and were speeding swiftly toward home.

"Homeward bound!" cried Harry.

"Thank God!" murmured Tom.



THE CAPTAIN SURVEYED LITTLE TOM AS SHE STOOD

A FEW PAGES OFF.

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CHAPTER XIX.

LOST AT SEA.

"Blast my my head-lights!" exclaimed old Captain Marlin as he turned in his walk on the deck and surveyed little Tom, as she stood but a few paces off. "Blast my eyes! but I believe that that gal's old James Winterstine's darter—Lord-a-mighty-now; but she's a beauty an' no mistake, sartin. But what in the name of— is she dressed up in boys clothes for? God almighty now, if that story old Hans told me to-day is true, about that diamond once the 'Star of Kimberly'—but blast my eyes, now, if I could tell which was the 'Star,' the gal or the diamond. Some how I don't just exactly like this— a-h-e-m, M-r-r-r—"

"Lovejoy," said Harry. "Harry Lovejoy."
"Ahem, a very pleasant evening, Mr. Lovejoy," and he cast an inquiring glance upon little Tom.

"Very pleasant, indeed, captain," returned Harry taking the proffered hand of the old sea-captain and, noticing the inquiring glance, he said:

"Let me, Captain Marlin, introduce you to my wife— little Tom, I call her."

The captain ahemed, rubbed his bald pate and finally bawled out in his gruff tones:

"A-h-e-m—blast my head-lights now! He knew it, he knew it all the while, old Hans Granerholtz did— God almighty now, he's run a drive and we—God almighty, he knew it."

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"Knew what, captain?" asked Harry, rather taken back by the captain's unrestrained embarrassment.

"God almighty now! Ahem—I might just as well tell it—I—I—ahem, I—that is, if the crew knew that—that—I a-h-e-m—that is, if they knew—if they were aware that the 'Star of Kimberly' was aboard us, they would desert the ship before night," stammered the captain.

"What do you know about the 'Star of Kimberly', captain? What does the crew know about it? How do you—what makes you think that it's aboard you? What is the 'Star of Kimberly,' anyway?" asked Harry, somewhat confused at the turn of events.

"Godlemighty yes! it's old Winterstine's darter—and she found it, a great, blood-red diamond—the devil's own gem, so they say, and it brings ill-luck and disaster upon every one that has anything to do with it. Godlemighty now! they do say that it has been baptized in the life-blood of more than fifty men already."

"But that's a lie, captain, there's not a word of truth in it!" exclaimed Harry.

"God almighty now! But I don't know about that. But come, I will show you where to bunk. We are rather crowded this trip and I'll have to stow you away in my cabin. There are two of us, but we'll divide with you;" and leading the way into the cabin, he showed them a bunk and said: "Rather close quarters, but's the best we can do. Your wife is small, so she won't take up much room anyway."

"O Harry," cried Tom, reproachfully, "what did you mean by telling him such a story?"

"I did it so I wouldn't have to tell your name, Tom, that's all—"

"But he knows me, Harry, besides you might as well have lied about one as the other," declared Tom.

"Well, it's done and can't be helped, so we'll just have to make the best of it, Tom. Come, you are tired, lie down and go to sleep and think nothing more of it," coaxed Harry.

"I won't do it!" declared Tom.

"Nonsense, Tom; I didn't think that we'd get into such a scrape as this—but what is to be, will be, and we can't help it. So think nothing more of it—"

"I won't—I don't want to just the same. If you hadn't told him I was your wife—"

"But what difference does it make, Tom? Are you afraid to trust me, Tom? If you are, just say so like an honest girl."

"O Harry, I didn't mean that—I ain't afraid of you—I never thought of such a thing!" declared Tom, whose feelings were wounded at such a reflection, and removing her coat and shoes, she crawled into the bunk and lay down in silence.

"Well, I didn't think that you were afraid," remarked Harry, spreading a blanket over her; "but you are angry just the same. But never mind, Tom, go to sleep and think nothing more about it. If I had a known—but how did he know you anyway, Tom?"

"Oh, he has heard about us, I suppose."

"Blast his old eyes, anyway," muttered Harry, seating himself upon the foot of the bunk and thinking of the old captain's words, and the strange agitation and

uneasiness which he seemed to entertain on account of his new passenger and the mystery which he believed hung about that mystery stone—the “Star of Kimberly.”

“I don’t know about that old fellow,” mused Harry, “but I will watch him a little and see what—ah, here he comes now”; and lying back across the foot of the bunk, he pretended to be asleep as the captain entered, and pausing before the sleeping pair, the old sea-captain muttered:

“God almighty now! There’s no doubt about that gal—she answers the description to a ‘T’—yes, it’s old Winterstine’s darter. Blast my old eyes, but I wish she was away from here. God almighty now! I don’t believe they’re married at all, for he wouldn’t choose such an uncomfortable place as that to sleep when there’s plenty of room in there with her.” And rubbing his bald pate, the captain paced back and forth a few times, and then again paused in his walk and muttered:

“God almighty now! I don’t believe that there’s anything in these superstitious notions—it’s all nonsense. But somehow there’s been something wrong ever since they come aboard us. There’s something a-wind among the men, an’ they do say that the rats have all left the ship—a sure sign of disaster. Not a sign of a rat has been seen or heard to-day—God almighty now!”

This is an old saying, but as to its truthfulness I cannot say, nor whether it be merely a superstitious fancy; but it is said that the rats will always leave a vessel just before she sets out upon a passage in which she will be lost. Perhaps not all sailors believe it, but Captain

Marlin and his ship’s crew were not an exception to the general rule.

“God almighty now!” muttered the captain, “I do wonder if there’s anything in that sign?” Blast my headlights! but I’ve sailed the seas for on to forty years, and the rats are the only living things that have stood by me all that time. Not a day, not an hour in all those forty years has my vessel been free from the pesky varmints till this day. God almighty now, I wonder if there’s anything in it—”

“Cap’n, Cap’n Marlin!” called the mate, entering the cabin hastily. “Cap’n, there’s a storm coming directly off the coast and I believe it’s going to be a bad one—”

“God almighty now!” exclaimed the captain. “Pipe all hands on deck, close reef the canvass, and make everything snug! God almighty now! I wonder what it means, anyway?” he muttered as he left the state-room.

“Harry, Harry!” cried Tom, awakened by the tumult. “Harry where are you?”

“Here, Tom.”

“What are you sitting there for, Harry? Why didn’t you lie down here? For shame, Harry, you are angry at me!” said Tom, reproachfully.

“No, no, Tom, it’s not that—I’ll tell you some other time. Come now, get up—the deuce is to pay—”

“Oh Harry! what do you mean, what’s the matter, what’s all that noise about?” cried the girl.

“We are going to have a storm. Here, stand up and hold up your arms while I buckle this thing around you,” said Harry.

And hastily he buckled a life-preserver around her slender form.

"It don't fit!" complained Tom, twisting herself around uneasily.

"You ain't used to this kind of—of—what do you call 'em?"

"Oh, never mind—fix me quick. O dear! I can't stand that; it's too tight—it hurts—I ain't got room to breathe!"

"Never mind the fit, Tom; it wasn't made for comfort nor—"

"Oh!" cried Tom, as a shock, which nearly threw them off their feet, followed by a grating, jarring sensation, was felt. "O Harry, what is it?"

"Good Heavens," cried Harry, we are going a-ground!"

Just then, clear and loud above the roar of the tempest, rang out the awful cry—"Lost, lost!"

"Here, Tom," cried Harry, seizing a rope and drawing it through Tom's life-preserver and making it fast, "stand up close to me."

Then passing the rope through his own life-preserver, he bound her close to him.

"There, Tom," he said, "we will live or die together—we are united for life and none, save God, can put us asunder. Tom, are you afraid?"

"No, Harry," she answered, "I am not afraid."

"Come, then—"

Just then came that awful cry again—"Lost, lost!"

Panic-stricken, the crew now began rushing about in wild dismay. Some praying, some crying, some cursing

and swearing, while others remained in awe-stricken silence.

"Look, look—O God!" cried Tom, pointing directly ahead, at the dark outlines of a huge pile of rocks which rose high and indistinct in the darkness.

"God Almighty, now!" came in the stentorian tones of old Captain Marlin.

"Quick, Tom, hold your breath and hang to me!" cried Harry, seizing the girl in his arms and running quickly to the side of the vessel.

"Oh Harry!" wailed poor little Tom; and the next moment the mad sea-waves reached out their demon arms, and, in that awful, close and deadly embrace, bore them away.

In half an hour the storm had passed and all was peace and quiet, and the next morning a passing steamer noted the wreckage on the rocky shore and hove to to investigate. Not a living soul was found among all that ill-fated ship's crew.

The ship had struck upon the rocky shore of a small islet and within sight of land; but inquiry convinced them that all had perished.

The proud ship which had sailed the stormy seas for many years and weathered many storms, had gone down