

davits on the weather bow! Look sharp, lads! Stand by the tackles and ease her off! Take charge, Mr. Beasley! Let her go!"

Four seamen with the first mate sprang into their places. The small boat bearing the Spitfire's name swung free of its davits and descended with a gentle flop into the sea, while the yacht, freed of her master power, rolled easily in the trough of caressing waves.

"Where is he?" cried Polly, endangering her own young life in scrambling to a point of better observation on the rail. "Oh, there he is! Look! Look!"

"What is he doing?" wailed Aunt Mary, still holding her hands before her eyes, yet perishing with human curiosity.

Now there was no doubt whatever as to what Jonah was doing; for he was in full view, and his actions spoke for themselves. With one powerful hand he was keeping himself afloat, and with the other was engaged in shooting at the tugboat with a heavy but wet revolver, while his mocking persecutors desisted suddenly in their coarse laughter and dived for the engine room. "Things," as Polly expressed it tritely, "were happening."

"He sees us!" she cried. "He sees us!" Then, as the small boat neared him, the three women huddled together and called out hysterically, sometimes singly and at others in shrill concert, "Hurry, men! Row as fast as ever you can! They've got him! They're taking him in! Oh, I'm so glad!" the women shouted, with other inane and idiotic observations which are usually in vogue when a person is being rescued.

As the triumphant boat came bobbing back, there fell a silence of expectancy; and yet not quite, for behind the smokestack Ormond and Tracy were engaged in an earnest, low toned argument.

"But it can't make any difference," claimed Tracy. "We pick up a strange man, and—"

"Well, it can make a difference!" the other whispered hotly. "I don't know—I'm worried about Martin. He ought to have been more careful. If—"

"Nonsense, Jim! Why—"

"For Heaven's sake don't call me Jim! If only you had brains enough to—"

But here the interesting conversation ended abruptly as the rescuing boat grated along the yacht's side and the sympathetic women called to those below:

"Is he all right, Mr. Beasley? Is he conscious?" The answer came in the form of a ringing, full throated laugh, and a further verbal assurance expressed in a musically deep voice, "Sound as a trivet, thank you. I'll be up in a minute to prove it in person."

So the women waited. "Stand by for the painter!" called Captain Joe from the bridge. "Cleat it, you lubbers! Hold her fast!"

Whatever these directions meant, the seamen executed them with willingness and despatch, and in a moment more Jonah ran nimbly up the ladder and stood on deck.

HE was a man of perhaps twenty-six years, tanned to a healthy brown, and standing a good six feet in his sopping shoes. He was hatless, coatless. His outing shirt, torn literally to ribbons by his friends of the tugboat, disclosed a view of deep, wide chest and shoulders, while his sinewy arms swung easily at his narrow hips. His head was poised much as Valda's was,—carelessly, but with power,—and the face was one which any woman would remember. It was fresh and fearless, pleasing in every line, from the steady gray eyes to the firm square chin which was marked with a heavy crease. It was a handsome face, and besides it wore a dash of impishness, as though its owner found a modicum of humor even in being drowned.

So the women gave him a smile of welcome. Yes, they did; for show us a woman, of any age or of any clime, that does not appreciate the goodly figure of a man! Therefore the women smiled upon Jonah, and were glad he came.

If the women were pleased, however, one man was not. He peered from behind the smokestack, grew slightly pale, and whispered hoarsely:

"Blazes! Do you know who that is?"

"Who?"

"It's Brown!"

"Brown? What Brown?"

"Why, him,—the chap that—"

"Keep your blamed mouth shut!" enjoined Ormond for the second time, and Tracy, who was in the very act of opening it again, wisely obeyed instructions. The Captain was looking in their direction, and the newest newcomer on the Spitfire was speaking to the women:

"I beg to apologize, ladies, both for my rumpled and moist condition and this somewhat unconventional manner of intrusion. Might I ask where I am?"

"You certainly may," said Valda, smiling cordially. "This is the private yacht Spitfire, and I am the owner's daughter, Miss Girard."

"Delighted, Miss Girard, believe me," he answered, with a bow. "My name is Bruce Morson, of Virginia."

Valda acknowledged the informal introduction; then, as she knew the others were burning for information, she asked how he chanced to be thrown from the passing tug.

Morson laughed. "Do you know," he began, "it

is rather a serious matter, and is saved only by—well, by a sense of humor. I am on a business trip, and was most anxious to catch this evening's steamer from Calais. I missed the midday boat at Dover, and engaged that tug to ferry me across the Channel. Paid a hundred dollars, and foolishly gave it in advance. A while ago that shark of a Captain doubled his price. Naturally I refused to be swindled a second time. The argument became spirited. The result you witnessed. It was ridiculous, but inevitable."

"I think it was an outrageous shame!" declared Aunt Mary, without even being introduced to the handsome victim.

"Thank you, madam," he returned, with the utmost deference to her age and commonsense. "I agree with you most heartily."

AT this moment, to the utter astonishment of everyone, Ormond strolled up as if nothing had happened and took part with amazing coolness in the conversation.

"Quite a remarkable experience," he observed. "What do you intend doing now?"

"I am," declared the young man suavely, with a graceful wave of his hand toward the women, "at the mercy of the angels. Whither are you bound, and when do you expect to get there?"

"New York," Ormond informed him. "We hope to make it by the twentieth."

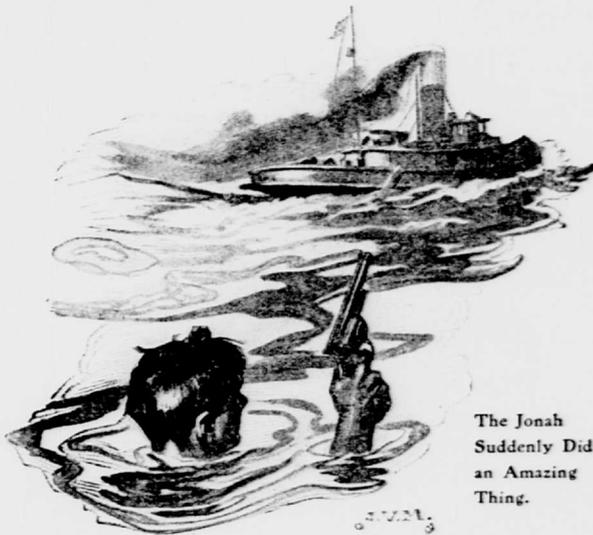
"Bully!" exclaimed Morson, forgetting himself in his evident satisfaction. "That suits me exactly, if you'll take me as a passenger. I'm in a position to pay in wet bills; or," he paused slightly,—or I am perfectly willing to work my passage."

Here Valda cut in on her own account. "Neither, I think, will be necessary, Mr. Morson." She checked his thanks, and proceeded, with an icy formality in her tones, "Allow me to present you to Mr. Ormond, who was, until a few moments ago, in charge of my father's yacht."

Ormond ignored this pointed reference to his fall from official grace, shook hands cordially, and expressed himself as being greatly pleased in being of service to a castaway. "And now," he said, by way of dismissing the matter finally, "I suggest that one of the seamen find you a dry costume."

This, no doubt, was meant in kindness; but, in view of his inexplicable conduct in refusing to pick up a drowning man, Valda was disposed to place a different construction on his present attitude.

"Mr. Ormond," she said, "I hardly think the costume of a sailor will suit Mr. Morson at all." She turned to the mate beside her and issued an order



The Jonah Suddenly Did an Amazing Thing.

which later bore strange fruit: "Mr. Beasley, you will kindly take this gentleman to your own cabin and fit him out as best you can."

Morson stepped back a pace, in sheer astonishment, then smiled and inclined his head. "Miss Girard," he answered, in low toned earnestness, "there are no words in which a gentleman may express his appreciation of your courtesy."

"My father," she returned, with a sidelong glance of contempt at Ormond, "is always glad to welcome gentlemen as his guests."

Ormond shrugged and turned away. There was more in the matter than he could explain in the presence of the newcomer; so he bore the lash in silence, reserving his vindication for a future time.

As for the castaway, he did not try to answer his generous hostess; but he made her a sweeping bow. It was the kind of bow in which men of the South pay tribute to gentlewomen of their own people,—a courtly-bow, loaded to the throat with deference, yet in it there was not one single vestige of humility.

Valda remembered that bow afterward. She tried to forget it; but she failed.

#### IV. Ormond's Seesaw Rise to Grace

AS may have been noted, the coming of Bruce Morson affected the various members of the yacht's party in varying ways, according to his or her separate and distinctive point of view. Ormond and Tracy were clearly troubled; but that was their own affair, which could be rebutted later

on. Captain Joe received the castaway with open arms, if for no other reason than that his advent tended to nip the authority of Ormond. Valda was serenely contented with herself at being instrumental in saving a human life; and, if this human life chanced to be a young and extremely good looking one, she, of course, was in nowise to blame. She had no hand whatever in the selection.

Aunt Mary was politely, placidly, perfectly, pleased. "My dear," she observed to Valda, "I approve of that young man. His name is a good one. I happen to know, personally, that both the Bruces and the Morsons are most delightful and aristocratic families. I am very glad indeed, my child, that you declined to have him dressed as a common sailor."

"I had my reasons, Aunt Mary," said Valda, with a grim expression about her mouth, "and I wanted Mr. Ormond to understand my reasons."

"I should think so!" exclaimed Polly, in a mixture of approval and indignation. "The idea of Mr. Ormond not wanting to stop and save a drowning man! It was simply horrid! Besides, I call it luck to pick up a young fellow like that, and right out of the sea too! Oh, goody!"

This last young woman took a more material view of the day's occurrences than anyone else on board. That an otherwise uneventful ocean trip should be miraculously transformed by the arrival of three separate pairs of trousers was, to put it mildly, a special dispensation of Providence, seeming to her optimistic soul like manna distributed to the desert bound, hungry little children of Israel. Three men! All in a bunch! Yea, truly a miracle!—that is to say, a miracle with limitations. Polly interpreted in this wise:

"Of course, it's hardly fair to count Mr. Tracy, because he isn't one bit attractive, and has a look of unhappiness that makes me think he is married and has been for a very, very, long time. Anyhow, he is a man! Mr. Ormond is much better. He is quite handsome,—side face,—but is too well along in years to be of any great conversational value. But as for the new one,—the white toothed, Grecian nosed, straight legged one, with darling little wet curls nestling all over his beautiful head—oh, Lord!" Obviously, Polly Thurman was impressed. "And a person," she declared, with rising warmth, "who would think for a quarter of a half a second of leaving a Romeo Adonis like that right out in the middle of the cold water—"

SSH!" cautioned Valda, as the person under adverse criticism came toward them from Girard's cabin, followed by the unhappily married Tracy.

"Pardon me, Miss Girard," said the gray haired possibility; "but may we have a word with you—my secretary and I—alone?"

Valda rose and answered in polite dignity. "Yes, Mr. Ormond, you may. There are several matters to be discussed immediately."

She led the way into the main saloon and waited till the door was closed, while Tracy took the additional precaution of shutting the traps of two port-holes that opened on the deck. Valda noted this, but said nothing, though there were lines about her mouth which warned her guests that the interview might be squally. She did not wait to be placed on the defensive, but opened the battle without delay, seizing on the advantage of attack.

"Now, gentlemen," she began when all three were seated, "you will pardon me for speaking frankly. The matter is a business one."

There was a slight pause. Tracy was nervous, as proved by his shifting eyes and restless feet; but Ormond seemed perfectly at ease. He was about to speak; but Valda checked him.

"Your manner of coming aboard my father's yacht," said she, "was, to say the least, irregular."

Ormond smiled in fatherly indulgence. "You received Mr. Girard's telegrams, did you not?"

"Yes, certainly," she admitted; "but anyone could send a telegram."

"Miss Girard!" There was genuine reproach in the tone; but Valda answered remorselessly:

"The matter, Mr. Ormond, is a business one, admitting of no informality."

"Granted," he returned; "but what, may I ask, leads you to suppose that friends of your father would deliberately break the law in forging messages?"

"Your own recent conduct," she retorted angrily, a red spot flaming in either cheek, while her big brown eyes snapped fire. "I cannot conceive of any friends of my father being willing to desert a helpless and drowning man." Again she checked his protest, and continued hotly, "Your order for full steam ahead was in violation not only of every seaman's code of mercy, but of that of every human creature of God who calls himself a man!"

SHE had risen to her feet, feeling that not one moment longer could she look on this wretch and hold her dignity; but Ormond had risen also, and stepped between her and the door.

"Miss Girard," he said quietly, "in your ignorance of the facts, and your lack of observation, you are perfectly justified in condemning me. Won't you sit down?"

For an instant she held him, eye to eye; but in his glance she found no wavering; then she set her lips and complied with his request.

Ormond continued in the same unruffled tone, "It is not easy for a man to desert a fellow creature