

The Stowaway

By **LOUIS TRACY**

Author of the "Pillar of Light," "The Wings of the Morning" and "The Captain of the Kansas."

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In the veins under the stress of an emotion at once passionate and mystic, Iris, spurred on by no stronger impulse than that of the sightseer, though not wholly unaware of an element of adventurous shyness in her expectation of a tete-a-tete with a good looking young man of her own status climbed to the bridge so speedily and noiselessly that Hozier did not know of her presence until he heard her dismayed cry:



"Is that the Southern Cross?" He turned quickly.

"You, Miss Yorke?" he exclaimed and not even her wonder at the insignificance of the stellar display of which she had heard so much could cloak the fact that Hozier was unprepared for her appearance.

"Of course it is I. Who else?" she asked. "Did not Captain Coke tell you to expect me?"

"No."

"How odd! That is what he arranged. A man came and rapped at my door."

"Pardon me one moment."

He leaned over the bridge and hailed the watch. The same hoarse voice that had roused Iris answered his questions, and in the faint light that came from the binnacle she caught a flicker of amusement on his face.

"Our excellent skipper's intentions have been defeated," he said. "He told one of the men to call him at seven bells, but not to wake you until the cross was visible. His orders have been obeyed quite literally. He will be summoned in another hour, and you have been dragged from bed to gaze at the false cross, which every foremast hand persists in regarding as the real article. The true cross, of which Alpha Crucis is the southern pole star, comes up over the horizon an hour after the false one."

"But Captain Coke said he would see you and warn you of my visit."

"I can only assure you that he did not. Perhaps he thought it unnecessary, meaning to be on deck himself."

"Must I wait here a whole hour then?"

Hozier laughed. It was amusing to find how Coke's marked effort to keep the girl and him apart had been defeated by a sailor's blunder.

"I hope the waiting will not weary you," he said. "It is a beautiful night."

"I am glad of the accident that brought me on deck somewhat earlier than was necessary," she said. "You and I have not said much to each other since you routed me out of the lazarette, Mr. Hozier."

"Our friends at table are somewhat difficult. If only you knew how I regretted—"

"Oh, what of that? When I became a stowaway I fully expected to be treated as one. I suppose, though, that you have often asked yourself why I was guilty of such a mad trick."

"Not exactly mad, Miss Yorke, but needless, since Captain Coke partly expected to have your company."

"That is absurd. He had not the remotest notion—"

"Forgive me, but there you are wrong. He says that your uncle and he discussed the matter on the Sunday before we left Liverpool. His theory is rather borne out by the present state of the ship's larder. I assure you that few tramp steamers spread a table like the Andromeda's mess during this voyage."

Iris laughed with a spontaneous merriment that was rather astonishing in her own eyes.

"Being the owner's niece, I am well catered for?" she cried.

"Something of the sort. It is only natural."

"But I think I have read in the newspapers that when some unhappy creature is condemned to death by the law he is supplied with luxuries that would certainly be denied to any ordinary criminal?"

"Such doubtful clemency can hardly apply to you, Miss Yorke."

"It might apply to the ship or to that human part of her that thinks and remembers and is capable of—of giving evidence."

She paused, fearing lest, perhaps, she might have spoken too plainly. Coke's counter stroke in alluding to her dread of the proposed marriage was hidden from her ken. Hozier, of course, was thinking of nothing else. For the moment, then, they were at cross purposes.

"Things are not so bad as that," he said gently. "I hope I am not trespassing on forbidden ground, but it is only fair to tell you that the skipper was quite explicit up to a point. He said you were being forced into some matrimonial arrangement that was distasteful—"

"And, to escape from an undesirable suitor, I ran away?"

"Well, the story sounded all right."

"Did myself on my uncle's ship when I wished to avoid marrying the man of his choice?"

Hozier was not neglecting his work, but he did then take his eyes off the starlit sea for a few amazed seconds. There was so mistaking the scornful "ing in the girl's words. He could see the deep color that flooded her cheeks. The glance that met his sparkled with an intensity of feeling that thrilled while it perplexed.

"Please pardon me if the question hurts, but if that is not your motive and there never was any real notion of your coming on this trip why are you here?" he said.

"Because I am a foolish girl, I suppose—because I thought that my presence might interpose a serious obstacle between a criminal and the rime he had planned to commit. If one wants to avoid hateful people a change of climate is a most effectual means, and I had not the money for ordinary travel. Believe me, Mr. Hozier, I am not on board the Andromeda without good reason. I have often wished to have a talk with you. I think you are a man who would not betray a confidence. If you agree to help me, something may yet be done. At first I was sure that Captain Coke would abandon his wicked project as soon as he discovered that I knew what was in his mind. But now I am beginning to doubt. Each day brings us nearer South America, and—"

She was breathless with excitement. She drew nearer to the silent and impassive man at her side, dropping her voice almost to a whisper. She caught his arm with an appealing hand.

"I am afraid that my presence will offer you hindrance to his scheme," she murmured. "I am terrified to say such a thing, but I am certain, quite certain, that the ship will be lost within the next few days."

"Hozier, though incredulous, could not but realize that the girl was saying that which she honestly thought to be true.

"Lost! Do you mean that she will be purposely thrown away?" he asked, and his own voice was not wholly under control, for he was called on to repress a sudden temptation to kiss away the tears that glistened in her brown eyes.

"Yes, that is what he said—on the rocks, this side of Montevideo."

"He said—who?"

"The—captain."

"To whom did he say it?"

"Oh, Mr. Hozier, do not ask that, but believe me and help me."

"How?"

"I do not know. I am half-distracted with thinking. What can we do? Captain Coke simply swept aside my first attempt to speak plainly to him. But—make no mistake—he knows that I heard his very words, and there is something in his manner, a curious sort of quiet confidence, that frightens me."

After that neither spoke during many minutes.

"That is a very serious thing you have told me, Miss Yorke," muttered Hozier at last, not without a backward glance at the sailor in the wheelhouse to assure himself that the man could not by any chance overhear their conversation.

"But it is true—dreadfully true," said Iris, clasping her hands together and resting them on the high railing of the bridge.

"It is all the 'BUT IT IS TRUE—MORE SERIOUS, DREADFULLY TRUE.' INASMUCH AS SAID HIM. We are helpless," he went on. "Don't you see how impossible it is even to hint at it in any discussion with the man principally concerned? I want to say this, though—you are in no danger. There is no ship so safe as one that is picked out for willful destruction. Men will not sacrifice their own lives even to make good an insurance policy, and I suppose that is what is intended. So you can sleep sound of nights—at any rate until we near the coast of Brazil. I can only promise you if any watchfulness on my part can stop this piece of villainy—Hello, there! What's up? Why is the ship falling away from her course?"

The sudden change in his voice startled the girl so greatly that she uttered a slight shriek. It took her an appreciable time to understand that he was speaking to the man at the wheel. But the sailor knew what he meant.

"Something's gone wrong with the wheel, sir," he bawled. "I wasn't certain at first, so I tried to put her over a bit to starboard. Then she jammed for sure."

Hozier leaped to the telegraph and signaled "slow" to the engine room. Already the golden pathway behind the Andromeda had changed from a wavering yet generally straight line to a well defined curve. There was a hiss and snort of escaping steam as the sailor inside the chart-house endeavored to force the machinery into action.

"Steady, there!" bellowed Hozier. "Wait until we have examined the gear boxes! There may be a kink in a chain!"

A loud order brought the watch scurrying along the deck. Some of the men ran to examine the bearings of the huge fan-shaped casting that governed the movements of the rudder, while others began to tap the wooden shafts which protected the steering rods and chains. In the midst of the hammering and excitement Captain Coke swung himself up to the bridge.

"Well, I'm blowed! You here?" he said, looking at Iris. "Wot is it now?" he asked, turning sharply to Hozier. "Wheel stuck again?"

"Yes, sir. Has it happened before?"

"Well, not this trip. But it 'as 'appened. Just for a minute I was mixin' it up with the night you nearly run down that bloomin' booker off the Irish coast. Ah, there she goes! Everything O. K. now. Wot daylight comes we'll overhaul the dain's. Nix thing if the wheel jammed just as we was crossin' the Recife!"

Hozier tried to ascertain from the watch if they had found the cause of the disturbance, but the men could only guess that a chance blow with an adz had straightened a kink in one of the castings. Coke treated the incident with nonchalance.

"Thought you was to be called w'en the cross rose in sight, Miss Yorke?" he said abruptly.

"I am sorry to have to inform you that some people on board cannot distinguish between falsity and truth," she answered. "But please don't be angry with any of the men on my account. Mr. Hozier tells me they often confuse the false cross with the real one, and the mistake has been enjoyable."

"A regular 'umbug, the Southern Cross," grunted Coke. "It ain't a patch on the bear!"

Coke grinned at his own pleasantry. To one of his bearers at least it seemed to be passing strange that he was so ready to forget such a vital defect in the steering gear as had manifested its existence a few minutes earlier.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

(Paid Advertising.)

ABUSING THE INITIATIVE.

Initiative for Matters of General Interest.

"The initiative privilege is a valuable right and the people of Oregon are fortunate in the possession of the same. It is a right though that should be used with discretion. If the initiative is invoked indiscriminately it will be of injury rather than of benefit," says the Pendleton East Oregonian in its issue of July 19.

"By the nature of things the initiative should be used for the settlement of questions that are of general state interest and questions upon which the people at large are capable of judging. It was proper that the direct primary law be enacted under the initiative. The law could not have been enacted in any other way. Legislatures elected under the old convention system would never have passed the direct primary law. It was proper that the corrupt practices act be enacted under the initiative and referendum. That law pertains to political morality and the people were able to judge of the merits of the law. It is all right to settle the normal school problem under the initiative. The legislature has utterly failed to handle the question.

"But the most glaring abuse of the initiative is on the part of those who have proposed county division measures. Eight bills have been filed asking for the creation of new counties or for the changing of boundary lines. In each case the question involved is of a purely local nature; not of state interest. It will be impossible for the people of the state to judge of these measures with intelligence. All division disputes should have been held in abeyance pending the passage of a law calling for the settlement of such disputes by the people directly concerned. The county divisionists, however, have refused to wait. They have submitted their bills in hopes the people will vote blindly for them. They have abused the initiative privilege and they should be rebuked for doing so. Every county division bill should be voted down.

"Insist that the initiative be used only when it may be invoked with propriety."

County Division Increased Taxes 6 1/2 Per Cent.

(East Oregonian.)

That county division means in-

creased taxation for the recessionists is shown by the experience of E. A. Schiffler, the well known local tailor, who owns some property in the city of Hood River. To the East Oregonian Mr. Schiffler has exhibited his tax receipts and they show that during the first year of the existence of Hood River county Mr. Schiffler's taxes increased 61.4 per cent. His 1908 taxes, which were paid in Wasco county, amounted to \$85.50. His 1909 taxes, the first levied after the creation of Hood River county and which he paid on February 14, 1910, amounted to \$138. Therefore the creation of the new county cost Mr. Schiffler the sum of \$52.50 during the first year of Hood River county's existence.

"I have always said that it is foolish to divide counties," declared Mr. Schiffler. "It only means additional expense and increased taxation."

THE MARKETS.

Portland.

Wheat—Track prices: Club, \$2c; bluestem, 82c; red Russian, 80c. Barley—Feed and brewing, \$21. Oats—No. 1 White, \$23 per ton. Hay—Timothy, Willamette Valley, \$19@20 per ton; Eastern Oregon, \$20@22; alfalfa, \$15@16. Butter—Creamery, 36; ranch, 21c. Eggs—Ranch, candied, 37c. Hops—1910 crop, 10@12 1/2c; 1909, nominal; old, nominal. Wool—Eastern Oregon 12@17c lb.; Valley, 17@19c lb. Mohair—Choice, 32@33c.

Seattle.

Wheat—Bluestem, 80c; Club, 82c; red Russian, 80c. Oats—\$23 per ton. Barley—\$21 per ton. Hay—Timothy, \$26 per ton; alfalfa, \$19 per ton. Butter—Washington creamery, 36c; ranch, 22c. Eggs—Selected local, 45c.

Shooting in Self-Defense.

Unatilla—Sam Kee, the Chinaman, who shot and killed James W. Loveface here on October 17 last, was given his liberty following the verdict handed down by the coroner's jury at Pendleton, which held that the shooting was done in self defense. The jurors came here from Pendleton, and after taking all the testimony of the witnesses here, returned to Pendleton and signed the verdict.

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