

"Come for our congratulations," thought Kitty. It was strange how cold her heart felt; but she put on a woman's armour, and had a smile all out and dried. Why not? Need she lose him as a friend because he was going to be married—because another had elected to take the place she had refused? But here common sense came in with her cold warning. "Nonsense! when he's married, adieu to his kindly offices; you have cast away a good chance for happiness."

He came in, shook hands with the elder lady, then with Kitty. Madame always had a smile and warm welcome for him. "You have been out riding?" she said.

"Yes; I met Lord Enniskeen and his daughter." Kitty got furiously red, and hated herself for it. Madame looked sharply at her.

And I called at the post office for my own letters, and brought some on for you, as you don't get afternoon post here."

"Because I love the man, not for the sake of his house."

"Well, well, 'tis hard to please you. He's as good as gold, and a gentleman, and though he hasn't ancestors—why, he has wit and sense, and a noble heart. But there is no use in crying over spilt milk; and spilt it is. I hear he's going to be married."

If Kitty was red before, she was white now. Her eyes fell before Madame's keen look. "Is he? Good luck to him!" she said in a very gay tone, which did not deceive Madame.

"So they say." Oh, Lord Enniskeen is a clever man! He knows what he was about when he asked Mr Raymond to the castle, and used to send him out riding with one of those red-haired clumsy girls; and they say he's taking the eldest. She hasn't a penny, and she's thirty-five, if she's a day!

It was a fine day, and the sun came strongly in—perhaps that was the reason why Kitty turned away from the window; perhaps it was because at that very moment Mr Raymond was seen riding up to the door.

"Thank you, thank you," said Madame; but Kitty was silent; she expected no letters, yet there was one for her—one that George Raymond handed her.

With a little cry she opened the envelope. "Desmond," she said. "He's alive and well—alive and well!"

The letter was from America; and it was the key to the mystery of Desmond's disappearance. It told how he had come upon the dead body of Jemmy Sullivan when returning from shooting. He had seen or guessed that a gunshot wound had caused his death; and as the weapon was not to be seen, he at once feared that others might think him guilty of the man's death. Hastening home unseen, he had, in an agony of terror, replaced his own gun in its usual corner, and taking the security store of money in his possession, had left his home. He had managed to escape any special notice, and reached Liverpool; there he heard that suspicion had attached to him, and that the coroner's verdict—an open one—would not render him safe. He took a berth in an ocean-bound steamer, and had had a good passage to New York. While there

he had read in an Irish paper the circumstance of the finding of the gun, and, of course, he saw that James Sullivan's death was thus accounted for. He was going "up country," and gave only a sketchy plan of his possible future.

"Tell my father," he wrote—he did not know that the summer leaves were waving over the old man's grave in the churchyard.

Kitty stole out of the room to read her letter—to cry over it, too. Desmond was alive, to be sure, but was lost to her. America seemed almost another world. She wandered down the garden-paths sadly enough. Relief and pain mingled in her heart.

"I am a fool to cry when I know Desmond is alive," she said to herself; but still her tears fell heavily. The picture seemed very gloomy. To be sure she had a home, and Madame was very good and kind, but the dear old home, and the careless, happy days of the past came back to her painfully.

A step on the gravel. She dried her eyes and turned round, with a smile on her lips that was rather uncertain and tremulous. "Did not I bring you good news?" It was Mr. Raymond; his face was lit up with a pleasant smile.

"Very good; I am very happy." He looked down at her, perhaps thinking that she did not speak the truth.

"I am happy too," he said, "and very glad that I should have been the one to bring it to you."

She was silent, and he said, "I came about something else."

"Now is the time to congratulate him," she thought, and with a desperate effort she said, "To tell me some news, I suppose?"

"Well, perhaps. Can you guess it?" "I think I can—that you are going to be married"; and to an ugly old painted creature, too, she thought, but she wisely did not say it.

"Well, yes—I hope so—"

"I hope you will be happy, very happy." She managed to look bravely up, and there were no tears in her bright eyes. This time she was speaking the truth.

"If I marry I shall be," he said. "And when is it to be?" What could he mean by that "If"?

"You can answer that question. Come Kitty, best and sweetest Kitty, you know you're the only creature in the world I ever loved, the only one I'd marry. Don't send me away this time."

Madame waited awhile that summer's day all alone. "If he asks her now, will she refuse him again? I think not. The little goose likes him better than she thinks."

When Kitty came in, Madame's doubts and fears were set at rest. He has gone," said the girl, "but he's to come here to-morrow, and—"

"You needn't tell me another word," said Madame. "Bless you, child, anyone with half an eye could see what he had come for."

So you see, after all, that Kitty was to come back to Ballybrophy, and to reign there as mistress.

(The End.)

Copyright Story.

THE DERELICT.

By ALEC G. PEARSON
(Author of "The Phantom Destroyer," etc.)

It was on the fourteenth day out from Wellington, New Zealand, when we were about one hundred and eighty miles to the southward of Cape Horn that we fell in with the derelict ship.

She was rolling lazily in the trough of the sea, a battered, disreputable looking hulk, time-worn and weather-beaten. A craft of an old-fashioned type with square stern and bluff bows, she looked as though she had been afloat for half a century at least.

Her name, still faintly to be read on the scarred timbers of her stern, was the "Resolution." That is all we learnt about her from personal observation; for the fact that her hold was half full of water and her cabin smelt of many dead things, precluded the possibility of a thorough examination.

But on board of her we discovered the human derelict. He was lying in a heap, in the galley on the upper deck, and at first we thought it was a mere bundle of furs and clothing. A closer scrutiny, however, revealed the fact that within the bundle was a man. There was a flicker of life in him no more.

As tenderly as we possibly could we carried him to the gangway and lowered him into the boat. He presented a strangely pitiful appearance, and was even more of a wreck than the ship. Clad in an indescribable garment, made up of ragged furs, and odds and ends of the rough clothing usually worn by whalemen, lean and wrinkled, with long and matted hair and beard, he was a veritable scarecrow, the mere apparition of a man. His eyes were wide open, but he did not appear to be conscious of anybody's presence.

As soon as we got back to our vessel we handed him over to the care of the doctor, who seemed to think he was rather a hopeless case.

"Pull him round if you can," said the skipper. "I should like to hear how it came that he was drifting about alone in that old hulk; which by the way," he added, gazing thoughtfully towards the derelict, "is a danger to navigation."

"She won't float many hours longer," said the mate, who had been in charge of the boat that visited her; "in fact I was half afraid she would go down by the run while we were aboard of her."

"In that case," observed the skipper, as he jammed the engine room telegraph down to full speed ahead, "I will let her slide."

There was only one other passenger on board the Patagonia beside myself—a colonial named Holroyd—and as we were bound direct to Rio Janeiro, calling at no intermediate port, the voyage seemed likely to prove a rather uninteresting one. Not but what Holroyd was a pleasant companion, and we got on very well together, but I think we both hailed with satisfaction the doctor's announcement a couple of days later, that his patient was sufficiently recovered to come and spend an hour with us in the saloon.

We half led, half carried him from his berth, and sat him down on the after lockers. He blinked his eyes in the lamplight, and gazed round at us with a sort of bewildered expression.

"He hasn't spoken a word yet," whispered the doctor; "and I didn't encourage him to do so, for I wanted him to keep his strength until the right moment arrived. But we must have his story to-night, if we are to hear it at all. I shan't be able to keep him alive another twenty-four hours—"

—he is all to pieces."

"But surely, as he has improved so much," I said, "there is some hope of his entire recovery."

"None," replied the doctor. "It is merely the last flicker of the dying candle; that is all."

Holroyd was sitting by his side endeavouring to get him to say something.

"Are you a countryman of ours," he asked. "An Englishman?"

A gleam of intelligence came into the poor fellow's eyes, and he nodded his head twice.

"That is all right," continued Holroyd. "Now try and recall some incident of your life. We want to know who you are."

The stranger looked from one to the other of us with an expression that was pitiful in his eager longing to give utterance to some half formed ideas. Memory and thought were evidently quickening to life again in his brain.

"Can you tell us your name?"

"My name," he said, speaking slowly and with difficulty, like a child learning to talk, "is—James—Wilson."

"James Wilson," replied Holroyd.

"Go on, old fellow, but think slowly."

There was a pause of expectancy while the human derelict sat motionless, gazing into vacancy. Then suddenly he turned to me and asked:

"What year—is this?"

"I told him.

"I thought perhaps it was—a frightful dream," he muttered. "But it was reality. Six years—my God—six years!"

He stopped abruptly and covered his face with his hands. Holroyd poured out a glass of wine and gave it to him.

"Drink this, old fellow," he said, "and then try and tell us what has happened to you."

The wine seemed to do him good, and he brightened up a bit.

"On the 20th December—six years ago," he said, "we sailed from Adelaide in the Enterprise on an exploring expedition in the Antarctic regions. The captain's name was—Cleveland."

"I remember it," I exclaimed. "I was in Adelaide when the vessel sailed."

The derelict fixed his lustreless eyes on me and said, "I was chief officer of the Enterprise."

"Good God!" exclaimed Holroyd.

"But neither the Enterprise nor any member of the expedition was ever heard of again," put in the doctor. "What has become of them?"

"I will tell you all I know," he said. "Let me think."

We gave him a little more wine and propped him up more comfortably with some pillows. Then, with many gasps and pauses, and with some help from us when he was fishing for words with which to express himself, he told us the following remarkable story:

"After leaving Adelaide we steered for Kerguelen Island, which we reached on the 17th of January. Here we landed some seal fishers and their stores, and proceeded on our voyage next day.

"On the 23rd of the month we made out some high land on the starboard bow. Our observations showed us that we were in 67deg 30sec S., and I think 60deg E., so it must have been Kemp Land, which was partially explored by Biscoe, in 1833, and since then I believe has never been visited. There was open water before us and we coasted along this desolate shore, steering S. by E., for one hundred and eighty miles. The sea in that region had never before been known to be so clear of ice.

"The line of coast terminated in a bold headland, and then trended sharply to the west. We were unable to follow it, however, on account of the quantity of summer ice that had formed in that particular direction. As there was land visible to the south, and also the summits of a chain of mountains just showing above the horizon to the west, it is probable that we were skirting the mouth of a vast inlet.

"The water, however, was clear to the southward, so we pushed on, with the land always visible on our starboard side, until on the 3rd of March we got in among a lot of drift ice. Through this we attempted to force our way, but we made scarcely any progress, and three days later we were beset in the pack. It was with the greatest difficulty that we managed to warp our ship into a small inlet, which Cleveland determined to make his winter quarters. We were then in 75deg S. and 64deg 30min E.

"As soon as the ship was safely moored we started to explore this desolate land, which no living man had ever yet set foot upon, or even seen. It was a wild and inhospitable country with little sign of vegetation, and none

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