

THE WHEEL O' FORTUNE

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Drawing by James Montgomery Flagg

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

RICHARD ROYSON, a young well educated English gentleman, who was an athlete of tremendous strength, while in London saved the lives of Baron Franz von Kerber, an Austrian, and Miss Irene Fenshawe in a carriage accident, and was given the position of second mate of the Aphrodite, a yacht belonging to Hiram Fenshawe, Irene's grandfather, which was to sail to an Italian possession in Northern Africa in search of treasure buried by an ancient Roman expedition. He saved the Baron's life at Marseilles, the day before the final departure, when a furious attack was made by a gang led by an Italian named Alfieri. The latter, however, stole a valuable parchment from von Kerber. Irene, thinking her grandfather had been deceived as to the legitimacy of the expedition, confessed to Dick that the latter was the only one she had confidence in. At Massawa, Royson received letters from Forbes, the solicitor of his uncle, a wealthy Baronet, stating that the Aphrodite expedition was a piratical scheme, in which Fenshawe was used as a dupe. Fenshawe and von Kerber were arrested at Massawa on the charge of conducting an illegitimate enterprise; but the former was soon released. Irene, mistaken for Mrs. Haxton, was forced into a carriage by a lot of Arabs and driven off at a gallop. Dick, guided by Abdullah, an Arab friend of Mrs. Haxton's, who thought that Mrs. Haxton was the victim of the kidnapers, after a sensational encounter with the gang of villains, rescued Irene.

CHAPTER IX.

The Calm Before the Storm



But the next encounter of Irene and Dick with the Spear Thrower was destined to take place under strange conditions. His present intent was to slip away and seek an interview with Mrs. Haxton, as he had managed to worm out the information that she was on board the yacht. The last thing he desired was to be dragged into prominence. Though he had not been taught that a man might "do good by stealth and blush to find it fame," he was specially anxious that his action of that night should not be trumpeted forth in every ear.

Long before they gained the main thoroughfare, both Royson and Irene were conscious of many prying eyes. Not a few passersby yielded frankly to curiosity and followed them. The girl, of course, was hatless. Her dress of fine muslin was of a style and texture seldom seen in Massawa, and if the rare beauty of her face could excite comment in Hyde Park, it would surely not pass unnoticed in a small and semibarbarous Red Sea port. Royson, too, though his white drill uniform was familiar enough to the public, was out of keeping with his surroundings. He towered among the puny Italians; not a stalwart negro nor gaunt Arab in the throng could equal him in stature and physique.

So they both agreed in thinking that they were much more at ease when Moti was carrying them along the dark road of the mainland than now while hurrying through the packed and dimly lighted streets. But the sensation they created in the bazaar was as nothing compared with the overwhelming effect of their arrival in the Grand Hotel of the Universe. Two officers and a round dozen of soldier policemen became incoherent at sight of them. The hotel manager nearly wept with joy. He tumbled up stairs, tripping not once but several times, in his eagerness to make known to the English milord that the Signorina Fenshawe had returned. The vestibule filled in the most amazing way with a crowd that seemed to speak all languages under the sun. Fenshawe rushed to the head of the stairs as soon as he grasped the meaning of the manager's dramatic announcement, and a combined "Ah!" of gratification gushed from a hundred throats when Irene flung herself into his arms. Clearly this affair had stirred Massawa to its depths. It would supply food for gossip during many a day. That long drawn out "Ah!" was in some sense a testimony to Abdullah's wisdom.

While Irene was sobbing her joy on her grandfather's breast, Stump crushed a broad track through the ever increasing mob until he reached Royson.

"I was bettin' on you from the minute I missed you," he roared genially. "You're a fair wonder, an' no mistake! By Gad! how did you manage it? The Governor has raised the whole crimson town, I will say that for him. I don't know his lingo; but I rather fancy he swore to have a scalp for every hair on Miss Irene's head if she didn't turn up afore daylight. Where was she? Who took her off? The police are

huntin' for your friend Alfie this hour an' more." Stump's concluding item was at once gratifying and puzzling.

"How did they come to suspect him?" asked Dick, ignoring the rest of his commander's outburst.

"Mrs. Haxton put 'em on his track. You see, it was this way: I sent the jolly boat's crew back to the yacht with orders that Tagg was to arm every mother's son on board, an' be ready for action when Mr. Fenshawe gev' the word. The old man wasn't half mad, I can tell you. I take my solemn davy he'd have stormed that bloomin' fort to-morrow mornin'. Mrs. Haxton heard about the trouble, an' wrote a note sayin' as how that Dago we saw to-day was at the bottom of the whole business. She tole Mr. Fenshawe to demand von Kerber's release. He was the on'y man who could handle Alfie, she said, an', w'at between our commodore's threat to land an armed force, an' the redhot cables he's been sendin' to London an' Rome, sink me if the Governor isn't scared to death!"

"Is the Baron at liberty, then?"

"Not yet. There's no knowin' w'at might have happened if you'd kep' away another hour or two. The ole man has raised Cain, I can tell you. But, look here, I'm doin' all the talkin', an' it ain't fair."

"Did no one tell you a few minutes ago that Miss Fenshawe had escaped and was hurrying here with me?"

"Ax me another," growled Stump. Then he eyed Royson critically. "I know w'at's wrong with you," he went on. "You're light headed for want of a drink. Come out of it. Damme! you need lubricatin'!"

They went to the upper floor, and Fenshawe hurried to grasp Dick's hand.

"I will not endeavor to thank you now," he said brokenly. "My gratitude is too deep for words; but, believe me, Mr. Royson, if I had lost my little girl, it would have killed me."

The hotel manager came to Dick's relief. With a

face all wrinkled in a satisfied grin, he informed them that dinner was served. The poor man had been waiting for two hours to make that announcement, and Irene's gleeful appreciation of this low comedy close to the night's adventures showed that she was little the worse either in health or spirits. She would not hear of a doctor being summoned. She assured her grandfather that soreness of lips and wrists would not impair her appetite; but she hoped that the dinner would not be utterly spoiled if it was delayed two minutes longer—she had actually forgotten to bring forward the Arab who had helped Royson to rescue her!

Yet, search as they might, El Jaridiah was not to be found. None knew him, nor had any news of the girl's safety been received until she was seen in the vestibule. Though mystified, they were far too excited to pay special heed to the circumstance at the time. Both Irene and Royson believed that the man was detained by some slight difficulty with regard to the horses, one of which, they knew, was borrowed. They said that surely he would come to the hotel ere the dinner was ended. But he came not.

The only interruption to a lively meal was supplied by the Governor, who showed very proper official horror when he heard the story of Irene's abduction and saw the evidences of the rough usage to which she had been subjected. He was so urbane and apologetic, and promised such impartial punishment both for the persons who inspired the outrage and for those who actually carried it out, that Fenshawe deferred to the morrow the stern protest he meant to register against von Kerber's detention. It was quite true, as Stump told Royson, that strongly worded cablesgrams were despatched to London and Rome earlier in the evening. Diplomatic representations would certainly be made in both capitals, and the yacht owner felt that the local authorities would now leave matters entirely to the Italian Colonial Minister.

So a truce was proclaimed. Before he left them, the Governor drank to Miss Fenshawe's health in the best champagne that the Grand Hotel of the Universe could produce.

The four people rose from their belated meal at half-past ten. A sailor came from the Aphrodite in response to a message sent by Stump announcing Miss Fenshawe's return. The jolly boat was waiting to take them on board, he said, and they walked to the jetty, escorted by the whole body of police who had mounted guard at the hotel.

The long pull across the starlit waters of the harbor was peculiarly refreshing and restful after the thrilling events of the day. Irene said with a laugh that it was almost worth while being kidnapped for the sake of becoming a heroine, and Fenshawe yielded to the soothing influence of the hour in expressing the opinion that he expected to hear of the Baron's unconditional release early next day.

"By the way," said the girl, speaking to the boatswain, "how was Mrs. Haxton when you left the yacht?"

"She was all right, miss, when I saw her about nine o'clock. She was just gonn' ashore—"

"Going ashore!" For the life of her, Irene could



"She Is a Thief Self Confessed!" Cried Alfieri.