

THE CABLEMAN

AN EXCITING PRESENT-DAY ROMANCE

BY WEATHERBY CHESNEY

CHAPTER XI.—(Cont'd.)

She heard the rattle of a wheel and the sharp rumble of the rudder chains. A shadowy form loomed out of the vapors, and came slowly on towards the entrance. The next moment the bowsprit of a large vessel passed between the rock walls of the narrow opening; there was a grating noise, and a sharp jerk; the vessel heeled till her bulwark touched the bassalt, shivered a moment, and swung back again the other way; the bell on her foremast tolled with the violence of the oscillation, and then, balanced on the fulcrum of the grounded forefoot, she settled down with long slow swings, like some giant metronome or like the dead rolling of a dikelet in the trough.

There was a confusion and shouting on her deck, and Elsa thought that she saw a woman's form. The fog crept round again, and blotted out the view of the stranded vessel.

She sculled nearer, as quietly as she could. It did not seem that there was any immediate danger, the vessel apparently was not sinking, and as the sea outside was calm, her people would easily make the shore in their boats. She did not wish to be seen, so she waited until they were gone. But meanwhile she must know whether it was possible for her to get out at all.

It was not possible. Under the light air the ship had taken ground slowly, but her weight had carried her well into the opening. There was not room on either side of her for a boat to pass out. Elsa was a prisoner.

She looked up at the name painted on the bows. It was almost dark now, but she could just make out the white letters. She nearly betrayed herself by a cry of dismay. The vessel was the Sea-Horse, the circus people's schooner.

She pushed back quickly, but a head appeared over the forward bulwarks, and a woman's voice hailing her told her that she had been seen. "Boat ahoy! We want help. Bring your boat alongside."

It was Mona de la Mar.

Elsa drew back further into the fog. Her first impulse was to refuse help. Mona shouted again, and Elsa brought her boat alongside.

"Do you need help?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Are you filling?"

"No. I don't think so. But we're hard aground. If it comes out to blow, we shall break up."

"You had better take to your boats."

"We haven't any boats, that's why we need yours. Can you come aboard if we let down a ladder?"

"Yes."

A rope ladder was thrown over the side. Elsa fastened the end of it to the painter of her boat, and then waiting till the pendulum swing of the schooner brought the bulwarks to their lowest point, put her feet in a rung and took a firm hold with her hands. There was an almost motionless second between the down swing and the up, and then she was carried swiftly upwards. At the same time she was pressed hard against the schooner's side, and the cold iron took the skin off her knuckles. It was all she could do to hold on; she could not climb until once more the fall of the roll swung her outwards again. In the brief pause between the two movements she raised herself two rungs, but it was not until she

had been hoisted and lowered eight times that she reached the bulwark level. Then two black arms grasped her and lifted her on the deck, and a soft voice murmured:

"All right, missy; now yo's safe, You didn't brave lady."

"I very thank you would manage it," said Mona de la Mar, who was standing close by. "Sambo is right. You are a very brave girl. But I don't suppose you need us to tell you that, and time is precious. May we use your boat?"

"Yes," said Elsa.

"I expect you wonder why we haven't one of our own. There's a simple explanation, but you can hear it by and by. Meanwhile I daresay you'll trust us. We're honest, you know. We haven't stolen this ship."

"You may use my boat if you can get it out."

"Get it out? What do you mean?"

"You will have to get the boat out of the water, and launch it again over the stern. There is only one way into or out of the circle of the Ring-Rock, and your schooner is blocking it."

"Is this the Ring-Rock?"

"Yes. Didn't you know?"

"Hadn't a notion," said Mona lightly.

"I saw it marked on the chart, but I thought we were a good five miles from it. Val B. will say nasty things about my navigation when he hears. I'm his pupil in that subject, you see!"

She laughed softly again, and then with a quick movement, came closer to Elsa, and peered into her face.

"Aren't you Elsa Carrington?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes."

"Do you know who I am?"

"You are Margaret Ryan."

"I was. I'm Mona de la Mar now. Come down to my cabin. Sambo, you heard what the lady said about the boat. Can you do it?"

"Got to, Missy Mona," said Sambo cheerfully. "Can't stay here till the wind comes. Oh, yes, we'll do it all right."

"Then be quick as you can. Let me know when you've done it. I shall be in my cabin."

She led the way down below, and Elsa followed her.

As she lit a lamp in the pretty little cabin she said with a smile:

"It's a funny meeting between us too, isn't it? I wish I could have shown you over my home under less wobbly conditions, but the circumstances are peculiar. Do you think you can sit on the edge of that bunk without being shot off when she rolls?"

"Why are you here?" said Elsa.

"Why am I here,—I, Mona de la Mar, late Margaret Ryan? Is that what you mean? Or do you mean why is the good ship Sea-Horse piled on the Ring-Rock, and making it necessary for Sambo and the sailors to lift your boat out and rescue you from a watery prison? Incidentally, of course, you rescue us from a possible watery grave, which would be even more unpleasant. So we are grateful. But in which sense am I to understand your question?—Me or the Sea-Horse?"

"Both," said Elsa.

Mona laughed again.

"I'm here because—oh because of a variety of reasons. It's a long story though, and I think you know most of it already. The Sea-Horse is here because I didn't allow enough for drift, and piled her up. There I've answered your question, haven't I?"

"Not in the sense in which I asked it," said Elsa.

"No, I know that. But I shall have to explain at great length to Val B. Montague presently, and explanations are fatiguing. I want to talk about you just now. I want to know you, if I can. Do you wonder why?"

Elsa looked straight at the laughing face of her questioner, and after a brief pause, said coldly:

"No."

"You understand why?" said Mona, nodding.

"I don't understand. It is merely that the question does not interest me."

Mona clasped her fingers behind her head, and leaned her back against the heaving wall of the cabin. Her brown eyes showed a sparkle of amusement, and a smile played about her lips. She was a girl who made a habit of taking life with a laugh, and even the fact that she had just piled her employer's rock did not seem to have made a break in the habit. Elsa regarded her with a cold disapproval, but at the same time with a certain admiration. There had been on examination of the extent of the dam-

age. For all that this laughing girl knew to the contrary, the Sea-Horse might in a few minutes slip off the ledge and take her to the bottom.

"I want to talk to you," said Mona—"to learn, if I can, what sort of girl you are; and though you are not interested in my reason, I'm going to give it to you. It is because you are the daughter of the man who robbed me of twenty thousand pounds."

Elsa sprang to her feet with quivering lips.

"That is not true," she said.

"Oh, come! You don't deny the relationship!" said Mona mockingly.

"And as for the robbery—"

"My father did not rob you," said Elsa hotly.

"Didn't he? I think the term is accurate. At any rate Richmond Carrington accepted its substantial accuracy as a description of what he had done when I taxed him with it yesterday."

"Yesterday!" cried Elsa. "You saw him yesterday? You admit it?"

"Of course I admit it. Why shouldn't I? I have been very anxious to see him, you know. I knew he was in San Miguel, and I meant to see him; but I didn't count on having the luck to run up against him in the course of the very first bicycle ride I took in the island. However, that was what happened."

"Where did you meet him?" Elsa demanded.

"About a mile from the village of Furnas. I had gone there to see the famous geysers, you know. Romantic district for a defrauded heiress and the defaulting trustee to meet in, wasn't it?"

Elsa decided at once that the girl was lying. Furnas is ten miles from the Caldeira de Morte. The tale was impossible.

"I thought the defaulting trustee was looking very prosperous," Mona went on mockingly. "He has put on flesh since I last met him. But he didn't seem to be as glad to see me as he might have been, considering all that he owes to me. He spoke of you, by the way, and actually had the folly to appeal to what he called my finer feelings, my generous heart, on your behalf. That was a false move which I should not have expected from a man of his proved ability. Do you know, Miss Carrington, that your father is a very plausible imposter?"

Elsa answered her with a glance of contempt.

"I recognize," she said, "that he made a mistake in crediting Margaret Ryan with finer feelings. Will you allow me to return to the deck? You shall have the use of my boat."

"But you would prefer not to have any more of my company than is necessary," said Mona, laughing. "I suppose that's natural. But I've something more to say. Your father made a ridiculous proposition to me. Will you tell him that it is declined, with Margaret Ryan's best love and thanks."

"Let me go!" said Elsa fiercely.

"How dare you mock at him like that? You know that he is dead!"

Mona de la Mar started forward with a cry.

"Dead! Do you say he is dead?"

"Do you say that you did not know it?"

(To be Continued.)

Reduce Fire Risks.

The average farm building is a fire trap from one end to the other. It is full of readily inflammable material. Once started, a farm fire is very seldom stopped. We will suggest a few precautions which we take to reduce fire risks.

If a lantern is upset almost anywhere in the ordinary barn or stable, there is a litter of chaff around to take fire. The first precaution we would advise is to clean up the chaff and litter and eliminate this danger.

Another precaution is never to set a lantern down where it can be knocked over. Everywhere in our barns we have convenient hooks or wires running from one end of the stable to the other on which the lantern may be suspended.

Spontaneous combustion is supposed to be the cause of many farm fires. Is there such a thing? A United States professor who has examined into hundreds of cases, states his belief that in almost all cases of so-called spontaneous combustion the heating of the forage was not sufficient to set the forage itself on fire, but that it set some smudge of oil or grease ablazing. The dirty lantern carried into the hay mow is a prolific distributor of oil dirt. The best preventive is to throw down the hay by daylight. A lantern in which the burner is always kept clean, however, is not so liable to distribute oil.

We never let the tramps sleep in our barns, no matter how solemnly they swear that they will not smoke or throw matches around. They are a prolific source of farm fires. We restrain our own love for "the weed" when we are around the buildings. Farm and Fireside, compares a smoking man to a walking stick of dynamite, and they are about right.

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ON THE FARM

Prepare Good Seedbed.

The promise of an early Spring will attract the attention of farmers to the approach of the grain-sowing season. The first crop considered by the majority is oats, and the buying of seed or preparing of the home-grown grain for seeding should be looked after at once.

The best way to sow oats is with the grain drill. Drilling gives a more even stand than broadcast seeding, for all the seed is covered to about the same depth. In sowing broadcast some of the seed may not be covered at all and some may be covered too deeply. Germination is better from drilled seed and the growth is more uniform throughout the season. In numerous tests at the experiment stations drilled oats have outyielded oats sown broadcast by several bushels to the acre. Better stands of grass and clover can also be obtained in drilled than in broadcast oats.

The best depth to sow oats varies with the soil and the season. In any case they should be covered with half an inch to an inch of moist soil. They should be sown deeper in sandy soils than in loams or clays. Deeper seeding is also necessary when the ground is dry than when it is moist. On the average the best depth is from one to one and a half inches.

Oats should be sown as early in the Spring as it is possible to make a good seed bed. The exact date of course varies with the season and with the locality. This does not mean that the preparation of the land should be neglected in order to sow early. Better yields will be produced from seed sown in a good seed bed than from that sown a few days earlier in ground too cold and wet for the seed to germinate.

In a good seed bed the best rate of seeding in the corn belt is about two and a half bushels to the acre. If the seed is sown broadcast, more is necessary. More seed is required in a poor seed bed than in a good one, as fewer seeds are likely to grow. A lower rate of seeding may be used for small-ker-

neled varieties than for large-kerneled ones for there are many more of the former in a bushel.

After the winter protection provided the plants last Fall to remain upon the plants for some time to come. It is during the alternate freezing and thawing weather of late Winter and early Spring that the protection is most needed.

Maintaining Humus in the Soil.

A valuable pamphlet has just been issued by the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. It deals with soils, soil cultivation and crops in that province, being a reprint of a series of articles appearing in the annual report of the Secretary for Agriculture for the year 1915. The articles have been specially prepared by experts and contain a fund of valuable information for farmers generally. In an article prepared by Mr. Cumming appear the following valuable hints on humus:

Humus may be maintained or even gradually increased by the following practices:—

(a) Live stock farming, with its attendant use of barnyard manure.

(b) Reasonably short rotations in which clover and grass sods are plowed under at not more than 3 to 5 years intervals.

(c) The use of clover, always, when seeding down.

(d) The plowing under in extreme instances of green crops, such as buckwheat, rye, clover, vetches, etc.

(e) When commercial fertilizers are largely depended upon, short rotations and the plowing under of green crops are absolutely necessary.

The humus supply may be depleted by the following practices:—

(a) Selling hay and other products off the farm instead of feeding to live stock.

(b) Careless preserving of barnyard manure.

(c) Growing too many successive crops of oats, etc. or roots or even hay (the latter is the most common source of humus depletion in Nova Scotia).

(d) The wrong use of commercial fertilizers.

In a light, open soil, humus is rapidly decomposed and lost, and consequently one must apply manure more frequently and follow a shorter rotation in order to conserve the humus supply than on heavier soils.

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