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The Bride's Name;

Or, The Adventures of Captain Fraser

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd).

"Anything wrong with the grub?" inquired the landlord severely.

Flower, who was all excitement, shook his head.

"Because if there is," continued the landlord, "I'd sooner you spoke of it than smash the table; never mind about hurting my feelings."

He wiped down the counter to show that Flower's heated glances had no effect upon him, withdrawing reluctantly to serve an impatient customer.

"I'll go down to-morrow morning to the Golden Cloud and try and ship before the mast," said Flower, excitedly;

"get married out in New Zealand, and then come home when things are settled. What do you think of that, my boy? How does that strike you?"

"How will it strike Cap'n Barber?" asked Fraser, as soon as he had recovered sufficiently to speak.

Flower's eyes twinkled. "It's quite easy to get wrecked and picked up once or twice," he said, cheerfully.

"I'll have my story pat by the time I get home, even to the names of the craft I was cast away in. And I can say I heard of Elizabeth's marriage from somebody I met in New Zealand. I'll manage all right."

The master of the Swallow gazed at him in helpless fascination.

"They want hands on the Golden Cloud," he said, slowly; "but what about your discharges?"

"I can get those," said Flower, complacently; "a man with money and brains can do anything. Lend me a pound or two before I forget it, will you? And if you'll give me Poppy's address, I'll be outside the house at seven to-morrow. Lord, fancy being on the same ship with her for three months."

He threw down a borrowed sovereign on the counter, and ordering some more drinks, placed them on the table. Fraser has raised his lips when he set it down again, and with a warning finger called the other's attention to the remarkable behaviour of the door communicating with the next bar, which, in open denance of the fact that it possessed a patent catch of the latest pattern, stood open at least three or four inches.

"Draught?" questioned Flower, staring at the phenomenon.

The other shook his head. "I'd forgotten those two chaps," he said, in a low voice; "they've been listening."

Flower shifted in his seat. "I'd trust Joe anywhere," he said, uneasily, "but I don't know about the other chap. If he starts talking at Seabridge I'm done. I thought Joe was alone when I sent in for him."

Fraser tapped his chin with his fingers. "I'll try and get 'em to ship with me. I want a couple of hands," he said, slowly. "I'll have them under my eye then, and, besides, they're better at Bittlesea than Seabridge in any case."

He rose noisily, and followed by Flower entered the next bar. Twenty minutes afterwards Flower bade them all a hearty good-night, and Mr. Green, walking back to the schooner with Joe, dwelt complacently on the advantages of possessing a style and address which had enabled them to exchange the rudeness of Ben for the appreciative amiability of Captain Fraser.

Flower was punctual to the minute next evening, and shaking hands hastily with Fraser, who had gone down to the door to wait for him, went in alone to see Miss Tyrell. Fraser smoking his pipe on the doorstep, gave him a quarter of an hour, and then went upstairs, Miss Tyrell made a futile attempt to escape from the captain's encircling arm as he entered the room. Flower had just commenced the recital of his adventures. He broke off as the other entered, but being urged by Miss Tyrell to continue, glanced somewhat sheepishly at his friend before complying.

"When I rose to the surface," he said, slowly, "and saw the ship draw-

ing away in the darkness and heard the cries on board, I swam as strongly as I could towards it. I was weighed down by my clothes, and I had also struck my head going overboard, and I felt that every moment was my last, when I suddenly bumped up against the life-belt. I had just strength to put that on and give one faint hail, and then I think for a time I lost my senses."

Miss Tyrell gave an exclamation of pity; Mr. Fraser made a noise which might have been intended for the same thing.

"The rest of it was like a dream," continued Flower, pressing the girl's hand; "sometimes my eyes were open and sometimes not. I heard the men pulling about and hailing me without being able to reply. By and bye that ceased, the sky got grey and the water brown; all feeling had gone out of me. The sun rose and burnt in the salt on my face; then as I rose and fell like a cork on the waters, your face seemed to come before me, and I determined to live."

"Beautiful," said Fraser, involuntarily.

"I determined to live," repeated Flower, glancing at him defiantly. "I brushed the wet hair from my eyes, and strove to move my chilled limbs. Then I shouted, and anything more dreary than that shout across the waste of water I cannot imagine, but it did me good to hear my own voice, and I shouted again."

He paused for breath, and Fraser taking advantage of the pause, got up hurriedly and left the room, muttering something about matches.

"He doesn't like to hear of your sufferings," said Poppy.

"I suppose not," said Flower, whose eloquence had received a chill, "but there is little more to tell. I was picked up by a Russian brig bound for Riga, and lay there some time in a state of fever. When I got better I worked my passage home in a timber boat, and landed yesterday."

"What a terrible experience," and Poppy, as Fraser entered the room again.

"Shocking," said the latter.

"And now you've got your own ship again," said the girl, "weren't your crew delighted to see you?"

"I've not seen them yet," said Flower, hesitatingly. "I shipped on another craft this morning, before the mast."

"Before the mast?" repeated the girl, in amazement.

"Full-rigged ship Golden Cloud, bound for New Zealand," said Flower, slowly, watching the effect of his words; "we're to be shipmates."

Poppy Tyrell started up with a faint cry, but Flower drew her gently down again.

"We'll be married in New Zealand," he said, softly, "and then we'll come back and I'll have my own again. Jack told me you were going out on her. Another man has got my craft; he lost the one he had before, and I want to give him a chance for a few months, poor chap, to redeem his character. Besides, it'll be a change. We shall see the world. It'll just be a splendid honeymoon."

"You didn't tell Captain Martin?" inquired the girl, as she drew back in her chair and eyed him perplexedly.

"Not likely," said Flower, with a laugh. "I've shipped in the name of Robert Orth. I bought the man's discharges this morning. He's lying in bed, poor chap, waiting for his last now, and hoping it'll be marked 'v. g.'"

Poppy was silent. For a moment her eyes, dark and inscrutable, met Fraser's; then she looked away, and in a low voice addressed Flower.

"I suppose you know best what is to be done," she said, quietly.

"You leave it to me," said Flower, in satisfied tones. "I'm at the wheel."

There was a long silence. Poppy got up and crossed to the window, and, resting her cheek on her hand sat watching the restless life of the street. The room darkened slowly with the approach of evening. Flower rose and took the seat opposite, and Fraser, who had been feeling in the way for some time, said that he must go.

(To be continued).

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