

THE FICTION CORNER

SQUALLS

By MAUD McCURDY WELCH

Gramma's experience in squalls with her seafaring husband prepared her admirably for the role she was called upon to play when Nedra and John called off their marriage.

NEDRA had been crying. Sitting in her chair by the big window in the living room, Gramma went on knitting. In one quick glance she'd seen that the girl had tried to hide the tear-stains by an inept dabbing of powder around her pretty blue eyes.

After a minute Gramma said casually, "John left early."

"And not a minute too soon," Nedra returned quickly, sinking deeper into the fireside chair and turning her face away.

"Ho, so you two had a quarrel." Gramma knitted a little faster than before.

"No, a conflagration, an explosion, a dissolution, a parting of the ways." Nedra's voice was both angry and vehement, and a little tearful too.

"As bad as that?" Gramma inquired mildly.

"I gave him his ring. It's all over," Nedra swallowed a sob quickly.

Gramma made a little clucking sound but she went on plying her needles industriously.

At last Nedra burst out unhappily. "Well, aren't you going to console me, or congratulate me, whichever the case may be?"

Gramma stopped knitting for a moment, looked up. "You and John have quarreled before. They are something like the squalls we'd sometime meet up with on the Saint Lawrence when I'd made a trip with your grandfather on his steamer. He was a sea-captain, you know. Well, there'd be a terrible lot of noise and wind, and then the most beautiful calm you ever saw. It's natural for people in love like you and John to quarrel once in a while."

Nedra sat up. "Darling, you're an incurable sentimentalist. John and I are sensible and modern and analytical about love, as all young people are nowadays. We've had several bitter quarrels since we became engaged, so we've simply had to face the fact that we're not compatible and that marriage would be a mistake."

"It was sensible of course to face this before it was too late."

"It's the modern way," Nedra said in a small, desolate voice.

"But love is not modern," Gramma observed quietly. Then she added, "but of course someday you'll meet the right man."

The sudden white horror of Nedra's sweet face was like a shock. "There'll never be another man, never!" she exclaimed passionately, as she rose and left the room.

Two or three days passed. One day at noon Nedra was lying on a chaise longue in her room, listlessly turning the pages of a magazine when Gramma burst in, excitedly waving two important looking tickets.

"Listen, darling, we're going places. We're shipping on a fruit-boat for . . . for . . ." she studied the tickets for a moment, "for Trinidad."

"Where on earth is that?" Nedra asked indifferently, still pretending to be interested in her magazine.

Gramma lifted her shrewd dark brows. "My dear, I don't seem to have the slightest idea, but if we stay on the boat long enough, I imagine we'll find out."

Nedra sat up. "Now, look, you absurd darling, if you're taking me on a sea voyage because you think my heart is broken, that's out. Girls these days when disappointed in love, don't waste time languishing. They go in for careers, maybe politics or something."

"It's been the desire of my life to travel on a fruit-boat," Gramma said fervently.

Nedra stared at her for a moment; then yielded. "In that case we'll go."

So it happened that in a very few more days, Gramma and Nedra found themselves on a fruit-boat bound for the intriguing destination of Trinidad. And on their very first morning on deck, they both saw a tall, dark young man standing at the rail, gazing moodily out to sea.

Nedra's heart almost stopped. She clutched Gramma's arm and drew her around to the other side so quickly that she almost lost her



"We were silly to think we could," Nedra agreed softly.

breath. "Hey, what goes?" Gramma asked in Nedra's own jargon.

"That was John," Nedra exclaimed breathlessly.

Gramma straightened her neat black toque and got herself better organized. Then Nedra's voice came suddenly accusingly. "And you knew it all the time. You did this on purpose." She whirled around angrily, "I'm going to my cabin and I'm going to stay there."

Nedra kept her word. She stayed in all day, even though after she'd had her dinner, Gramma reminded her that there was nothing on earth more beautiful than a moonlit evening at sea.

"What do I care about a silly old moon," Nedra retorted in a voice that shook with tears.

IT SEEMED a stalemate, so Gramma went on deck alone and soon found John, his boyish face looking tired and drawn even in the semilight. Gramma slipped into the chair beside him, and he said unhappily, "Look here, Gramma, a man can't go a thousand miles away, more or less, to forget a girl and stay on the same boat with her all the way."

"Why don't you two youngsters make up?"

"We decided that if we quarreled before marriage, we'd do the same thing afterward. We're trying to be logical and modern but . . ." his voice trailed away sadly.

"Well, someday you'll meet another girl," Gramma said lightly. "That'll never happen . . . never. Don't even mention a thing like that." John's voice was hoarse with pain.

But just the same, it looked more and more as if Gramma's plotting

to bring these two stubborn kids together would come to nothing at all. It looked plain enough that John and Nedra had no intention whatever of making up their quarrel. . . .

Next morning Mother Nature herself decided to take a hand. They awakened to find the ship tossing in a sudden gale, thunder roaring in demoniac fury, lightning flashing with every split second, the waves tearing at the ship as if possessed of the fury of a thousand devils.

Nedra dressed hurriedly, went into Gramma's room to find her also dressed, as early as it was. "Is it a hurricane?" Nedra asked shakily.

"I don't know, dear. I think I'll just go and try to find out."

"Don't stay long. I'm beginning to be frightened," Nedra pleaded.

"I'll be back in a jiffy. There's nothing to worry about. At least I think not."

She'd hardly disappeared before there was a loud knock on the door and John came in. "Nedra, Nedra darling, I had to find you, I had to tell you . . . in case anything happened, that I still love you, and I always will."

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Jewels THROUGH GLASS

Grace Noll Crowell

STAND before a jeweler's plate glass pane: That crystal-clear conductor of the light. I watch the sunshine pierce the gorgeous stain Of rare gems clustered there before my sight: Crimson and purple fires banked in gold, And ice-white diamonds splintering the air, Deep fires of brilliant beauty to behold Displayed for any who may pass them there.

I think of God whose gracious hand prepares His living truths for all mankind to see. They shine as clearly as these jeweled wares, To ever be revealed by you and me. Lord, shine through me as jewels shine through glass, That men may see thy beauty as they pass.



BE-KIND-TO-NYLONS WEEK

Now, that your longer skirts and petticoats have forced you out of socks and saddles and heels, we're declaring a "be-kind-to-nylons" week. We appealed to our hi style scouts for ideas on nylon preservation and they've come through as usual with flying colors — also with fewer runs. If nylons are one of your economic problems you might want to try out their ideas.

Preventative Measures—No more snags and runs from rough desk and chair edges in school, if you take a piece of sandpaper along with you and do a competent smoothing down job. Then the only disaster you need fear when you get up to go to the blackboard is not knowing the right answers.

First-Aid Equipment—Carry colorless nail polish with you wherever you go to stop those runs in their tracks. Use bright red nail polish to identify your stockings with your initials at the tops to avoid confusion with other nylons in the family. Nail polish is good for the nails, too—in case you forget.

Proven Precautions—Wash your new nylons before you wear them and wash after each wearing. One teen tells us a pinch of salt in the first rinsing strengthens the fibres. We only have her word for it. Don't hang them over the radiator to dry. If your nails and hands are rough, put on a pair of cotton gloves before handling your nylons.

