

The Visitors Book.

A Yachting Story

BY A. T. QUILLLEN-COUCH

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If anyone cares to buy the yawl Siren he may have her for £300, or a trifle less than the worth of her ballast, as lead goes nowadays. For sufficient reasons—to be disclosed in the course of this narrative—I am unable to give her builder's name, and for reasons quite as sufficient I must admit the figures of her registered tonnage (29.56), cut on the beam of her fore-castle, to be a fraud. I will be perfectly frank; there is a mystery about the yacht. But I gave £400 for her in the early summer of 1890, and thought her dirt cheap. She was built under the old "Thames rule," that is, somewhere between 1875 and 1880, and was, therefore, long and narrow to begin with. She has been lengthened since. Nevertheless, though nobody could call her a dry boat, she will behave herself in any ordinary sea, and come about quicker than most of her type. She is fast, has sound timbers and sheathing that fits her like a skin, and her mainmast and bowsprit are particularly fine spars of Oregon pine; her mizzen doesn't count for much. Let me add the newest of patent capstans—I put this into 'her' mine—cabins paneled in teak and pitch pine and cushioned with crushed red morocco, two suits of sail, besides a big spinnaker that does not belong to her present rig, a serviceable dinghy—well, you can see for yourself without my saying more that, even to break up, she is worth quite double the money.

In what follows I shall take leave here and there to offer a name or suppress it. With these exceptions you shall hear precisely how the Siren came into my hands. Early in 1890 I determined—my health being in rather a poor way—to take a longer holiday than usual, and spend the months of July, August and September in a cruise about the channel. My notion was to cross over to the French coast, sail down as far as Cherbourg, recross to Salcombe, and thence lie westward to Sicily, and finish up, perhaps, with a run over to Ireland. This, I say, was my notion; you could not call it a plan, for it left me free to anchor in any port I chose, and to stay there just as long as it amused me. One fixed intention I had, and one only—to avoid the big rogatas. Money had to be considered, and I thought at first of hiring. I wanted something between twenty-five and forty tons, small enough to be worked by myself and a crew of three, or at most three men and a boy, and large enough to keep us occupied while at sea. Of course I studied the advertisement columns, and for some time found nothing that seemed even likely to suit. But at last in the Field, and in the left-hand bottom corner—where it had been squeezed by the lists of the usual world-known agencies—I came on the following coy announcement:

"Yawl, 35 tons. For immediate SALE that fast and comfortable cruiser Siren, lately refitted and now in perfect condition throughout. Rigging, etc., as good as new. Cabin appointments of unusual richness and taste. £400. Apply, Messrs. Dewy and Moss, Agents and Surveyors, Portea Street, F—."

On reading this I took down "Hunt, and Lloyd's Yacht Register," and hunted for further details. Sirens crowd pretty



I RESTED ON MY OARS AND DRIFTED TOWARD THEM.

thickly in the yachting list, only a little less thickly than Undines, and including Sirens and Sirenas, I found some fourteen—and not a yawl amongst them, nor anything of her tonnage. There were two more in Lloyd's list of American yachts—one a centre-board schooner, the other a centre-board sloop; and in a further list I came upon a Siren that had changed her name to Mirage—a screw schooner of one hundred and ninety tons, owned by no less a man than the marquis of Ormonde. On the whole it seemed pretty clear that neither Lloyd nor Hunt knew of the existence of this "fast and comfortable cruiser" of thirty-five tons.

However, if half the promises of the advertisement were genuine, the chance ought not to be lost for lack of further inquiry. So I sat down there and then and wrote a letter to the poetically named Dewy and Moss, asking some questions in detail about the boat, and, in particular, where she was to be seen.

The answer came by return of post. The boat had been laid up since the autumn in a sheltered creek of the F— river, a couple of miles up the F— river, on three-quarters of a mile up from the harbor side, where Messrs. Dewy and Moss transacted business. The keys lay at their office, and she could be inspected at any time. Her sails, gear and movable furniture were stored in a roomy loft at the back of Messrs. Dewy and Moss' own premises. Their client was a lady who wished to keep her name concealed—at any rate during the preliminaries; but they had full power to conduct the sale. The yacht was a bargain. The lady wished to get rid of it at once; but they might mention that she would not take a penny less than the quoted price of £400. They would be happy to deal with me in that or any other line of business; and they inclosed their card.

The card bore witness to the extraordinary versatility of Messrs. Dewy and Moss if nothing else. It proclaimed them to be "Auctioneers; Practical Valuers; House and Estate Agents; Business Brokers; Ship Brokers; Accountants and Commission Merchants; Servants' Registry Office; Fire, Life, Accident, and Plate Glass Insurance Effectors; Fire Claims prepared and adjusted; Live Stock Insured; Agents for Packington's Manures, the best and cheapest for all crops; Valuations for Probate; Emigration Agents; Private Arrangements negotiated with Creditors; Old Violins cleaned and repaired; Vice-Consulate for Norway and Sweden."

I cannot say that this card produced quite the impression which its composers no doubt desired. It seemed to me that Messrs. Dewy and Moss had altogether too many strings to their bow. And the railway journey to F— was a long one. So I hesitated for two days, and on the late afternoon of the third found myself some three hundred miles from home, standing in a windy street full of the blown odors of shipping and pulling at a bell which sounded with terrifying alacrity just on the other side of the door. A window was thrown up, right above me, and a head appeared (of Dewy, as it turned out) and

commanded me to walk in and come upstairs.

Mr. Dewy met me on the landing, introduced himself and led me into his office, where a fat young woman sat awkwardly upon a wooden chair several inches too high for her. Hastily reviewing the many professional capacities in which Mr. Dewy could serve her, I decided that she must be a cook in search of a place. The agent gave me the only other chair in the room—it was clear that in their various feats of commercial dexterity the firm depended very little upon furniture and "accessories"—and balanced himself on the edge of his knee-hole table. He was a little, round man, and his feet dangled three inches from the floor. He looked honest enough, and spoke straightforwardly.

"You have come about the yacht, sir. You would wish to inspect her at once. Dear, dear, it is most unfortunate! Your letter only reached us this afternoon. The fact is, my partner, Mr. Moss, has gone off for the day to N— to attend a meeting of the Amateur Bee-keepers' association—my partner is an enthusiast upon bee-culture."

The versatility of a Moss began to grow bewildering.

"And will not be back until late to night. As for me," he consulted his watch; "I am due in half an hour's time to conduct the rehearsal of a service of song at Lady Huntingdon's chapel, down the street, where I play the harmonium."

The diversity of Dewy amazed me completely.

"You are staying the night at F—?" he said.

"Why, yes. Linger at the Ship inn, but hoped to leave early to-morrow."

"Of course you could inspect the sails and gear now at once; they are in the loft behind." He jerked a thumb over his left shoulder.

"So I understand; but it would be better to see the boat first."

"Naturally, naturally. I hope you see how I am placed. You would not desire me, I feel sure, to disappoint the members who will be waiting presently for their rehearsal. (I began to delight in Dewy). Stay, perhaps you would not greatly object to rowing up and inspecting the yacht by yourself? Here are the keys and my boat is at your disposal; or, if you prefer it, a waterman—"

"Nothing would suit me better, if you don't mind my using the boat."

"It will be a favor, sir, your using 'her,' I assure you. This way, if you please."

He jumped from the table and led the way downstairs and through some very rickety back premises to the quay door, where his boat lay moored to a frape. As I climbed down and cast off Mr. Dewy pulled out his watch again.

The evenings are lengthening, and you will have plenty of time. Half an hour to high water; you will have the tide with you each way. The keys will open everything on board. By the way, you can't miss her—black, with a tarnished gilt line, moored beside a large white schooner, just three-quarters of a mile up. You can moor the boat to the frape on your return; to-morrow will do for the keys; at your service any time after nine a.m. Good evening, sir."

Mr. Dewy turned and hurried back to his client, whose presence during our interview he had completely ignored.

The sun had dropped behind the tall hills that line the western shore of the F— river; but a soft yellow light, too generously spread to dazzle, suffused the whole sky, and was reflected on the tide that stole up with scarcely a ripple. A sharp bend of the stream brought me in sight of the two yachts, not fifty yards away—their inverted reflections motionless as themselves; I rested on my oars and drifted up towards them, conning the black yawl carefully.

She struck me as too big for a thirty-five tonner, foreshortened though she lay—a wall-sided narrow boat, but a very pretty specimen of her type. Her dismantled masts were painted white, and her upper boards had been removed, of course.

Hullo!

There was a man standing on her deck. She lay with her nose pointing up the river and her stern towards me.

The man stood by her wheel (for some idiotic reason best known to himself, her builder had given her a wheel instead of a tiller), which was covered up with tarpaulin. He stood with a hand on this tarpaulin case, and looked back over his shoulder towards me—a tall fellow with a reddish beard and a clean-shaven upper lip. I was drifting close by this time—he looking curiously at me—and must have been studying his features for half a minute before I hailed him.

"Hi!" I called out. "Is this the Siren?"

Getting no answer, I pulled the boat close under the yacht's side, made her fast and climbed on board by way of the channels.

"This is the Siren, eh?" I said, looking down her deck towards the wheel.

There was no man to be seen.

I stared around for a minute or so; ran to the opposite side and looked over; ran aft and leaned over her taff-rail; ran forward and peered over her bows. Her counter was too short to conceal a man, and her stern had absolutely no overhang at all; yet no man was to be seen, nor boat, nor sign of a man. I tried the companion, it was covered and padlocked. The sail hatch and fore hatch were also fastened and padlocked, and the skylights covered with tarpaulin and screwed firmly down. A mouse could not have found its way below, except perhaps by the stove pipe or the pipe leading down to the chain locker.

I was no believer in ghosts, but I had to hit on some theory there and then. My nerves had been out of order for a month or two, and the long railway journey may have played havoc with them. The whole thing was a hallucination. So I told myself while getting the coverings off the skylights, but somehow got mighty little comfort out of it; and I will not deny that I fumbled a bit with the padlock on the main hatchway, or that I looked down a second time before setting foot on the companion ladder.

She was a sweet ship; and the air below, though stuffy, had no taste of bilge in it. I explored main cabin, sleeping cabin, fore-castle. The movable furniture had been taken ashore, as I knew; but the fixtures were in good order, the decorations in good taste. Not a camel had shrunk or warped, nor could I find any leakage. At the same time I could find no evidences that she had been visited lately by man or ghost. The only thing that seemed queer was the inscription "29.56" on the beam in the fore-castle. It certainly struck me that the surveyor must have under-registered her, but for the moment I thought little about it.

Passing back through the main cabin I paused to examine one or two of the fittings—particularly a neat glass-fronted bookcase, with a small sideboard below it, containing three drawers and a cellaret. The bookcase was empty and clean swept, as also were the drawers. At the bottom of the cellaret I found a couple of flags

stowed—a tattered yellow quarantine signal tightly rolled into a bundle, and a red ensign neatly folded. As I lifted out the latter, there dropped from its folds and fell upon the cabin floor a book.

I picked it up—a thin quarto bound in black morocco, and rather the worse for wear. On its inside it bore the following inscription in dingy gilt letters: "Job's Hotel, Penleven, Visitors' Book. J. Job, Proprietor."

Standing there beneath the skylight, I turned its pages over, wondering vaguely how the visitor's book of a small provincial hotel had found its way into that drawer. It contained the usual assortment of conventional praise and vulgar jocosity:

"Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Smith, of Huddersfield, cannot speak too highly of Mrs. Job's ham and eggs—September 15th, 1881."

"After wet through after a fifteen-mile tramp along the coast; but, thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Job, was soon steaming over a comfortable sea.—John and Annie Watson, March, 1882."

Note appended by a humorist:

"Then you sat on the hob, I suppose."

There was the politely patronizing entry:

"Being accustomed to Wolverhampton, I am greatly pleased with this coast.—F. B.W."

The poetical effusion:

"Majestic spot! Say, doth the sun in Heaven Behold aught to equal thee, wave-washed Penleven!" etc.

Lighter verse:

"Here I came to take my ease."

(Old joke in margin by another hand: "Shall I not ache my knees at mine inn?")

"Agreeably disappointed to find no it—Mrs. Job, you bread and butter—Is quite too utterly, utterly utter!"

"J. HARPER, June 3, 1883."

The contemplative man's ejaculation:

"It is impossible on viewing these cyclopean cliffs, to repress the thought. How great is nature, how little man!"

(Notes in various hands: "So it is, old chap! Try Hudson's Extract!" and a reproof: "Shut up! can't you see he's suffering!")

The last entry was a brief one:

"J. MacGuire, Liverpool; September 2, 1886."

Twilight forced me to close the book and put it back in its place. As I did so I glanced up involuntarily towards the skylight as if I half expected to find a pair of eyes staring down on me. Yet the book contained nothing but these mere trivialities. Whatever my apprehension, I was, as J. Harper would have said, agreeably disappointed. I climbed on deck again, relocked the hatch, replaced the tarpaulins, jumped into the boat and rowed homewards. Though the tide favored me it was dark before I reached Mr. Dewy's quay door. Having with some difficulty found the frape, I made the boat fast. I groped my way across the back premises and out into the gaslit streets and so to the Ship-inn; a fair dinner and a sound night's sleep.

At ten o'clock next morning I called on Messrs. Dewy and Moss. Again Mr. Dewy received me, and again he apologized for the absence of his partner, who had caught an early train to attend a wrestling match

at the far end of the county. (Moss was becoming immense.) Mr. Dewy showed me the sails, gear, cushions, etc., of the Siren. Everything was in surprising condition. I told him that I meant business, and added:

"I suppose you have all the yacht's papers?"

He stroked his chin, bent his head to one side and asked: "Shall you require them?"

"Of course," I said. "The transfer must be regular. We must have her certificate of registry at the very least."

"In that case I had better write and get them from my client."

"Is she not a resident here?"

"I don't know," he said, "that I ought to tell you. But I see no harm—you are evidently, sir, a bona fide purchaser. The lady's name is Carlingford—a widow—residing at present in Bristol."

"This is annoying," said I; "but if she lives somewhere near the Temple Mead station, I might skip a train there and call on her. She herself despised no delay, and I desire it just as little. But the papers are necessary."

After some little demur, he gave me the address and we parted. At the door I turned and asked: "By the way, who was the fellow on board the Siren last night as I rowed up to her?"

He gave me a stare of genuine surprise. "A man on board? Whoever he was, he had no business there. I look after the yacht myself."

Dewy's versatility was uncanny.

I fled to the railroad station. Soon after six that evening I knocked at Mrs. Carlingford's lodgings in an unattractive street of Bedminster, that unattractive suburb. A small maid opened the door, took my card, and showed me into a small sitting-room on the ground floor. I looked about me—a round table, a horsehair couch, a walnut sideboard with glass panels, a lithograph of John Wesley being rescued from the flames of his father's rectory, a colored photograph—

As the door opened behind me and a woman entered, I jumped back almost into her arms. The colored photograph staring at me from the opposite wall above the mantel-shelf, was a portrait—a portrait of the man I had seen on board the Siren!

"Who is that?" I demanded, wheeling round without ceremony.

"But if I was startled, Mrs. Carlingford seemed ready to drop with fright. The little woman—she was a very small, shrinking creature, with a pallid face, and large, nervous eyes, like a hare's—put out a hand against the jamb of the door and gasped out:

"Why—why do you ask? What do you want?"

"I beg your pardon," I said; "it was merely curiosity. I thought I had seen the face somewhere."

"He was my husband."

"He is dead then?"

"Oh, why do you ask? Yes; he died abroad." She touched her widow's cap with her shaking finger, and then covered her face with her hands. "I was there—I saw it. Ah!" She drew back a sudden breath as if stabbed. "Why do you ask?" she repeated.

"I beg your pardon sincerely," I said; "it was only that the portrait reminded me—I thought—but my business here is quite different. I am come about the yacht Siren which you have advertised for sale."

She seemed more than ever inclined to run. Her voice scarcely rose above a whisper.

"My agents at F— have full instructions about the sale."

"Yes, but they tell me you have the papers. I may say that I have seen the yacht and gear and am ready to pay the price you ask for immediate possession, I said as much to Mr. Dewy. But the papers, of course—"

"Are they necessary?"

"Certainly they are. At least the certificate of registry or, failing that, some reference to the port of registry, if the transfer is to be made. I should also like

to see her warrant, if she has one, and her sail makers' certificate. Messrs. Dewy and Moss could draw up the inventory."

She still hesitated. At length she said: "I have the certificate; I will fetch it. The other papers, if she had any, have been lost or destroyed. She never had a warrant. I believe my husband belonged to no yacht club. I understand very little of these matters."

She left the room, and returned in five minutes or so with the open document in her hand.

"But," said I, looking over it, "this is a certificate of a vessel called the Wasp."

"Ah, I must explain that. I wished the boat to change her name with the new owner—her old name—it has associations—painful ones—I should not like anyone else to know her as the Wasp."

"Well," I admitted, "I can understand that. But, see here, she is entered as having one mast and carrying a cutter rig."

"She was a cutter originally. My husband had her lengthened in 1886, I think by five feet, and turned her into a yawl. It was abroad, at Malaga—"

"A curious port to choose."

"She was built, you see, as long ago as 1874. My husband used to say she was a broad boat for those days, and could be lengthened successfully and turned into quite a new-looking vessel. He gave an entire new sheathing, too, and all her spars are new. She was not insured, and being in a foreign port, it was understood he would have her newly registered when he returned, which he fully intended. So no alterations were made in the certificate here, and, I believe, her old tonnage is still carved-up somewhere inside her."

This was true enough. The figures on the certificate, 29.56, were those I had seen on the beam in the fore-castle.

"My husband never lived to reach England, and when she came back to F—, though she was visited, of course, by the custom house officer and coast guard, nobody asked for certificate, and so the alterations in her were never explained. She was laid up at once in the F— river, and there she has remained."

Certain structural peculiarities in the main cabin—scarcely noted at the time, but now remembered—served to confirm Mrs. Carlingford's plainly-told story. On my return to London that night I hunted up some back volumes of Hunt, and satisfied myself on the matter of the Wasp and her owner, William Carlingford. And, to be short, the transfer was made on a fresh survey, the check sent to Mrs. Carlingford, and the yawl Siren passed into my hands.

All being settled, I wrote to my old acquaintance, Mr. Dewy, asking him to fit the vessel out, and find me a steady skipper and crew—not without some apprehensions of hearing by return of post that Dewy and Moss were ready and willing to sign articles with me to steer and sail the yacht in their spare moments. Perhaps the idea did not occur to them. At any rate they found me a crew, and a good one; and I spent a very comfortable three months cruising along the southwestern coast, across to Seilly, from Seilly to Cork and back to Southampton, where on September 30, 1891, I laid the yacht up for the winter.

Thrice since have I applied to Messrs. Dewy and Moss for a crew, and always with satisfactory results. But I must pass over 1892 and 1893 and come to this summer; or, to be precise, to Wednesday, the 11th of July. We had left Plymouth that morning for a run westward; but the wind falling light towards noon, we found ourselves drifting, or doing little more, off the entrance of the small fishing haven of Penleven. Though I had never visited Penleven I knew on the evidence of countless picture-shows that the place was well worth seeing. Besides, had I not the assurances of the visitors' book in my cabin? It occurred to me that I would anchor for an hour or two in the entrance of the haven, and eat my lunch ashore at Mr. Job's hotel. Mr. Job would doubtless be pleased to recover his long-lost volume, and I had no more wish than right to retain it.

Job's hotel was unpretending. Mrs. Job offered me ham and eggs and, as an alternative, a cut off a baked silver side of beef, if I did not mind waiting for ten minutes when her husband would be back to dinner. I said that I would wait, and added that I should be pleased to make Mr. Job's acquaintance on his return, as I had a trifling message for him.

About ten minutes later, while studying a series of German lithographs in the coffee room, I heard a heavy footstep in the passage and a knock at the door; and Mr. Job appeared, a giant of a man, with a giant's girth and red cheeks, which he appeared to inflate as a preliminary of speech.

"Good day, Mr. Job," said I briskly. "I won't keep you from your dinner, but the fact is, I am the unwilling guardian of a trifle belonging to you." And I showed

him the visitors' book.

"I thought the man would have an appetite fit there on the spot. He rolled his eyes, dropped heavily upon a chair, and began to breathe hard and short."

"Where—where?" he gasped, and began to struggle for breath.

"Listen," I said; "for some reason or other the sight of this book distresses you, and I think you had better not try to speak for a bit. I will tell you exactly how the book came into my possession, and afterwards you can let me have your side of the story, if you choose." And I told him just what I have told the reader.

At the conclusion, Mr. Job loosed his neckcloth, and spoke:

"That book, sir, ought to be lying at the bottom of the sea. It was lost on the evening of September the 3d, 1886, on board a yacht I went down with all hands. Now, then, you all about it? There was a gentleman called Blake staying over at Port William that summer—that's four miles up the coast, you know."

I nodded. "Staying with his wife and one son, a tall, young fellow, aged about twenty-one, maybe. They came from up the country—M— was the place, in Lancashire, and they had a yacht with them, that they kept in Port William harbor, anchored just below the bridge. She would be about thirty tons—a very pretty boat. They had only one hired hand for crew; used to work her themselves for the most part; the lady was extraordinarily clever at the helm, or at the sheets either. Very quiet people they were. You might see them most days that summer, anchored out on the Whiting grounds. What was she called? The Queen of Sheba—cutter rigged—quite a new boat. It was said after that the owner, Mr. Blake, designed her himself. She used often to put in to Penleven. Know her? Why of course I'd know her, specially considering what happened."

"What was that? A very sad case; it made a lot of talk at the time. One day—the 3d of September, '86—the day I spoke about—Mr. and Mrs. Blake and the son, they anchored off the haven and came up here to tea. I supposed at the time they'd left their paid hand, Robertson, on board; but it turned out he was left at home at Port William that day, barking a small mainmast that Mr. Blake had brought a purpose for the fishin'. Well, Mrs. Blake she ordered tea, and while my missus was layin' the cloth, young Mr. Blake he picks up this very book, sir, that he was layin' on the stoolboard, and begins readin' it and whin'ing. My wife she goes out of the room for to cut the bread and butter, and when she comes back there was the two gentlemen by the window studyin' the book with their backs to the room, and Mrs. Blake lyin' back in the chair 'I'm now sittin' on, an' her face turned to the wall—so. The young Mr. Blake he turns round and says: 'Tis here's a very amusing book, Mrs. Job. Would you mind my borrowing it for a day or two to copy out some of the poetry? I'll bring it back the next time we put into Penleven.' Of course my wife says: 'No, she didn't mind.' Then the elder Mr. Blake he says: 'I see you had a visitor here yesterday—a Mr. Macquire. Is he in the house?' My wife said: 'No, the gentleman had left his traps, but he'd started that morning to walk to Port William to spend the day.' Nothing more passed. They had their tea and paid for it, and went off to their yacht. I saw that book in the young man's hand as he went down the passage."

"Well, sir, it was just dusk in as they weighed and stood up towards Port William the wind blowing pretty steady from the south'ard. At about ten minutes to seven o'clock it blew up in a sudden little squall—nothing to mention; the fishing boats just noticed it and that was all. But it was reckoned that squall capized the Queen of Sheba. She never reached Port William, and no man ever clapped eyes on her after twenty minutes past six, when Dick Grege declares he saw her off the Blowth, half-way toward home, and going steady under all canvas. The affair caused a lot of stir, here and at Port William, and in the newspapers. Short-handed as they were, of course, they'd no business to carry on as they did, specially as my wife declares from her looks that Mrs. Blake was feelin' faint afore they started. She always seemed to me a weak, timmersome woman at the best; small and aillin' to look at."

"And Mr. Blake?"

"Oh! he was a strong-made gentleman; tall, with a big red beard."

"The son?"

"Took after his father, only he hadn't any beard; a fine upstanding pair."

"And no trace was ever found of them?"

"Not a stick nor a shred."

"But about this visitors' book. You'll swear they took it with them? See, there's not a stain of salt water upon it."

"No, there isn't; but I'll swear young Mr. Blake had it in his hand as he went from my door."

I said: "Mr. Job, I've kept you already too long from your dinner. Go and eat, and ask them to send in something for me. Afterwards I want you to come with me and take a look at my yacht that is lying just outside the haven."

As we started from the shore Mr. Job, casting his eyes over the Siren, remarked: "That's a very pretty yawl of yours, sir."

"As we drew nearer he began to eye her uneasily."

"She has been lengthened some five or six feet," I said; "she was a cutter to begin with."

"Lord help us!" then said Mr. Job, in a hoarse whisper. "She's the Queen of Sheba. I'd swear to her run anywhere—ay, or to that queer angle of her hawse-eyes."

A close examination confirmed Mr. Job that my yacht was no other than the lost Queen of Sheba, lengthened and altered in

fig. It persuaded me, too. I turned back to Plymouth, and leaving the boat in Cattewater, drove to the Millbay station and took tickets for Bristol. Arriving there just twenty-four hours after my interview with Mr. Job, I made my way to Mrs. Carlingford's lodgings.

She had left them two years before. But just fourteen days ago I received the following letter, dated from a workhouse in one of the midland counties:

"DEAR SIR: I am a dying woman and shall probably be dead before this reaches you. The doctor says he cannot give me forty-eight hours. It is angina pectoris, and I suffer horribly at times. The yacht you purchased of me is not the Wasp, but the Queen of Sheba. My husband de-

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