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He turned to the policeman.

"I am much obliged to you, Jenkins," he said; "we know the lady. Unless — unless there are serious consequences, will you oblige me by saying nothing about her? But stay. When you pass the Mount's Bay Hotel, please call and say that Mrs. Vansittart has been seized with sudden illness and is being cared for at my house."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant, saluting.

As he walked away down the garden path he wondered who Mrs. Vansittart could be, and why Miss Brand said she had "come home."

Then he glanced back at the house, into which the others had vanished. He laughed.

"Just fancy it," he said; "I treated him as if he was a bloomin' lord. And I suppose my position is a better one than his. Anyhow he is a splendid chap. I'm glad now I did it, for his sake and the sake of those two girls. How nicely they were dressed. It has always been a puzzle to me how they can afford to live in that style on the pay of a lighthouse-keeper. Well, it's none of my business."

CHAPTER XVIII

ENID WEARS AN OLD ORNAMENT

LADY MARGARET took her departure from the hotel at an early hour. Her son went with her. Their house was situated on the outskirts of the town, and, although Stanhope would gladly have remained with the two men to discuss the events of this night of surprises, he felt that his mother demanded his present attention.

Indeed, her ladyship had much to say to him. She, like the others, had been impressed by Mrs. Vansittart's appearance, even under the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of the occasion. The feminine mind judges its peers with the utmost precision. Its analytical methods are pitilessly simple. It calculates with mathematical nicety those details of toilette, those delicate *nuances* of manner, which distinguish the woman habituated to refinement and good society from the interloper or mere copyist.

It had always been a matter of mild wonder in Penzance how Constance Brand had acquired her French trick of wearing her clothes. Some women are not properly dressed after they have been an hour sitting in front of a full-length mirror; others can give

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one glance at a costume, twist and pull it into the one correct position, and walk out, perfectly gowned, with a happy consciousness that all is well.

Every Parisienne, some Americans, a few English women, possess this gift. Constance had it, and Lady Margaret knew now that it was a lineal acquisition from her mother. The discovery enhanced the belief, always prevalent locally, that Brand was a gentleman born, and her ladyship was now eager for her son's assistance in looking up the "Landed Gentry" and other works of reference which define and glorify the upper ten thousand of the United Kingdom. Perhaps, that way, light would be vouchsafed.

Being a little narrow-minded, the excellent creature believed that a scandal among "good" people was not half so scandalous as an affair in which the principals were tradesmen, "or worse."

She confided something of this to her son as they drove homewards, and was very wroth with him when he treated the idea with unbecoming levity.

"My dear boy," she cried vehemently, "you don't understand the value of such credentials. You always speak and act as if you were on board one of your hec-toring warships, where the best metal and the heaviest guns are all-important. It is not so in society, even the society of a small Cornish town. Although I am an earl's daughter I cannot afford to be quietly sneered at by some who would dispute my social supremacy."

As each complaisant sentence rolled forth he laughed quietly in the darkness.

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"Mother," said he suddenly, "Mr. Traill and I have had a lot of talk about Enid during the past two days. I have not seen you until this evening before dinner, so I have had no opportunity to tell you all that has occurred."

"Some new embroglio, I suppose," she said, not at all appeased by his seeming carelessness as to what the Dowager Lady Tregarthen or Mrs. Taylor-Smith might say when gossip started.

"Well, it is, in a sense," he admitted. "You see, we are jolly hard up. It is a squeeze for you to double my pay, and, as I happened to inform Mr. Traill that I was going to marry Enid, long before he knew she was his daughter, it came as a bit of a shock afterwards to hear that he intends to endow her with two hundred thousand pounds on her wedding-day. Now the question to be discussed is not whether the adopted daughter of a poor lighthouse-keeper who may be Lord This-and-That in disguise is a good match for me, but whether an impecunious lieutenant in the Royal Navy is such a tremendous catch for a girl with a great fortune."

Lady Margaret was stunned. She began to breathe quickly. Her utmost expectations were surpassed. Before she could utter a word her son pretended to misunderstand her agitation.

"Of course it was fortunate that Enid and I had jolly well made up our minds somewhat in advance, but it was a near thing, a matter of flag signals — otherwise I should have been compelled to consider myself

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ruled out of the game. Therefore, during your tea-table tactics, if the Dowager, or that old spit-fire, Mrs. Taylor-Smith, says a word to you about Brand, just give 'em a rib-roaster with Enid's two hundred thou', will you? Whilst they are reeling under the blow throw out a gentle hint that Constance may ensnare Traill's nephew. 'Ensnare' is the right word, isn't it? The best of it is, I know they have been worrying you for months about my friendship with 'girls of their class.' Oh, the joy of the encounter! It must be like blowing up a battle-ship with a tuppenny hapenny torpedo-boat."

So her ladyship — not without pondering over certain entries in the Books of the Proudly-born, which recorded the birth and marriage of Sir Stephen Brand, ninth baronet, "present whereabouts unknown" — went to bed, but not to sleep, whereas Jack Stanhope never afterwards remembered undressing, so thoroughly tired was he, and so absurdly happy, notwithstanding the awkward situation divulged at the dinner.

Pyne, left with his uncle, set himself to divert the other man's thoughts from the embarrassing topic of Mrs. Vansittart.

He knew that Brand was not likely to leave them in any dubiety as to the past. Discussion now was useless, a mere idle guessing at probabilities, so he boldly plunged into the mystery as yet surrounding Enid's first year of existence.

Mr. Traill, glad enough to discuss a more congenial subject, marshalled the ascertained facts. It was easy to see that here, at least, he stood on firm ground.

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"Your father, as you know, was a noted yachtsman, Charlie," he said. "Indeed, he was one of the first men to cross the Atlantic in his own boat under steam and sail. Twenty years ago, in this very month, he took my wife and me, with your mother, you, and our little Edith, then six months' old, on a delightful trip along the Florida coast and the Gulf of Mexico. It was then arranged that we should pass the summer among the Norwegian fiords, but the two ladies were nervous about the ocean voyage east in April, so your father brought the *Esmeralda* across, and we followed by mail steamer. During the last week of May and the whole of June we cruised from Christiania almost to the North Cape. The fine keen air restored my wife's somewhat delicate health, and you and Edith throve amazingly. Do you remember the voyage?"

"It is a dim memory, helped a good deal, I imagine, by what I have heard since."

"Well, on the fourth of July, putting into Hardanger to celebrate the day with some fellow-countrymen, I received a cable which rendered my presence in New York absolutely imperative. There was a big development scheme just being engineered in connection with our property. In fact, the event which had such a tragic sequel practically quadrupled your fortune and mine. By that time, the ladies were so enthusiastic about the sea-going qualities of the yacht that they would have sailed round the world in her, and poor Pyne had no difficulty in persuading them to take the leisurely way home, whilst I raced off via Newcastle

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and Liverpool to the other side. I received my last cable from them dated Southampton, July 20th, and they were due in New York somewhere about August 5th or 6th, allowing for ordinary winds and weather. During the night of July 21st, when midway between the Scilly Isles and the Fastnet, they ran into a dense fog. Within five minutes, without the least warning, the *Esmeralda* was struck amidships by a big Nova Scotian barque. The little vessel sank almost like a stone. Nevertheless, your father, backed by his skipper and a splendid crew, lowered two boats, and all hands were saved, for the moment. It was Pyne's boast that his boats were always stored with food and water against any kind of emergency, but, of course, they made every effort to reach the ship which had sunk them, rather than endeavor to sail back to this coast. As the *Esmeralda* was under steam at the time, her boilers exploded as she went down, and this undoubtedly caused the second catastrophe. The captain noticed that the strange ship went off close hauled to the wind, which blew steadily from the west, so he, in the leading boat, with your father and mother, you and my wife and child, followed in that direction. He shouted to four men in the second boat to keep close, as the fog was terrific. The barque, the *John S.*, hearing the noise of the bursting boilers, promptly swung round, and in the effort to render assistance caused the second and far more serious catastrophe. The captain's boat encountered her just as the two crafts were getting way on them. Someone in the boat shouted, they heard an

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answering hail, and instantly crashed into the barque's bows. The sail became entangled in the martingale of the bowsprit, the boat was driven under and filled, and the second boat crashed into her. All the occupants of the captain's boat were thrown into the sea. You were grasped by a negro, a powerful swimmer. He, with yourself and two sailors, were rescued, and that was all. Your father was a strong man and he could swim well. He must have been stunned or injured in some way. The two sailors jumped from the second boat and clung to the barque's bobstays. The whole thing was over in a few seconds."

Mr. Traill rose and paced slowly to the window. Pyne stared into the fire. There was no need for either of them to conjure up the heart-rending scene as the sharp prow of the sailing-ship cleft through the seas and spurned the despairing hands clutching at her black walls.

Too often had the older man pictured that horrific vision. It had darkened many hours, blurred many a forgetful moment of pleasure with a quick rush of pain.

Even now, as he looked out into the still street, he fancied he could see Enid's mother smiling at him from a luminous mist.

He passed a hand over his eyes and gazed again at the moonlit roadway. From the black shadows opposite a policeman crossed towards the hotel, and he heard a bell ring. These trivial tidings restored his wandering thoughts. How the discovery of his lost child had brought back a flood of buried memories!

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"It is easy to understand that I should be fanciful tonight," he said, returning to the cheery glow of the fire and the brightness of the room. "The whole story of the disaster centered in the narratives of the sailors and the negro. They all declared that both boats went down. The crew of the barque, who ran to starboard, as the leading boat was swamped and sank on that side, imagined they heard cries to port. But though they lowered a boat, and cruised about the locality for hours, they found nothing but wreckage. You, Charlie, when I went to St. John's five weeks later, could only tell me that you had felt very cold and wet. That is all I ever knew of the fate of the *Esmeralda* until, in God's good time, I met Stanhope on board the *Falcon*."

"Then the manner of Enid's rescue is conjectural?"

"Absolutely. But Stanhope, who is a sailor, and two men named Spence and Jones, who were Brand's colleagues on the Gulf Rock at that time, have helped me in building up a complete theory. It is quite clear that the second boat did not sink, as was reported by the captain of the *John S.* She was damaged, and had her mast broken, by the collision. In the darkness and confusion she would be readily carried past the barque, which was probably traveling four knots an hour. The two sailors, in springing from her gunwale into the bob-stays, would certainly cant her considerable, and at that instant my poor wife either threw her child into the boat with a last frenzied effort, or someone caught the baby from her as she sank. The boat was seen by Brand floating in with the tide on the morning of the

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30th of July. She had been nine days at sea. Some survivor must have given the little one nourishment in that time, as a twelve-months-old child could not possibly have lived. In all likelihood, the bank of fog clung to the surface of the sea and followed the tides, as there was little or no wind on the days following the loss of the yacht. Again, there were provisions in the boat, but no water. Why? Either the water-casks had started their staves when the smash took place, or a careless steward had failed to fill them. The next thing is the identity of the boat. By the stupidity of a sailor, one of the *Esmeralda's* life-boats was burnt to the water's edge in Norway. He upset a tin of petroleum whilst he was opening it, and a lighted match did the remainder. Indeed, he and another man at the oars narrowly escaped death. A boat was purchased, but accident or mischance prevented the *Esmeralda's* name being painted on it. There was a Norwegian port number on the stern-board, and this was smashed away by the falling mast. As the sail was trailing in the water when the boat was found by Brand, it is assumed that the survivor or survivors, who paid some heed to the child, suffered from injuries which prevented him or them from hauling it in. One man's body was found on board and he had been dead many days. Finally, we have the evidence of the child's clothing."

"The girls told me something of the story on the rock," said Pyne. "Gee whiz! I little dreamed that Enid, or Edith, I mean, was my first cousin."

"You know that her garments were marked E. T.,

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and that a little shawl was pinned about her with a gold brooch set with emeralds arranged as a four-leaved shamrock?"

"No. I fancy that they were hindered in their yarn. Believe me, there was always enough to do in that wonderful place. Besides, I knew about the brooch. Had they mentioned it, I guess the gray matter at the back of my head would have become agitated by thought."

"Yes, of course. I am talking to you as if you were hearing this sad history for the first time."

"It is new enough. It has a fresh point of view, which is everything. Now, about that brooch?"

"I bought it in Bergen. I remember your poor father laughing about it. It was odd to find an Irish emblem in that out-of-the-way little town. I have not seen it yet, but it is ludicrous to think that so many coincidences can affect two different children cast adrift about the same time in open boats at the junction of the St. George's Channel and the North Atlantic."

"It's the kind of thing that doesn't occur with monotonous regularity," agreed Pyne. "By the way, I have just made an interesting discovery on my own account."

"What is it?"

"It might easily have happened that not Enid — sorry — I mean Edith — but I should have been the youngster cast adrift in that boat."

"Yes, that is so, of course."

"And I would have grown up as Constance's brother. Guess things have panned out all right as it is."

It was on the tip of his uncle's tongue to ask for some

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explanation of the very gratified tone in which Master Charles made this remark, but the head waiter entered, solemnly, with the air of respectful and discreet decorum which only an English family butler or a head waiter can assume without burlesque.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," he said, "but I thought you would like to know about the lady in No. 11, Mrs. Vansittart."

"Yes, what of her?" demanded Traill, whilst Pyne found himself imagining that which caused his heart to beat more rapidly than even the fight for life in the saloon of the *Chinook*.

"She went out, sir, about an hour ago, and —"

"Has she not returned?"

"No, sir. A policeman has just called to say that she was taken ill, and is now bein' cared for at Mr. Brand's house."

Uncle and nephew glared at each other as men do when they call the gods to witness that no madder words could be spoken. Before the waiter, they perforce restrained themselves.

But Pyne shouted:

"Where is the policeman?"

"He is down below, sir. Shall I bring him up?"

Sergeant Jenkins, however, was too loyal in his friendship to Brand to tell them exactly how it came about that Mrs. Vansittart was sheltered in Laburnum Cottage. He admitted that he directed the lady to the house in the first instance, and that Mr. Brand told him subsequently to convey the stated message to the hotel.