

The Lust of Hate

BY GUY BOOTHBY

Author of "A Beautiful White Devil," "A Bid For Fortune," "The Marriage of Esther," "Dr. Nikola," Etc., Etc.

(Continued from last week)

There was no need for her to bid me look. I was watching the ship with all my eyes. Heaven alone knows how supreme was the agony of that moment. She had gone about, and for this reason it was plain that those on board had not seen the signal. Now unless I could manage to attract her attention, it would be most unlikely that she would see us. In that case we might die upon the island without a chance of escape. At any cost we must intercept her. I accordingly returned to my seat again and the pull willed by the light and the sea smooth, otherwise I should have made no headway at all. But when all was said and done, it was but little that I could accomplish. The boat as I have already said, was a large and heavy one, and my strength was perhaps a little undermined by all I had gone through in the last two or three days. But, knowing what depended on it, I tolled at the oars like a galley slave, and Miss Maybourne kept her eyes fixed upon the retreating ship. At the end of an hour I was obliged to give up the race as hopeless. My strength was quite exhausted, and our hoped-for saviour was just showing hull down upon the horizon. Realizing this I closed my eyes and resigned myself to my despair. For the moment I think I must have forgotten that I was a man. I remembered only the fact that a chance had been given us of escaping our prison, and that just as we were about to grasp it, it was snatched away again. Our fate seemed too cruel to be endured by mortal man.

"I should have been much more to you. I am a powerless as you are," I replied. "You are a powerless as I am," she answered gravely. "But poor little Esther is no longer in this morning. In fact, if anything, I fancy she is worse. She was delirious for some time in the night, and now she is in a comatose condition that frightens me more than her former restlessness. It goes to my heart to see her in this state. 'Is there anything we can do for her, Mr. Wrexford?' I said as I prepared my fish for the fire. 'I fear we are powerless,' replied Miss Maybourne. 'The only thing I can imagine to be the matter with her is that she must have been struck by something when she was sucked under by the sinking ship. She complains continually of pains in her head.' 'In that case, I fear there is nothing for it but to wait patiently for some ship, with a doctor on board, to come in sight and take us off.' 'In the meantime, she may die. Oh, poor little Esther! Mr. Wrexford, this helplessness is too terrible.' 'What could I say to comfort her? In my own mind I saw no hope. Unless a vessel hove in sight, and she succeeded in carrying the doctor must inevitably die. As soon as the breakfast was cooked, I went into the cave and looked at her. I found the little thing stretched upon the grass I had thrown down for a bed. She was unconscious, as Miss Maybourne had said, and was breathing heavily. Her pulse was almost unnoticeable, and occasionally she moaned a little, as if in pain. It was a sight that would have touched the most callous of men, and in spite of that one sinister episode in my career, I was far from being such a hero.

At midday there was no change perceptible in her condition. By the middle of the afternoon she was worse. Miss Maybourne and myself took it in turns to watch by her side; in the intervals, we climbed the peak, and scanned the offing for a sail. Our vigilance, however, was never rewarded—the sea was as devoid of ships as our future seemed of hope. After a day which had seemed an eternity, the second night of our captivity on the island came round. A rather exquisite evening could scarcely be imagined. I had been watching by the sick child's side the greater part of the afternoon, and feeling that, if I remained on shore, Miss Maybourne I took the boat and rowed out into the bay, to try and obtain some fish for our supper. This was not a matter of much difficulty, and in less than a quarter of an hour I had hauled on board more than we could consume before we had eaten in the cave. When I had finished, I sat in my boat watching the sunset effects upon the island. It was indeed a scene to remember, and the picture of it, as I saw it then, rises before me now as clearly as if it were but yesterday.

To right and left the points which skirted the bay, the deep green of the sea was changed to creaming froth, where the surf caught the rocks; but in the little indentation which we had made our home the waves were rippled on the sand with the softest rhythm possible. The air was cloudless, the light warmer than it had been for days past. The glow of sunset imparted to the western cliffs a peculiar shade of pink, the beauty of which was accentuated by the deep shadows of the pebbles, and directly opposite where my boat was anchored, I could see the plateau, and on it my fire burning brightly. I thought of the brave woman nursing the sick child in the cave, and of the difference she had made in my lonely life.

"Oh, God!" I cried, "if only you had let me see the chance that was to be mine some day, how easy it would have been for me to have ordered Nikola and his temptation to stand by my side. Now I see my happiness too late, and am consequently undone for ever.

As I thought of that sinister man and the influence he had exercised upon my life, I felt a thrill of horror pass over me. It seemed dreadful to think that he was still at large, unsuspected, and that all probability working some sort of evil on another unfortunate individual.

In my mind's eye I could see again that cold, impassive face, with its snake-like eyes, and hear that insinuating voice uttering one of its "Dr. Nikola" diatribes. Surely, I thought, the direst enemy of mankind must be just such another as Dr. Nikola.

responsibility for that act of madness rested entirely upon my shoulders, and the burden of that knowledge was my continual punishment. At last I was roused from my blither thoughts by my companion exclaiming that she thought the fog was lifting a little in one particular quarter. I looked in the direction indicated, and had to admit that the atmosphere certainly seemed to be clearer there than elsewhere. Still, however, there was no noise of breakers to be heard.

The light in the quarter pointed out by my companion was destined to be the signal for the fog's capture, and in less than a few moments the sea, rising from the time of our first observing it, the whole expanse of sea from horizon to horizon, stood revealed to us. We sprang to our feet almost simultaneously, and searched the ocean for the island. But, as I have already said, we were alone on the open sea without either water or food, and my knowledge of where we were, or without being able to tell from which quarter we might expect assistance, was not such as to give us any ground for confidence. My companion, however, considered the sea and the weakness of my companion, and reflected what such a fate would mean for her. I could have cursed myself for the stupidity which had brought it all about. For some moment I thought I had made our escape, but, as I have already said, the fog returned, and we were again in a momentary increasing, and with it the waves were assuming more threatening proportions. To say that I did not like the look of affairs would be to put my feelings very mildly. To tell the truth, I was too worn out to think of anything save that our fate would be if by chance we should be on the edge of an hurricane. However, I knew it would not do to meet trouble halfway, so by sheer force of will I riveted my attention upon the boat, and in this way I succeeded in averting the evil which was before me. I occupied myself to prevent me from questioning the future.

Suddenly Miss Maybourne, who, as I have said, had for some time been sitting in a constrained attitude in the stern, sprang to her feet with a choking cry.

"Mr. Wrexford," she said, in a voice that at any other time I should have recognized as hers, "I must have something to drink or I shall go mad." Fearing she might fall overboard in her excitement, I leapt up, seized her by her arms, and dragged her down to her seat again. Had I not done so, I cannot say what might not have happened.

"Let me go," she moaned. "Oh, Heaven's sake let me go! You don't know what agony I am suffering."

could have saved my life. Every faculty was strained to breaking pitch, and I was continually watching and listening for something, though what I expected to see or hear I could not have told if I had been asked. I pray to God that I may never again be called upon to spend such another absolutely despairing night.

The calm with which we had so far been favored was not, however, destined to be as permanent as we imagined, for towards the middle of the night the wind got up, and the sea, from being as smooth as glass, became more boisterous than I altogether liked. Miss Maybourne, who now seemed to be sunk into the lethargy from which she had roused me, lifted her head from her hands, and at intervals glanced over her shoulder apprehensively at the advancing waves. One thing was very evident: it would never do to let our boat drift broadside to the sea, so I got out the oars again, and to distract my companion's thoughts, I invited her to take the oars. She did as requested, but without any sign of the eagerness she had hitherto displayed. Then, for something like an hour, we struggled on in this crab-like fashion. It was herculean labor, and every minute found my strength becoming more and more exhausted. The bow of the wind was momentarily increasing, and with it the waves were assuming more threatening proportions. To say that I did not like the look of affairs would be to put my feelings very mildly. To tell the truth, I was too worn out to think of anything save that our fate would be if by chance we should be on the edge of an hurricane. However, I knew it would not do to meet trouble halfway, so by sheer force of will I riveted my attention upon the boat, and in this way I succeeded in averting the evil which was before me. I occupied myself to prevent me from questioning the future.

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ing this, with an inarticulate sound she dropped her head on to her hands once more. To restore some animation to my cramped limbs, I rose into and endeavored to make my way to the bows of the boat. But, to my dismay, I discovered that I was as weak as a month-old child. My legs refused to support the weight of my body, and with a groan I sank down on the thwart where I had previously been rowing.

For upwards of half an hour we remained as we were, without speaking. Then I suddenly chanced to look along the sea-line to the westward. The atmosphere was so clear that the horizon stood out like a pencil line. I looked, rubbed my eyes, and looked again. Could I be dreaming, or was it a delusion conjured up by an overtaxed brain? I shut my eyes for a moment, then opened them, and looked again. No, there could be no mistake about it this time. A ship was in sight, and heading directly for us! In an excitement of that moment, the delirious joy, the wild, almost cruel, hope that seized me! But, mad with longing though I was, I had still sufficient presence of mind left to say nothing about my discovery to Miss Maybourne until I was sure of my facts. She was sitting with her back towards it, and therefore could not see it. So, while there was any chance of the vessel leaving us, I was not going to excite her hopes, only the possibility of time to tell her when she was close enough to see us.

For what seemed an eternity I kept my eyes fixed upon the advancing vessel, watching her rise higher and higher above the waves. She was a large steamer, almost twice the size of the ill-fated Fiji Princess. A long trail of smoke issued from her funnels; and at last, so close did she come, I could distinguish the water frothing at her bows with the naked eye. When she was not more than three miles distant, I sprang to my feet.

"We're saved, Miss Maybourne!" I cried frantically, finding my voice and strength as suddenly as I had lost them. "We're saved! Oh, thank God, thank God!" She turned her head as I spoke, and looked steadily in the direction I pointed for nearly a minute. Then, with a little sigh, she fell upon the gunwale in a dead faint. I sprang to her assistance, and kneeling at her feet, chafed her hands and called her name until she opened her eyes to speak to me. But in spite of my exertions, she did not open her eyes. When a quarter of an hour had elapsed, and she was still insensible, I began to wonder what I should do. To remain attending to her might mean that we should miss our deliverer. In that case we should both die. At any cost, and now more than ever, I knew I must attract the steamer's attention. She was not more than a mile behind us by this time, and, I would be glad to see her in a few minutes. For this last question I tore off my coat, and, attaching it to an oar, began to wave it frantically above my head. Next moment a long whistle came, the waves to the westward, and the steamer was before us. She had been observed, and never did a sound seem more musical to a human ear. On hearing it, I stood up again, and shading my eyes with my hands, watched her approach. My heart beating like a piston, I could hear the name of the vessel. Closing my eyes, I could see the name King of Cartage, upon her bows.

When she was less than a hundred yards distant, an officer on the bridge came to the railings, and hailed us with a whistle. "Do you wish to be taken on board? Do you wish to be taken on board? Do you wish to be taken on board?"

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to make up in that line, of I'm mistaken. He handed me a glass from the tray above my couch, and held it for me while I drank. When I had finished I laid myself down again, and instead of obeying him, began to question him as to where I was. But the more I was forestalled, this time by the entrance of a steward carrying a bowl of broth on a tray. "You see we're determined, one way or another, to close your mouth," he said, with a laugh. "But this stuff is too hot for you at present. We'll let it down here to cool, and in the meantime I'll answer not more than half-a-dozen questions. Fire away, if you feel inclined."

I took him at his word, and put the one question of all others I was longing to have answered. "How is the lady who was rescued with me?" "Doing as well as can be expected, poor soul," he replied. "She's been looking a great deal better, you must have noticed. You must have had a terrible time in that boat, to judge from the effects produced. Now, what is the next question?"

"I want to know what ship this is, and how far we were from the Salva- ges. This vessel is the King of Cartage—Captain Blockman in command. I'm afraid I can't answer your last question offhand, for the reason that, being the doctor, I have nothing to do with the sailing of the ship; but I'll soon get out for you." He left the cabin, and went to the foot of the ladder that led to the bridge. I heard him call the officer of the watch, and say something to him. Presently he returned. "The Salvages lie about seventy miles north-east of our present position," he said.

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