after the old place—it'll be yours, you know, every stick and stone!"

Then I got away as soon as I could. Gilbert was by way of becoming incoherent, and, as far as I was concerned, there was nothing more to be said.

CHAPTER XX.

I LOCKED the door of my state room and seated myself upon the edge of the lower bunk with a little sigh of relief. The slow pounding of the engines had begun—the pulse of the great liner was beating, and through the port hole I could see the docks, with their line of people, gliding past us. We were well out in the Mersey already.

"We're off, Guest!" I exclaimed, "and off safely too, I think. Chuck that now, there's a good fellow."

Guest was engaged in emptying the contents of one of my bags. He turned slowly round and faced me, with a pair of my trousers upon his arm.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," he answered calmly. "I am here as your servant, Courage, and your servant I intend to remain. We can't hope to keep the thing up on the other side, if we are all the time drifting back to our old relations. I wish I could make you understand this."

I opened the port hole as far as it would go and lit a cigarette. "That's all very well," I said; "but I don't see any need to keep the farce up in private, and I'm sure I can unpack my own things a thundering sight better than you can."

"Very likely," he answered; "but you certainly won't do it. Can't you understand that, unless we grow into our parts, they will never come naturally to us. Besides, we may be watched. You cannot tell."

"The door is locked," I remarked dryly.

"For the moment, no doubt, we are all right," Guest answered; "but you won't be able to lock it often on the voyage. Remember that we are up against a system with a thousand eyes and a thousand ears. It's no good running risks. I am Peters your man, and Peters I mean to be."

"Do you purpose," I asked, "to have your meals in the servants' saloon?"

"Most certainly I do!" was the curt answer. "I expect to make acquaintances there who will be most useful. Did you get the passengers' list?"

I drew it from my pocket. Guest came and looked over my shoulder. Half way down the list he pointed to a name.

"Mr. de Valentin and valet!" he murmured. "That is our friend. I recognize the name. He has used it before. Now, let us see."

Again his forefinger traveled down the list—again it paused. "Ah!" he said, "there is a lady whose acquaintance you must contrive to make."

"One of the court?" I asked.

He nodded. "There are others, of course; but I do not recognize their names. They will sort themselves up naturally enough. Now unlock that door, and go up on deck. The stewards will be in directly for orders."

I rose and stretched out my hand toward the door. Suddenly, from outside, an unexpected sound almost paralyzed me—the sharp, shrill yapping of a small dog. I felt the color leave my cheeks.

Guest looked at me in amazement. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "You are not frightened of a toy terrier, are you?"

I opened the door. Of course, my sudden fear had been absurd. I peered out into the passage, and a little exclamation broke from my lips. Sitting on his haunches just outside, his mouth open, his long red tongue hanging out, was a small Japanese spaniel. There may have been thousands of others in the world; but that one I was very sure from the first, that I recognized, and I was equally sure that he recognized me. I stared at him fascinated. His bead like black eyes blinked and blinked again, and his teeth, like a row of ivory needles, gleamed white from his red gums. He neither growled nor wagged his tail; but it seemed to me that the expression of his aged, puckered little face was the incarnation of malevolence. I pointed to him, and whispered hoarsely to Guest:

"Her dog!"

"Whose?" he asked sharply.

"Miss Van Hoyt's!" I answered.

"Rubbish!" he declared. "There are hundreds of dogs like that."

I shook my head. "Never another in the wide world," I said. "Look how the little brute is scowling at me."

The bed room steward came round the corner at that moment. I pointed to the dog.

"I always understood that dogs were not permitted in the state rooms, steward," I remarked.

"They are not, sir," the man answered promptly. "The young lady to whom this one belongs has a special permission; but he is not allowed to be out alone. He must have run away."

There was the sound of rustling of petticoats. A young woman in black came hurrying down the passage. She caught up the dog without a word, and hastened away.

"At what time would you like to be called, sir?" the man asked.

"Send me the bath room steward, and I will let you know," I answered, stepping back into the state room.

"He'll be round in a few minutes, sir," the man answered, and passed on.

Guest leaned toward me. His eyes were bright and alert, and his manner was perfectly composed. He was more used to such crises than I was. He asked no question; he waited for me to speak.

"It was her maid!" I exclaimed. "I was sure of the dog."

"Miss Van Hoyt's?"

"Yes."

He caught up the passengers' list. There was no such name there.

"If it is she," he said quietly, "she is here to watch you. It proves nothing else. I shall be seasick all the way over, and at New York we must part. Go to the purser's office and find out, Courage. There is no reason why you shouldn't. You are interested, of course?"

I nodded and left the state room; but I had no need to visit the purser. I met her face to face coming out of the saloon. If appearances were in anyway to be trusted, the meeting was as much a shock to her as to me. She was wearing a thick veil, which partially obscured her features; but I saw her stop short and clutch at a pillar as though for support, as she recognized me. If the amazement in her tone was counterfeited, she was indeed an actress.

"You?" she exclaimed. "Where are you going?"

"America, I hope," I answered. "And you? I did not see your name on the passengers' list."

"I am going home," she answered. "I made up my mind at the last moment to come on this steamer, to cross with my stepmother."

I did not like the way she said it. It was too apt, a little too mechanical. And yet I could not get it out of my head that her surprise was natural.

A little fair woman, wearing a magnificent fur cloak, and with an eyeglass dangling at her bosom, suddenly bore down upon us. "Adele!" she exclaimed, "have you seen my woman? I've forgotten the number of my state room."

She Clung to Me for One Long Delicious Moment.

"It is opposite mine," Adèle answered. "I can show it to you."

They passed on together. The fair little woman had favored me with a very perfunctory and somewhat insolent glance: Adèle herself left me without a word. I went into the saloon, took my place for dinner, and then sought the deck for some fresh air. I felt that I needed it.

A slight drizzling rain was falling, but I took no notice of it. I walked backward and forward along the promenade deck, my pipe in my mouth, my hands clasped behind me. The appearance of Adèle had been so utterly unexpected that I felt myself almost unnerved. For six days we should be living in the close intimacy which fellow passengers upon a steamer find it most difficult to avoid. Our opportunities for conversation would be practically unlimited. If indeed Guest's suspicions as to the reason of her presence here were well founded, a single slip on my part might mean disaster.

And yet, beneath it all, I knew quite well that her near presence was a delight to me. My blood was running more warmly, my heart was the lighter, for the thought of her near presence. Danger might come of it, the success of our undertaking itself might be imperiled; yet I was glad. I leaned over the vessel's side, and gazed through the gathering twilight at the fast receding shores, with their maze of yellow lights.

Life had changed for me during the last few weeks. The old placid days of content were over; already I was in a new world, a world of bigger things, where the great game was being played, with the tense desperateness of those who gamble with life and death. I had not sought the change. Rather it had been forced upon me. I had no ambitions to gratify; the old life had pleased me very well. I had quitted it simply upon compulsion. And here I was with unfamiliar thoughts in my brain, groping my way along paths which were strange to me, face to face now with the greatest happening which Heaven or Hades can let loose upon a man. It was a queer trick this, which fortune had played me.

After all we are very human. The dressing bugle brought me back to the present, and I remembered that I was hungry. I descended to my state room, and found all my things laid out, and Guest sitting on the opposite bunk regarding them critically.

"You shouldn't have bothered about my clothes, Guest," I protested.

"Nonsense!" he answered curtly. "I can't play the part without a few rehearsals. What about Miss Van Hoyt?"

"She is on board," I answered.

"You have spoken to her?"

"Yes."

"Did she offer any explanations as to her presence?"

"She appeared to be surprised to see me," I answered. "She said that she was going home."

Guest nodded thoughtfully. "Her father is immensely rich," he remarked; "I don't suppose you knew that."

"I did not," I admitted. "I wish you would tell me all that you know of Miss Van Hoyt."

"Thereby meaning Miss Adèle Van Reinberg," put in Guest; "for she is the oldest child of Hoyt Van Reinberg, and much as you are frequently called Jim by those who know your full name, so she came to be called Adèle Van Hoyt to distinguish her from the present Mrs. Van Reinberg's daughters. This twisted name has served her purposes on the Continent, by concealing her relationship to the rich American, and at home she is even better known by this *nom de guerre* than by her real name. But there's no time to tell you more now. You will be late for dinner as it is."

CHAPTER XXI.

I FOUND that a place had been allotted to me about half way down the Captain's table, on the right hand side. My immediate neighbors were an Englishman, on his way to the States to buy some commodity in which he dealt, and a very old woman, quite deaf, in charge of a spinster daughter. Neither of them imposed upon me the necessity for conversation. I had, therefore, plenty of time to look around me and take note of the people in whom I was interested.

They were all seated together at a small table in the far corner of the saloon. At the head of that table was a man whom I had not yet seen, but whom I at once knew to be de Valentin. He was tall, rather sallow, with a pointed black beard, and he wore continually an eyeglass, set in a horn rim, with a narrow black ribbon. On his right was the woman to whom Adèle had spoken upon the stairs. She wore a plain but elegant dinner gown of some dark material. She was exquisitely coiffured, and obviously turned out by a perfectly trained maid. There were two girls at the table, whom I judged to be her daughters, and Adèle.

Adèle was seated so that I could see only her profile. I noticed however, that she seemed to be eating little, and to be taking a small part in the conversation. Once or twice she leaned back in her chair, and looked round the saloon as though in search of some one. On the last of these occasions our eyes met, and she smiled slightly. Mrs. Van Reinberg who was sitting opposite to her, leaned forward and asked some question. I judged that it concerned me, for immediately afterward that woman herself raised her gold eye glass and favored me with a somewhat deliberate stare. Then she leaned forward again and made some remark to Adèle, the purport of which I could not guess.

Dinner lasted a long time; but I was all the while interested. I was facing Adèle and her friends; so I could observe them all the time without being myself conspicuous. I was able to take note of the somewhat wearied graciousness of de Valentin, who seemed always to be struggling with a profound boredom; the almost feverish amiability of Mrs. Van Reinberg, and, in a lesser degree, her daughters; and the undoubted reserve with which Adèle seemed to protect herself from de Valentin's attentions. When at last they rose and left the saloon, I quickly followed their example.

I put on an ulster, lit a cigar, and went up on deck. I found my chair on the sheltered side of the ship, and, wrapping myself in a rug, prepared to spend a comfortable half hour. But I had scarcely settled down before a little group of people came along the deck and halted close to me. A smooth faced man servant, laden with a pile of magnificent rugs, struck a match and began to examine the labels on the chairs. Its thickening light was apparently sufficient for Adèle to recognize my features.

"So you are going to join the fresh air brigade, Mr. Courage," she remarked. "I think you are very wise. We found the music room insufferable."

"I can assure you that the smoke room is worse, Miss Van Hoyt," I answered, struggling to my feet. "May I find your chair for you?"

"Thanks, the deck steward is bringing it," she answered. "Let me introduce you to my friends: Mrs. Van Reinberg (my stepmother), Miss Van Reinberg, Miss Sara Van Reinberg, Mr. de Valentin—Mr. Hardross Courage."

I bowed collectively. De Valentin greeted me stiffly. Mrs. Van Reinberg and the Misses Van

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