

The Minister's Rescue

By Ethel M. Colson.

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"THE Little Minister" everybody on board the *Lucretia* called him inevitably; he was so very little and so obviously a minister. And everybody, before the *Lucretia* was three days out from Liverpool, was gossiping about the little minister's devotion to one of the women passengers—the woman with darkened eyebrows and hair a thought too golden. Everybody would have gossiped still more had everybody heard and understood the whispered words which aroused the curiosity and wonder of the head stewardess on the evening when the little minister set everybody agog by escorting the yellow-haired woman down to the very door of her state-room.

"Courage! Courage! Do not despair!" was the half-comprehended ejaculation with which he bade her adieu.

And everybody, again, would have been nearly frantic with excitement had the manner in which the two became acquainted been publicly known.

The yellow-haired woman was leaning over the rail of the promenade deck, well forward, upon the second day of the voyage, when the little minister, who had been watching her keenly from his unobscured seat behind a music room porthole, strolled easily to her side.

"I wouldn't! Don't think of it," he said, softly. "It really wouldn't be worth while. Pluck up heart and take courage. Your present sorrow will be over in a lifetime, anyway; you'll be sorry for all eternity if you jump overboard, poor child."

"Why do you speak to me like this?" cried the woman, turning wide, desperate eyes on his kindly face.

"Because I, too, have been very close to despair," he made gentle answer, "and, perhaps, with far less reason than you have. I have known despair for my own sins rather than the sins of others. You have sinned, also doubtless, but you have been sinned against as well."

For a moment the woman looked as though she would kill him. Then, suddenly, she laid her weary head down on the rail, and he could feel, rather than see, that she was sobbing. Presently he stepped a little nearer, and, affecting to be deeply interested in the tossing water, spoke to her again, in a very low tone.

"Don't give way here—and now," he exhorted, tenderly. "Others are watching us; you don't want to attract attention. Bear up a little longer; you have been silent so long, I am sure. Let them think you are ill—it is only natural. Steward!" to the blue-jacketed functionary of the lower deck, "some hot beef-tee for this lady, immediately."

"Let me give you my arm to the upper deck," he suggested, when the beef-tee having been absorbed in a sheltered corner, the task of screening her from the inquisitive glances of casual deck-strollers became a little difficult. And there on the upper deck—which was altogether too exposed and too windy to be anything but deserted—the yellow-haired woman related her story. She was moved thereto partly by the knowledge of his cloth and his fatherly manner, partly because she looked through the clergyman, and saw that he was a man and a gentleman as well; more than all, perhaps, because she had reached the point where she could no longer contain the guilt-burdened misery from which a womanly listener might have shrunk with repellant disgust.

It was a pitiful story, more pitiful, even, than the teller of it realized. A desolate child, fatherless, motherless, she had never known a real home or affection. Tossed and buffeted from one unwilling, unloving relative to another, she had flouted them all, at 18, to fall in love with a man many years her senior, and who had never borne a good name. She had gone through the preliminary punishment of the lost in order to be true to him, in his absence. When, a year after he had bidden her good-by until "I can come back and marry you," he had sent her money and directions to cross the ocean and become his wife in Liverpool, she had sacrificed her all, deeming it no sacrifice, but a joyous privilege, to obey him. Two years later, inflamed with the fire of a new passion, he had offered her a goodly sum of money to sign an agreement protecting him from any future demands, embarrassments, and leaving him free to marry the woman of his later choice as he had promised—untruthfully—to marry her.

Stung to the quick of the sensitive nature which had lately known love for the first time, all but maddened, desperate, she had left him—but without taking the money. Now, another year later, she was using the proceeds of 12 months of hard work and semi-dissemination to go back to America. The slow passing of the long 14-days voyage, desirable for financial reasons, had left her time for the bitter think-

ing and forecasting so long deferred. The Giant Despair had her fast in his iron, relentless clutches when the little minister had interfered.

He heard her through in silence—the sympathetic, comprehensive silence so rich in balm and cheer. He, too, had been lonely; he was returning now from the journey undertaken to bid his last living relative a long good-by. His was a nature, also, which, while it could never know real wickedness, suffered much because of fancied sins against God and man. Since the fancy, as now happened, taught him great sympathy and skill in dealing with other—and greater—sinners it was not, perhaps, without its uses. The yellow-haired woman realized the supposed and actual character of the fancy intuitively; but the knowledge that he believed himself a sore sinner was as infinitely comforting as his wise silence.

Day after day the little minister cheered, strengthened and encouraged her, heroically regardless of the meaning glances cast toward them by women whose hair was not yellow, and by men who considered facetious speeches concerning flirtatious persons and the latitude of the cloth; day after day he induced her to postpone further compact with the Giant Despair at least until she had made effort a little longer. And all went well until the afternoon when he was powerless to fight the recurring battle with her because of the determined companionship and questioning of the ascetic maiden lady who wanted his views upon the Athanasian creed question—and also to talk about the yellow-haired woman. The little minister, whose gentlemanly instinct never allowed him to discuss one woman with another, found anxiety dispossessing his patient and polite boredom as he noticed that the yellow-haired woman was leaning through instead of over the rail. But before he could carry out his swiftly formed resolution to go to her immediately there was the flash of a falling figure, a sudden commotion—and he realized that the long-dreaded circumstance had come to pass.

It was in the water almost as soon as she was. Three other men made themselves ready, but were a trifle slower, for various reasons. Before they reached the rail the little minister had caught hold of the yellow-haired woman—who struggled and fought him wildly.

"Don't save me," she gasped, meaningly. "I can't help struggling, but I don't want to be saved. Please, please let me drown!"

For all answer he slipped a hand under the little, round, delicate chin which told such a clear story of the weakness which loves and finds it hard to resist temptation, pushed her at arm's-length from him, and swam as strongly as he might until a rope came to him over the stern of the ship. First she was drawn on board safely, then he followed and was hurried downstairs for brandy and hard rubbing. Almost before the two combined brought warmth and vitality back to the limbs which were so insidiously weak and unfitted to contain the mighty spirit which upheld them a message came to his stateroom. The yellow-haired woman hoped he had not been injured in coming to her rescue; she would like to see him to say "Thank you," whenever he should feel inclined to leave his berth. She herself had been commanded by the surgeon to remain motionless for some hours.

When the staterooms had been emptied by the dinner-gong the little minister traversed the former and stood at the side of the yellow-haired woman—pathetically weak and young-looking in her physical weakness and spiritual abasement. At sight of him she broke into sobbing, regardless of the now sympathetic stewardess, who considerably slipped from the room.

"Why did you save me?" she asked him, still weeping. "You knew I wanted to die. I want to die now, as God hears me, although I have learned this evening just how sweet it would be to go on living—if one only had a chance to start over."

And then it was that the soul of the man and the gentleman stood up in the eyes of the preacher, and the divine instinct which had healed so many sins and sorrows failed not the little minister, even though the remedy required was unusual.

"I, too, learned something while down in the water," he said, with the hesitating precision of one who relates a lesson but hastily learned. "I learned that my life will never be quite perfect, never quite what it should be, unless you consent to become part of it, my—my dear. Will you?"—his manner as reverential as though she had been the most conventional of conventional "good women."—"honor me by promising to become my wife?"

The hope and the wonder which flashed out in her face transformed and transfigured it; but the glory died out a moment later.

"You are only saying this for charity's sake, to save me, to give me another chance," she told him.

"No," answered the little minister, with quiet tenderness and gentle de-

termination, "you are quite, quite mistaken, my—my dear. I am saying it because I love you."

And the good God, hearing these words of nobility and resurrection, looked upon them with favor—and made them true.

One Admiring Constituent.

That no man is a hero to his valet is a truism that has come down through a long line of French cynics; but Lord Ripon, ex-viceroy of India, had occasion to demonstrate that he, at least, was appreciated by a faithful retainer. Soon after his return from Calcutta, and when the criticisms of his administration were particularly fierce, Lord Ripon was met by a member of the liberal party, who said to him, enthusiastically: "I congratulate you on your courage and public spirit in pursuing so large-minded and liberal a policy in the east." Lord Ripon smiled as he replied: "It is good of you to say such kind things of me; but to tell you the truth, I don't believe there was anyone in India who really approved of my policy except my old Scotch gardener."—Youth's Companion.

A Good Move.

While the action of the house rivers and harbors committee in recommending the authorization of a survey of the proposed boat railway between The Dalles and Celilo with the end in view of having a survey made for canal and locks is not all that could have been desired, it is yet a move in the right direction, and cannot but be encouraging to the people of the Inland Empire that they are finally to be given an open river. There is an unexpended fund of \$214,467 in the appropriation for the boat railway which the committee authorizes to be used in making the survey. This fund being immediately available will admit of work being commenced at once on the survey, and it should be completed in time for the engineers to make a full report by the time of the convening of the next congress.

The favorable report of the committee is unquestionably the result of their visit to the Columbia river basin last summer, and is evidence that when congressmen become better acquainted with the resources of the west they will be more liberal in their dealings with internal and coast improvements. We are certainly beginning to feel the effect of the east becoming acquainted with the west, and to further advance our interests a strong effort should be made to induce the irrigation committee to visit the arid regions next summer, for next to the improvements of our rivers and harbors is the reclamation of our arid lands—Dalles Mountaineer.

Knows Nothing of It.

James J. Hill, president of the Northern Securities Company, is quoted by the Journal of Commerce as saying he knows nothing of the new transcontinental railway line with a Pacific terminal at Eureka, Cal. The plans of the line were given out some time ago by Lord Thurlow, of England, and recently at Chicago. Mr. Hill is further quoted as having said that so far as he was concerned there was nothing in the report; that he did not even recall where the Eureka terminal was, and that he had no negotiations of any kind with Lord Thurlow or George H. Proctor.

Strikes a Rich Find.

"I was troubled for several years with chronic indigestion and nervous debility," writes F. E. Green, of Lancaster, N. H., "No remedy helped me until I began using Electric Bitters, which did me more good than all the medicines I ever used. They have also kept my wife in excellent health for years. She says Electric Bitters are just splendid for female troubles; that they are a grand tonic and invigorator for weak, run down women. No other medicine can take its place in our family." Try them. Only 50c. Satisfaction guaranteed by Adamson & Winnick Co.

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