

The Strumpet Sea

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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SYNOPSIS

George McAusland was 38 years old when he sailed from America to undertake his post as a missionary in the Fiji Islands. A crime he had committed in a fit of excitement had shattered all his confidence in himself. He felt forced to avoid pretty Mary Doncaster, who boarded the ship at Honolulu. She was en route to visit her parents, who were missionaries on Gilead Island. Mary was attracted by George's attempts to avoid her. One day George accidentally fell overboard. Mary unhesitatingly dove into the sea to rescue George. George is falling in love with her. When the boat approached her home on Gilead Island, they learned that Mary's parents had both died. George volunteered to take charge of the mission. Faced with the necessity of losing Mary if he left her now, George forced himself to ask her to be his wife. Mary accepted his clumsy proposal, and they left the ship to live in her former home on the island. The scanty dress of the natives shocked George at first, but he soon became reconciled to their customs. Mary discovered that Corkran, a sailor friend of George's, had deserted ship to live on the island. He had come there to help George and Mary if they needed him.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

Mary understood as the days passed that George both looked forward to the whaler's coming and dreaded it. When one day Jarambo came in some excitement to call them to see a distant sail, Mary asked quickly whether it was the Ventura. Jarambo said it was not.

At dark that night, the schooner was still distant, but at dawn she made in toward the roads. Mary saw that George was uneasy at the sight of this invader. They watched together, standing on the rocks above the landing place; and when the schooner approached the anchorage, Jarambo and the others prepared to launch canoes.

But George called them back. "Tell them only Jarambo is to go, Mary," he directed. "Have Jarambo tell the people aboard the schooner not to land here."

Mary urged: "Canoes always go off to any ship that comes in, George, and people come ashore."

We don't want sailors here on Gilead," he insisted.

She knew the message would be a useless one; but she told Jarambo to deliver it. He went off alone and they saw a white man speak to him from the deck of the schooner; and George commented scornfully: "That man's half naked, like a native!" Then the white man yonder dropped down into the canoe, and George said in deep resentment: "He's coming. Go to the house, Mary. I'll meet him here, get rid of him."

"Why, don't be silly! I'll stay and welcome him with you."

He said: "No, go to the house. If he sees you, he'll want to stay." Mary was absurdly pleased. She smiled.

After a while she heard them coming near, and a strong young voice, laughing, said:

"You're damned mysterious! What have you got here, a gold mine? Man, these are hospitable seas. We make all comers welcome. You ought to learn the custom of the country."

She soon saw a young man in soiled white trousers, barefoot, naked to the waist, his skin bronzed by sun, his golden hair curled tight on his chest, eyes blue as the sky in the brown of his countenance. He wore the radiance of bounding health; and when he saw her he stopped and cried delightedly:

"Oh, ho! No wonder you wanted no callers, Parson!"

Then he came forward by her husband's side; and George said grudgingly: "Mrs. McAusland, this is Mr. Augur."

The young man grasped her hand. "Fritz Augur," he corrected. "Your husband tried to warn me off; but now that I've seen you, you're going to have a lot of company here."

CHAPTER V

She said uneasily, and watching George: "Won't you come in?" She asked curiously: "Why will there be others coming?"

"Pearl!" he told her. His eyes were bold. "Not but what there'd be a rush anyway if they knew you were here, Mrs. McAusland." She felt George tight with rage beside her. "Pearl!" Fritz repeated.

"Black Laurence found shell in the lagoon across the island, months ago. The typhoon caught him, ripped his masts out; and I picked him off what was left of his schooner. He had a broken head and died of it; but I pieced together things he said with the prickings on his chart, and figured where he'd been and what he'd found. His halfbreed supercargo caught me studying the chart and tried to knife me as we were making into harbor. He missed his try and dove overboard and got away. I tried to pot him in the dark, but no go. He'll be back, with his friends, as soon as he can raise the wind; but I came along for a look-see."

He stayed an hour, did most of the talking.

He had known Mary's father, had touched her once four or five years ago. "I get around," he said. "I'm apt to drop in almost everywhere, give me time."

Mary asked him whether in his travels he had seen the Ventura. He had, three months before. "In Honolulu," he said. "She's been all over the lot, was just about full up."

She had next day a message from Corkran, a question; and when George was asleep in the afternoon she walked toward the beach, sure the sailor would be there to meet her. He was, and he asked: "Now, who was the fine young man who visited you, yesterday?"

Mary told him, and he listened with a gravity that disturbed her. "Honey fetches the wasps," he commented soberly when she finished. "There'll be more like him along, or maybe worse. How did himself take it? He was red behind the ears, I'm thinking?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Aye, like a boy looking on at a game he don't know how to play. Himself takes life the hard, tough way." He looked at her with a curious gentleness. "I thought he'd know better by now." She wondered why she found his understanding so full of comfort. He was like her own thoughts. "Well, ma'am," he said, "anytime you need me, I'm here, standing by."

She went back to the house surprisingly strengthened.

Mary and George almost forgot Augur during the days that followed. Something more imminent and dreadful rose like a cloud to shadow their lives. George seemed now completely healed of the cold which he had caught when he fell overboard; but within a few weeks after they landed on the island,



He held it toward her in his palm.

there were coughs and colds and sneezings all around them. Ieni died, and others too. Mary was deeply distressed; but George professed not to be surprised.

"It's always been the same," he insisted. "In the Sandwich Islands the natives have been dying off ever since the first ships touched there. There aren't many births, you know, and a lot of babies are strangled as soon as they're born. Or thrown over the cliffs."

"But they love the children," she urged jealously. "Almost too much. Not only their own children, but all of them. Don't you notice that children are never punished or disciplined here, George?"

"Yes. They should be, too. Some of them need it."

She warned him quickly: "Don't try it. I remember Father saying that they would never forgive that. I'm almost sure there've been some massacres and bad trouble where white people struck a child or something. They'd never forgive us if we were unkind to the children."

He smiled faintly. "I've no intention of doing anything of the sort."

He returned to the point. "But the thing is, these Islanders have been dying off for generations. Plagues have killed them off."

"Nobody was ever sick here when I was little. I remember Father was always proud of it."

"They need to learn how to take care of themselves, that's all. We'll have to teach them to build proper houses, to live properly."

But the remedy was not so simple as he thought. After Fritz Augur's first visit, the epidemic suddenly extended its attack. George labored over the sick with an ardor that seemed visibly to drag the flesh off his bones. He became thin and gaunt with his own efforts.

He was a methodical man. He kept a diary, recording every day's events. One day he said to her: "Mary, thirty-two people have died since we came, in less than four months' time."

She saw that he was shaken in his certainties, and his nerves were raw; and she sought to strengthen him in many ways. He began to long for the coming of the Ventura, thought Captain Corr would surely have medicines aboard.

They forgot the pearls in the lagoon across the island, forgot Fritz about three weeks after he sailed out of the roads. Fritz returned, and—he stayed two days. Despite George's protests, he came often ashore. He showed them the pearls he had already found, warm with life as though they had a pulse of their own, so that Mary caught her breath at sight of them; and Fritz

saw how she was stirred, and he told her that a pearl needed to be worn to acquire beauty.

She liked Fritz. By contrast with her husband's somber garments, the golden brown on this young man's bare chest and shoulders was warm and beautiful. Against her husband's austere denial of the flesh, this Fritz Augur by his frank acceptance of it seemed to shine. She asked curiously:

"How long have you been living so, sailing around alone? Aren't you lonesome, sometimes?"

He chuckled. "Lonesome? Now, it would need a woman to think that, always so sure a man must have some woman forever by him." His eyes clouded, seeming to look past her; and he shook his head. "No, the sea's company. The sea and the wind. Yes, they're company enough for a man. Too much for some men, maybe, like a heady wine. If you've seen many men in their liquor—and how could you ever, to be sure?—you'll know what I mean."

George made a resentful sound; but Mary urged, deeply interested: "No, I haven't, of course. So—what do you mean?"

Fritz smiled. "Why, only that some men are better drunk than sober, and some are better sober than drunk. It's the same with the sea. One man will be made by it, and another spoiled. Liquor, and the wrong woman, and a long voyage will each strip the trimmings off a man. I've seen more than one that was fine to look at start off on a long cruise with his head high, and come home . . ."

He hesitated, quoted then: "Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!" And he chuckled and said: "Only the man that wrote that did not mean the wind by itself. It was the sea he meant. A woman—even a bad one—is mild and easy enough till something stirs her up; and when she's roused, it's the woman who's dangerous, not the thing that roused her. It's the strumpet sea that tears a man and strips him and peels him down till you can see what's in him. The wind no more than rouses up the strumpet sea."

Mary nodded thoughtfully; but George spoke, in angry interruption. "You like the taste of an ugly word, Augur, to keep repeating it."

Fritz said amiably: "It's a good word all the same, Parson. It means what it says." Nevertheless he tempered his remarks thereafter; and as though he began to be sorry for George, he treated him from that hour with gentleness. Only when on the third day, the storm having passed, he was about to depart, George woke a moment's flare of anger in him. Augur wished to give Mary one of his pearls. "For your hospitality," he said. "With my thanks! Wear it. A pearl needs wearing, to make it completely beautiful."

He held it toward her in his palm; but before she could move, George by his side struck down that open hand with a violent gesture. The pearl did not fall, because Fritz closed his fingers on it; and he looked at George with narrowed eyes. He said through teeth that were white and even and firm:

"Don't do that again, my friend. Parson or no parson!"

George retorted: "Then don't you insult Mrs. McAusland."

Augur laughed briefly and not mirthfully. "Now, you know," he decided, "it strikes me you're the one who insulted her." He met Mary's eyes and laughed again. "You'll have to get used to visitors, Parson," he predicted in a grim amusement. "There'll be others coming; and some of them—if you can believe it—even blacker villains than I."

When he was gone, when they turned back up the path, Mary asked gravely: "George, need you have done that?"

He demanded: "Did you want the pearl?"

"I could have declined it with some courtesy."

"I won't have such men here!" he cried. "Staring at you, giving you things!"

Mary urged wearily: "What use is that, George? The world's full of men. We can't always live alone! No one can." He went ahead of her in silence, not replying. She thought, following him up the path: He's half-sick himself, with worry over all the poor sick people here. I must be patient, try to help him, must be kind.

Jarambo posted men as George commanded, high on the peaks that walled the island across with a barrier almost impassable, to watch Augur's schooner in the lagoon and report her movements; and they sent regular news of her, but the news was reassuring. She lay peacefully at anchor in the lagoon, and her boats went off every day, and men were diving.

Mary and George paid as the days passed, less and less attention to these monotonous bulletins; for they had a nearer trouble. The island had become a place of death; death that struck at random, without discrimination. They forgot Augur in fighting a hopeless, weary battle here, going to and fro among the maddeningly submissive Islanders. They were afoot all day, and their nights were broken. George was exhausted in body, and his spirit too wore thin.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Drop in Spring Pig Crop Predicted by Government

Rise in Pork Prices Considered Likely; Washington Correspondents Discuss 'Jitters' of War Rumors.



Nat'l Farm and Home Hour Commentator.

WASHINGTON.—"Pigs is Pigs"—that was the name of one of the funniest short stories ever written. Of course pigs "isn't" pigs. They "is" shoats and hogs and a number of other things including sausage and pork chops.

Not long ago the mail carrier probably stopped at your gate and asked a lot of impertinent questions about your plans for your porkers and the other day the department of agriculture finished reporting what the mail carriers reported to them. The result was the semi-annual Pig Crop report which said that there would be 10 per cent less little pigs going to market next spring than last.

Officially the Agricultural Marketing Service said this:

"The downswing in hog production which began in the spring of 1940 continued through the fall and will continue at least through the spring season of 1941, the Agricultural Marketing Service reported today. The decline apparently has been at an increasing rate. The percentage decrease in the 1940 fall pig crop was greater than that of last spring, and the indicated percentage decrease for the spring of 1941 is a little greater than that for the fall of 1940."

"The fall pig crop of 1940 is estimated at 12.5 per cent smaller than that of 1939. The decrease in the 1940 spring pig crop was 9 per cent. The combined pig crop of 1940 is down 10 per cent from last year but the crop is the second largest since 1933."

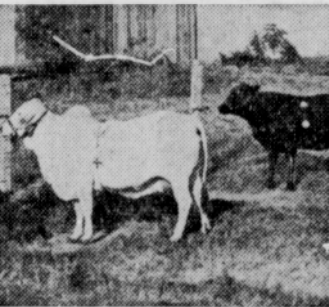
"The indicated number of sows to farrow in the spring season of 1941 is 14 per cent smaller than the number farrowed in the spring of 1940."

"This information, from the December Pig Crop survey, is based upon returns from 160,000 farmers obtained in co-operation with the postal office department through the rural mail carriers."

EXPECT PRICE RISE

Now according to past experience these estimates have proved to be pretty accurate and so the city folks can expect to have to pay more for their pork chops and the demand will probably exceed the supply.

Eventually that may apply to milk, too, but right now there are thousands of potential customers of



A family tree of value.

dairy farmers who would buy if milk and milk products were cheaper.

Efforts of the department to breed better cows is illustrated in the accompanying photograph. I wouldn't want to go on record as saying that the fine old Aberdeen-Angus that flourish in my home state of Illinois would be flattered to learn that mixing promiscuously with the strange-looking critter in the picture with the enlarged collar button on the back of its neck, would improve their family tree—but it's a fact.

At least the Brahman cow has certain points which help an Aberdeen-Angus if it has to live down Texas way. It's cool in Scotland where the Aberdeen-Angus came from. It's hot in tropical Asia where hump-backed beauty originated. The Brahman has sweat glands in their skin which acts as a refrigerating system. And a little of that goes pretty well in the Gulf states of this country.

News Correspondents

Discuss War Jitters

This is a story of chin-beards and war.

We have been going through some jittery moments in Washington lately with war and rumors of war all about us. In the midst of the confusion, little things, unimportant things which we remember years afterward but which never get into the papers or the history books stand out clear and sharp in our memories

GREEK CHILDREN

WASHINGTON.—One story which has not been told here is how a million young folks are helping Greece win the war. These children, members of a National Youth organization, are from 8 to 20 years old. They act as couriers, as aids to firemen, help the nurses and work at all sorts of jobs vacated by the men called to the front.

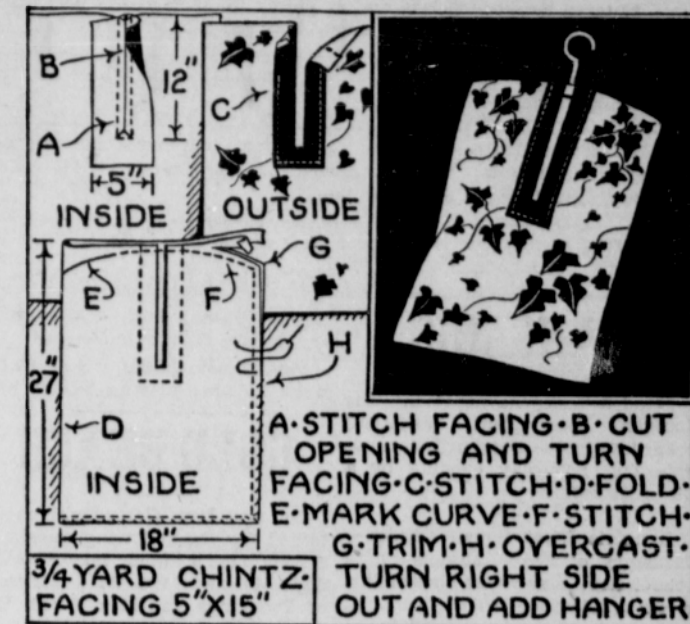
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(TO BE CONTINUED)

HOW TO SEW

by Ruth Wyeth Spears



A-STITCH FACING-B-CUT OPENING AND TURN FACING-C-STITCH-D-FOLD-E-MARK CURVE-F-STITCH-G-TRIM-H-OVERCAST-TURN RIGHT SIDE OUT AND ADD HANGER

ARE you planning things that will sell well at a Fair or Bazaar? Or is this the season that you catch up on odds and ends of sewing for the house? In either case you will like to stitch up a bag like this one. Everyone seems to have a special use for one of these bags on a hanger. I have one that I use for laundry when I go traveling. Men and boys like them for closet laundry bags too, as they are plenty big enough for shirts. A little girl I know has a small version of one of these in which she keeps doll clothes scraps. I have also seen them used for everything from dress patterns to dust rags.

This green and white ivy patterned chintz with green facing makes a good looking bag. Pictorial chintz will amuse a youngster—something with animals or toys or a landscape in the design. I saw a material the other day with a pattern showing all kinds

of rope knots. A boy would like that. Each step in making the bag is shown in the sketch.

In SEWING Book 3 there are directions for still another type of bag on a hanger; also a pocket for the pantry door. This book contains directions for the pool shelves; stocking cat; "The rug that grew up with the family," and many other of your favorites among articles that have appeared in the paper. Send order to:

MRS. RUTH WYETH SPEARS
Bedford Hills New York
Enclose 10 cents for Book No. 3.
Name
Address

Miss Had Another Chance After the Final Good-By

The fellow threatened to commit suicide every time a certain girl turned him down. She refused him again the other night, and the next morning a messenger boy called with this note:

"Darling—By the time you read this, my body will be floating down the river. Life without you is not worth while. Shed no tears over me, but just remember that I have always loved you. Good-by for ever."

The girl went white and nearly fainted. Then she noticed that the messenger boy was still there. "What are you waiting for?" she asked.

"The man who gave me that note said I was to wait for an answer," said the boy.



GOOD REASONS WHY QUINTUPLETS use MUSTEROLE for CHEST COLDS

Mother—Give YOUR Child This Same Expert Care!

At the first sign of a chest cold the Quintuplets' throats and chests are rubbed with Children's Mild Musterole—a product made to promptly relieve the DISTRESS of children's colds and resulting bronchial and croupy coughs. Relief usually comes quickly because Musterole is MORE than an ordinary "salve." It helps break up local congestion. As Musterole is used on the Quints you may be sure you are using just about the BEST product made. Also in Regular and Extra Strength for those preferring a stronger product.



Place for Money A wise man should have money in his head, but not in his heart. —Swift.

"I'M NOT AFRAID NOW"

Sometimes after eating too much I had gas pains. ADLERIKA quickly relieved me and my doctor says it's all right to use. (S. R. Minn.) Get ADLERIKA today.

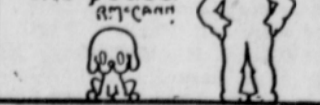
AT YOUR DRUG STORE

THE CHEERFUL CHERUB

The people who talk of their worries Make everyone's troubles increase.

A policeman should simply arrest them Because they're disturbing the peace.

WNU Service.



WNU Service.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

HAVE YOU anything around the house you would like to trade or sell? Try a classified ad. The cost is only a few cents and there are probably a lot of folks looking for just what-ever it is you no longer have use for . . .

Classified Ads Get Results