

# The Strumpet Sea

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

## SYNOPSIS

George McAusland was 38 years old when he sailed from America to under- take 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, who falls 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 and asked Mary to be his wife. She 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 come there to help George and Mary if they needed him. Their peaceful life was interrupted one day when a ship stepped in the harbor in search of pearls. They see the pearl divers attacked and their schooner sunk by a pirate ship. The pirates head their boat toward the bay near their village. George sends Mary inland for safety and walks down to the beach alone and defenseless. Natives carry him back to their hut hours later, shot through the shoulder. Natives killed the pirates that night and set their boat afire. The long-awaited whaler, the Venturer, arrived. Mary was told that its captain had died, and that his sons, Richard and Peter Corr, were now in charge as captain and first mate. She freed Richard, but was told by Peter that he publicly laughed at her affection. George was a sick man when the Venturer arrived. George agreed to leave the island when he saw that the epidemic among the natives was caused by his consumptive condition. A native gave Mary a small bag of pearls as a farewell present.

## CHAPTER IX—Continued

Later Tommy made the bunk ready; and Richard carried George in, and Mary made him comfortable for the night. When he slept, she went to her own quarters.

Alone there, beginning to undress, she remembered the packet Jarambo had given her. She unbuttoned her waist and drew the little bundle out and opened it. Although she had been sure what she would find, her heart clutched at her throat when she saw them.

In the dim lamp light, the little handful of pearls glowed warmly. She stirred them with her finger, counted them. Fourteen.

She stood looking down at them trying to understand. The men who killed Fritz must have looted his schooner before they burned the craft and sank it. Jarambo, in turn, had searched their vessel and found the pearls and kept them. Mary looked at them in a sort of terror; and when a knock sounded lightly on the door behind her, she turned with a gasp of surprise. The door opened.

Peter stood there. He looked past her, saw the pearls! Before she could move to hide them he stepped past her; took some of them in his hands with an exclamation of delight. He turned to her, his eyes shining.

"Where'd you get them?"

"Jarambo gave them to me."

"Where'd he get them?"

She remembered Richard's warning. "I suppose he found them somewhere."

He said huskily: "Maybe he got them at the island! Maybe there are more! Has anybody seen them?"

"No."

"Well, don't show them to anyone."

"I won't," she promised. She asked, suddenly wondering at his intrusion here: "Did George send for me?"

He shook his head, smiling. "No, I just stopped on my way to bed to make sure you were comfortable."

He touched the packet in her hand. "Better let me lock them up for you."

"I'd rather keep them. I'll hide them somewhere."

He did not urge her; yet he showed no disposition to go.

"I'm glad you're aboard. I'm a lone wolf on the Venturer, you know. The crew is down on me." He grinned as he spoke; but she thought he was not amused.

"Why?"

"Oh, it's that business about your uncle," he admitted. "They think I was afraid. Just because I used my head. I backed our boat clear of the suds so I'd have a chance to pick up the men, and after that they started calling me 'Starn all!'"

He added appealingly: "You know, Mary, I'm still a kid, in spite of this beard! I'm the youngest man aboard except Tommy. I sure need friends."

"Well, you've got one now, Peter. And really, they're all your friends, of course. You're just sensitive. For Heaven's sake don't go feeling sorry for yourself."

"The devil of it is not having anyone I can talk to."

"You can talk to me; to George and me." She laughed. "In the morning," she added. "I want to go to bed now, Peter."

"Right," he assented, and left the cabin.

During the first days aboard the Venturer, George slept much of the time, while strength crept back into him. When he was awake Mary stayed with him, giving him tenderness and strength from her store of it, and courage and comfort; but when he was asleep and did not need her, she was apt to come on deck. She learned to recognize some of the men in the crew. Some were good sailors, brisk, competent, and cheerful; but others, Richard admitted to Mary, were a poor lot.

"We recruited off the beach at Honolulu," he explained. "Father signed Hurd there. I wouldn't have taken him; and I don't let him aft at all. There's something I don't like about that man. He grins too much, maybe; and he's a poor hand to steer, anyway."

She led him to discuss other men aboard; and she watched him, as the days passed, develop into a mature and resolute man before her eyes, guarding his every word, speaking strongly when he gave orders, keeping himself a little aloof even from the mates. Peter, she saw, put himself under no such restraint. She thought sometimes he was too friendly with the men. When George was well enough, they brought him on deck. When he was on deck, Mary was always near him; and Peter spent much time near George's chair in cheerful talk. But she saw that whoever was with them when Peter approached was apt to move quietly away.

And the others aboard treated the mate with scant respect. He spent more time with George and her than was natural, seeming to turn to them as a refuge and a sanctuary, to escape from the dislike which



"Corkran, have you served on whalers before?"

met him elsewhere. She wondered whether it were true that others, like Tommy, blamed him for the tragedy of her uncle's death. There were questions she wished to ask. She chose to ask them of Corkran, since he presumably could not suspect what was in her mind. One day when Corkran had the wheel, Mary moved George's chair near the companion to catch the sun behind the after house and walked over to the wheel.

## CHAPTER X

"Corkran, have you served on whalers before?" Mary asked.

"I have that, ma'am."

"Were you a harpooner?"

"Aye, ma'am, and I was."

"Does Cap'n Corr know it?"

He said with a respect which made her warmly happy: "If there's anything about any man aboard the Cap'n doesn't know, ma'am, then the man don't know it himself. He's able, that one."

She nodded in content, and she asked Corkran: "Did you have some exciting fights?"

"Aye, some; but mostly, a whale dies by the book, if they're struck 'right and lanced fair."

"When they get mad and wreck the boat and charge around, you can't do anything but keep out of the way, can you?"

"Well, an extra iron into him will turn him, like as not," he said. "With a fighting whale there's no knowing, but I've seen it come out so."

So, she thought, if Peter had harpooned that other whale, it might have saved her uncle. Her eyes clouded; and she felt Corkran watching her, but George asked a question that started the man on some new tale, and George listened with intent interest. Mary thought George was better every day.

She thought more often, after that, about the attitude of the others aboard toward Peter. Tommy Hanline was beginning to avoid her, as if he liked her in his mind with the mate. One day she made an opportunity to talk to Tommy about it.

She said:

"Tommy, I don't see much of you lately."

"I'm pretty busy. Got a lot of work to do." He added sullenly: "I guess you've got plenty of company."

She decided to push the issue. "You mean Peter?"

"Sure."

She said gently: "I expect you're feeling I've sort of deserted you for him."

His voice suddenly was husky. "Well, you're my cousin, aren't you? And even that first night when I came ashore because I couldn't wait to see you, you just sat and talked to him all the time, didn't pay any attention to me!"

She smiled secretly, amused at his boyish jealousy. "Tommy," she

suggested, "I know you think Peter might have saved Uncle Tom from being killed; but don't people get killed whaling right along? I'm sure if anyone could have done anything, Peter would have."

He cried: "Oh, all right! You can stand up for him if you want to!"

She decided that for her own peace of mind she must know in detail how her uncle died. The log was usually on the desk in the common room. She had never looked at it, but she went to do so now, turning back the pages slowly. Since the Venturer left Gilead, Richard had made the entries; and she thought his handwriting had changed tremendously in the five or six years since he wrote her that harsh note in reply to hers which Peter, with a boy's malicious cruelty, had given him. She turned back the pages of the log till she came to entries in Richard's father's hand, till she found at last the one she sought.

It did not make the matter clear. Nevertheless its implications were damning. Captain Corr had written:

"Day began fair, wind light and westerly. Sighted bowhead well out from the ice and lowered three boats. The mate, Tom Hanline, got fast; but the whale cut his flukes and smashed the boat, then swept the water. Tom Hanline was holding up Joe Bingham who could not swim. The whale smashed them. Third mate Peter Corr was handy. He picked up the other men. My son Richard came up fast and killed the whale. Cutting in tonight. The bodies were not found. Day ended as it began."

The words, Mary thought, carried an overtone of deep regret like shame.

She put the log away, wishing she had not read it; and during the next few days she tried to forget this cloud which hung over Peter's head.

Richard counted on filling their remaining casks among the right whales south of Juan Fernandez; but before setting his course that way he wished to provision the ship. When Mary looked out of her cabin window next morning, she saw an island close aboard; and after breakfast she brought George on deck to sit with her under the boat house and watch the rugged, luxuriantly wooded shore along which they were making. Isaiah joined them. Mary wondered why no canoes appeared.

"The anchorage is further on," Isaiah told her. "They'll be there to meet us, and a pretty covey of girls swimming out to come aboard. I've put in here before. The girls are a main fine lot."

George looked at him; and Mary said smilingly: "Such talk, Isaiah! I'm surprised at you!"

A little later he nodded toward the bay they were entering. "Here come the canoes to meet us now."

"I see them," Mary assented.

He seemed absorbed in the scene before them; chuckled, said: "Them canoes coming off are loaded down with what we'll want. That 'un off t'he looard's got a live pig in it. Hear him squeal?"

The men were aloft busy with the sails; the canoes laden deep and full of eager islanders came racing near as the Venturer swung to her anchor. George and Mary went aft where Richard was; and Mary saw that Richard was frowning, looking uneasily at the canoes and the black heads of the girls swimming out to the ship. The men aloft finished their tasks there and tumbled down to the deck again and lined the rail. Swimming girls, their long hair streaming, came nearer; and the men aboard shouted to them in a robust and gusty welcome. Mary watched, smiling, catching the happy infection of their friendliness; and she turned to speak to Richard, and saw him watching George, and then Richard said suddenly: "Mr. McAusland, I wish you and Mary would go below."

George was looking at the girls, his face stern. He asked: "Why, Cap'n Corr?"

"Those girls will be swarming aboard here in another five minutes."

"Then why need you let them aboard? Keep the girls off the ship. Surely you can hold your men in hand?"

Richard shook his head. "Be reasonable, Mr. McAusland. Father always picked young men for his ships. They haven't seen a woman for over four months. You're young enough yourself to know that a young man misses the sight of a pretty girl. It's human nature."

George spoke with more restraint than he felt. "If men can't control themselves, shouldn't they be controlled?"

"Ever try to stop rain falling?" Richard challenged. "These men have to work for me. You know, Mr. McAusland, you can boss a man just so far, and you can do it two ways. I can have a ship full of fights on my hands, fists going all the time, bloody noses, whippings, and maybe killings before we're done. Or I can have a crew of men who know I'm fair and reasonable and try to be the same."

George said, "You're pretty cold-blooded."

"My job is my ship."

"You're responsible for your men, too."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Greetings and Salutations



## A New Year's Prayer

By DAVID CORY

God grant that I the new year through  
May strive with heart and soul to do  
Those things which are most good and true.

God grant that I each morning start  
My duties with a cheerful heart,  
And cheerfully perform my part.

To wear a smile all through the day,  
To banish thoughts unkind away;  
And when my bedtime comes, to pray.

To say my prayers with folded hands  
As night comes softly o'er the lands,  
To Him, who always understands.

And when the bells on New Year's dawn  
Proclaim the bright New Year is born,  
And I awake on New Year's morn,

I pray Him whisper, low and sweet,  
To help me guide my wayward feet,  
Lest I forget my prayer to meet.

## Ancient Rites Mark

### Chinese New Year

Magnificent parades of giant dragons and bright lanterns help celebrate New Year's in China's big cities, but simple ceremonies mark the passing of the old year in the great mass of homes.

Great care is taken that ancient customs are nicely observed, because New Year's is the time when many events of the coming year are determined.

Four days before the new year begins, a feast is spread before the idol in every home. This almost invariably contains sticky candies and syrups, although the gods are not especially pleased with sweets. The candy is offered to stick the god's jaws together so he cannot tell too much of what he saw on earth when he returns to the heavens.

On the last day of the old year, large quantities of water are stored in the house because it is unlucky to draw water during the first three days of the New Moon.

The door to every simple home is opened at midnight of the last day as its god re-enters amid blazing firecrackers, incense sticks and flaming candles. After a few minutes the door is tightly closed to keep in the good luck which he brought with him.

## New Year Is 'Born' In Chatham Islands

The New Year will be born January 1 in the lonely Chatham Islands 414 miles southwest of New Zealand and race westward 1,000 miles an hour toward the U. S.

In accordance with tradition, some 200 shepherds and fishermen will celebrate the arrival of 1941 by proudly ringing the bell of the little church on Hanson island as clocks in New York point to 5 a. m. December 31.

The Chatham Islands have the honor of welcoming the new year at its birth because they are the nearest land points to the British admiralty dateline from which the time zones are marked throughout the world. The line curves east and west of the 180th meridian of longitude so that it lies always in the ocean.

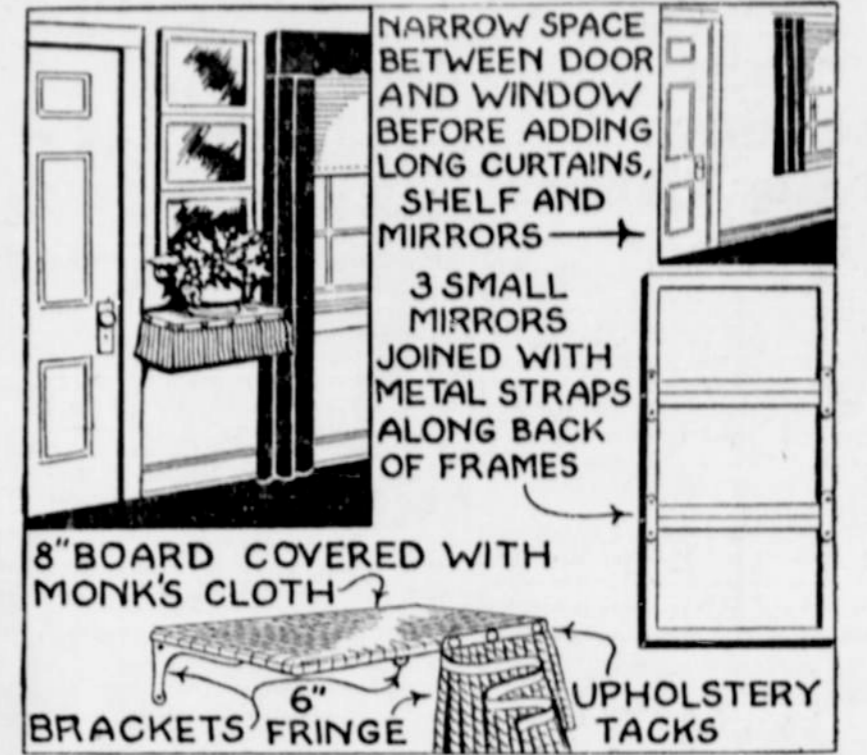
## New Year's Eve Fates

Every maiden wonders what the future has in store for her, and this is what she must do on New Year's day to learn her fate:

Turn the pillow at midnight, the thirty-first of December, and you will dream of the man you are to marry. Or let her take her hymn book to her bedroom, blow out the lamp, open the book and mark a hymn (in the dark), put it under the pillow and sleep on it. Next morning when she reads the hymn her fate will be revealed.

# HOW TO SEW

by Ruth Wyeth Spears



ON HER way home from the club Mrs. Martindale was thinking, "It will be my turn next. What will they think when they come to our house?" Then she put her latch key into the lock and stepped into her own front hall. "Just what I was afraid of," she said aloud. "When you look at this hall as an outsider the worst thing you think is that its owner is lacking in imagination."

Right then things began to happen. The shabby old hall carpet was washed right on the floor and then dyed a deep green with hot dye applied with a scrub brush. The long lines of the new green sateen curtains turned the space between door and window into a definite panel crying for a long mirror and a console shelf. The sketch shows you how these were made from next to nothing. The frames of the three inexpensive snail mirrors were painted red before they were fastened together. The shelf was covered with cream colored monk's cloth to match the walls and woodwork and edged with cream color cotton fringe tacked on with large red tacks.

The method of making the buckram stiffened valance used for the curtains in this sketch is described fully in SEWING Book 5. This book contains thirty-two homemaking projects with step by step directions for each. Send order to:

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## HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS

**Stubborn rust stains** sometimes can be removed by boiling the article for 10 minutes in a quart of water containing two tablespoons of cream of tartar, then rinsing thoroughly in cold water.

**To make your popovers** really pop over, be sure to have the baking pans well greased and very hot. The pans should "sizzle" when you quickly touch them with fingers dipped in cold water.

**Salt meat** requires longer boiling than fresh meat.

**To prevent rust** in the stove oven, leave the door open for an hour after baking.

**Oatmeal** on a dampened cloth will clean white paint.

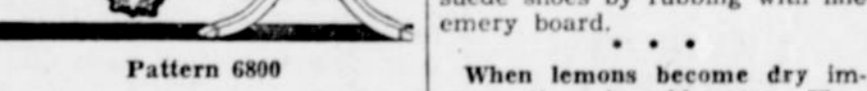
**Freshen up stale loaves**, buns or small cakes by brushing over with milk and putting into the oven to crisp again.

**If the roof should leak** and stain your ceiling, cover the stain with block magnesia. Rub the block over the spot until the stain is covered, then smooth over with the tips of your fingers. It works like magic.

**Rain spots** can be removed from suede shoes by rubbing with fine emery board.

**When lemons** become dry immerse them in cold water. They will soon become quite soft and ready to use.

## Brighten Your Home With Easy Crochet



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EVEN a beginner will find this medallion an easy one to crochet. Joined together the medallions form a lovely pattern for large or small accessories.

Pattern 6800 contains instructions for making medallion; illustration of it and stitches; photograph of medallion; materials needed. Send order to:

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## Place of Music

Music, like a true coin, rings best on the domestic hearthstone. The essence of it no more belongs to the concert-room than—reverently let it be said—does religion to the church. It must needs be an everyday matter, entering the hearts and homes of the people, otherwise its true functions remain unfulfilled.

## Benefits to Our Readers

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