A Secret of the Sea

A MYSTERY STORY.

By MRS. C. N. WILLIAMSON.

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CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

Dick Gives His Word.

To Dick Knight's stammered question—a whole sentence in that one word "Eve?"—Sir Peter gave no answer until he had searched the young man's face with a long, keen gaze. "I see that in truth you know no more of her than I do," he said at last, forgetting to be indignant, because the man who had no right to love a millionaire's daughter had dared to speak of her intimately as "Eve."

"Did you think that I knew, and lied to you?" Dick demanded hotly.

"I didn't think it, but I determined to make sure bayond a shadow of doubt," Sir Peter answered. As a matter of fact, it was Lord Waverley who had feared an elopement. Eve's maid had been catechised by Lady Drayton, who had repeated to her brother all she had gleaned concerning an "affair" between the heiress and her father's discharged secretary, and Waverley had, as tactfully as possibly, hinted his ideas to Sir Peter. But Sir Peter did not tell this to Dick, and looking now into the young man's angry, honest eyes he was glad that he had not been mistaken in him.

"Lord Waverley and Lady Drayton have stopped behind in Tangier," he went on, "in the hope of getting hold of some clue; and of course the police are buzzing like a hive of bees. I have offered a reward of a thousand pounds and no questions to be asked. It should have been more, but our consul advised that sum. Now that I'm sure Evie hasn't come here to you, when we've had a talk I'll go back myself as fast as the Lily Maid can steam, for it was in Tangier we saw the last of her, and since you know nothing more than we know, it's there we have the best hope of getting on her track. Great heaven! It seems that there's a curse upon me, Knight. I loved a girl whose name was Eve. She was snatched away behind a veil of mystery, which is as thick today as it was seven-and-twenty years ago. My wife I did not care for, but she gave me a daughter to love, and I named her Eve. She grows to be a woman, and becomes my one heart interest in life. Then she, too, disappears in circumstances as extraordinary, as mysterious, as before. I can't make it seem true. Ever since the thing happened I've been feeling that I shall wake up and find that I've been dreaming. But what about that theory of yours you mentioned in the telegram that answered mine? Why do you suspect a plot to kidnap the child? I suppose you are thinking of a scheme for a big ransom?"

"No," said Dick. "That is the obvious thing; but it wasn't what I meant. There were reasons why I couldn't elaborate my ideas in that telegram. The fact is, I was in a very queer position, and did the only thing I saw my way to do at the time. It didn't occur to me that you would suspect I had sent it simply to put you off the right track."

"Well, you must admit," said Sir Peter somewhat shamefacedly, "that it also was rather an obvious thing. The child cared for you, and resented my opposition, though she behaved very well on the whole—so well that I got thinking it might have been a blind. A runaway marriage might have been the plan; or, if you could have induced her to back you up in the idea, you might have spirited her away and demanded any sum you liked as ransom. It would have been rather a smart way of making a fortune in twenty-four hours."

"You know you put me down as lacking in genius," said Dick, "so I am surprised you credited me with being up to such 'smart ways.' I confess they're beyond me, and I shouldn't have had the wit to try that last scheme if you hadn't given me a present of it, Sir Peter. I'm afraid I'm not quite as grateful for that present as I might be; nevertheless, I am very glad that you are here. It helps me out of the difficulty I spoke of, for there are things which I can tell you which couldn't well be put in a telegram."

"You have something to tell me, then?" asked Sir Peter, quietly. "Something which concerns Eve?"

"Yes," answered Dick. It was difficult to know how to begin, and to make the queer, jumbled story sound credible. But when Dick (only keeping back the fact that Eve had sent him a letter) had got even so far in the narrative as the veiled woman's first threats, Sir Peter's shrewd face took on a frown of attentive gravity. He listened, without interruption, until Dick came to his one proof that the woman had not been lying from start to finish; the message supposed to have come from Eve. The young man could not bring himself to repeat that message to the girl's father, but merely said, stammering a little, that it was something which no one could have known, except through her. "The woman read me out the telegram," said Dick. "She wouldn't give it to me. But the words must have come from Miss Markham."

"What did you do then?" asked Sir Peter.

"I promised to throw up the whole business if Miss Markham were handed over to you, safe and sound, to-morrow."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the millionaire.

"What else could I do? I couldn't doubt after that message that some unscrupulous brutes had got her in their power; and for nothing in the world would I risk harm coming to her. The woman had me completely under her thumb, confound her!—and she knew it."

"So you have given your word to stop playing the detective?"

"Yes; and to leave not only the Xenia but Gibraltar."

"All for Eve's sake. Well, I suppose it was the only thing to be done. Had you got on the track of the mystery? Yet you had scarcely time for that."

Nevertheless, I had found some things, and thought I saw my way towards findings out more."

"H'm! Since you're giving up the job, there's no reason why you should mind giving me details, is there—the reward being off."

"It isn't off yet, Sir Peter," said Dick. "When I parted from the woman after making my bargain, I had twenty-four hours left me in which I was free to work. It didn't occur to her, evidently, to make any stipulation about so short an interval. Since that time, though it isn't very long ago, I have made several rather valuable discoveries. So valuable, indeed, that I'm not quite hopeless of finishing the whole work to-morrow, being able to tell you all you want to know, and—if the woman keeps her half of the bargain by returning Miss Markham to you—being also in a position to claim the reward."

"You mean the twenty thousand pounds?" sand Sir Peter.

"That isn't what I have been working for, you may remember, if you recall our talk. It was for the chance to win your daughter, if she were still free, and still—of the same mind."

"A few days are hardly fair. I thought you would be months at work."

"I believe there was no limit set, however. And no doubt a long delay in getting at the secret would be annoying for you, Sir Peter."

"No doubt. But it seems incredible that you should have got at it so soon. I can't believe it, Knight. If you're not boasting, at least you are deceiving yourself."

"It remains to be seen."

"What! You'll tell me nothing now?"

"I can't, for the best reasons. But I hope they may have ceased to exist by to-morrow."

"You—have learnt something about Eve Desmond?"

"That is one of the things I may have to tell you after to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIV.

The Woman of the Photograph.

Dick's thoughts traveled swiftly to the letters and the two black, gold-padlocked books once more hidden away in the secret cabinet. He longed now to have a chance at them. Even if he had not a right to keep what he had worked so hard to win, he would not have told Sir Peter Markham at this time of his latest discovery. To do so would be premature, for, after all, there might be nothing concerning either Eve Desmond or the mystery of the derelict contained in the volumes or the letters. He would examine both to-night when Sir Peter was on his way back to Tangier, he would himself; and whatever happened—whether he could claim his reward or not—if there were anything worth knowing Sir Peter should know it.

"For heaven's sake, at least tell me one thing," said the millionaire, "and I swear that you shan't regret it. Don't keep me in suspense. Heaven knows I've enough to bear just now, any way. If you know tell me whether the woman on this yacht was Eve Desmond or another."

"I don't know surely yet, but——"

"But you know something of the woman who was here? You have seen a picture of her? You have——"

"No. I have seen no picture; yet I could describe some of her characteristics."

"What were they? Good heavens, speak out, man! You don't know what this is to me."

"She was very slim—unusually slim, and not tall. She had golden hair——"

"Heavens! then it was Eve. Wait, I'll show you her portrait—the photograph in the watch—that man's watch. I took it away with me. I had a right to it. Come below where we can have plenty of light. Ah, if I could only tear away that veil of mystery that has hidden her from me for so long and find my daughter Eve at the same time!"

Sir Peter took Dick by the arm to hurry him to the companion. All was dark on the yacht, save for the usual riding light aloft. The two men were standing together near the bow, talking in low voices, as Brown and his mate had talked last night. Dick wondered, as he and Sir Peter went below, whether they had had any experiences resembling those of their predecessors to discuss. The electric light on the Xenia was generated by a petrol motor of a rather peculiar make, and such a quantity of electricity had been stored up that, with the short hours during which lights were required, Dick had not found it necessary to set the engine to work since he had been on board. But now, when he attempted to switch on the lights in the saloon he got no result, and he and Sir Peter remained in darkness.

"The accumulators are exhausted, I expect," said Dick. "The men have got the lanterns, but I know there are plenty of candles in the storeroom, for I've seen them, and if you'll wait here for a few minutes, Sir Peter, I'll fetch some."

He groped his way along through the dark, and it was impossible not to recall his old experience of the night before; the silky rustle and the feeling of something slippery that moved from under his fingers. He had not mentioned this matter to Sir Peter, nor had he repeated the story told by the man. There had been other things of far greater importance demanding all his attention.

Luckily, he had come this way so often that every step was familiar, and after two or three minutes of groping he had reached the storeroom door. He knew exactly where the packing case stood, and was avoiding it as he took the direction which would lead him to the shelves, when a figure, blacker than the darkness, sprang out of a corner and rushed past him through the door.

Dick followed, but the figure eluded him, and was almost instantly swallowed up in the gloom. He tried the electric light switch in the larger gallery, hoping that, after all, something had gone wrong in the saloon and the power was not exhausted. But no light came, and he was obliged to go back to the storeroom and search until he found the candles, as it would be futile to attempt a further chase in the dark. He took half a dozen, which he put in his pocket, lighting one with a wax vesta from his own match box and holding it up before him as he went back to the saloon.

In the doorway he found Sir Peter. "Something ran past me in the dark. What was it?" the latter exclaimed, in a sharp, excited voice.

"I don't know," said Dick. "It was in the storeroom. Which way did it go?"

"I can't tell you," returned Sir Peter. "I only know that it brushed past me. I saw it, black for an instant in front of an open porthole, and then it seemed to vanish."

"According to the men the Xenia's haunted, but I don't believe in the ghost theory," said Dick. "And yet this yacht has been searched from stem to stern. Well, we must search again."

They did as well as they could by the aid of a flaring candle apiece, but found nothing, and Sir Peter was half inclined to think that one of the men must have played them a trick. Knight had no alternative theory to offer, and impatiently they abandoned the hunt.

"It can't be anything else," exclaimed Sir Peter, impatiently. "If I were you, I should complain to the captain of the port. The thing's not worth arguing over. Let us go back to the business that brought us here. Fetch the candles closer. That's it; hold them up—so! I couldn't bear to let any eyes but mine look at her picture at first. I know I am a sentimental fool, and I wonder at myself because for a good many years sentiment and I have been strangers. Now I realize, though, that I made a mistake. You were here to find out what I wanted to know, and I ought not to have let you be handicapped." He took from a pocket of his waistcoat the gold watch which Dick had seen on the owner's dressing table the first night on board the derelict. Half-reluctantly he opened the case, gazed for a second or two at something inside, and then held out the watch, open, for Dick to see the photograph of Eve Desmond.

The light was dim and uncertain. The younger man brought one of the candles nearer; he bent his head over the watch, and then drew back with a cry of incredulous astonishment.

"You recognize the photograph?" ejaculated Sir Peter. "Eve Desmond is the woman who was on board this yacht."

"Let me see the picture again," said Dick, in a low, strained voice, putting out his hand for the watch. "I want to make sure. I—it seems almost too strange to be true, and yet—and yet——"

His sentence broke off in the midst. He looked closely at the photograph and seemed to have forgotten everything else, until the other brought him back to himself with an abrupt question:

"Why too strange to be true?" he asked sharply. "Is anything too strange to be true in this queer world?"

"Sir Peter," Dick said, slowly, "whether this is a picture of the Eve Desmond you once loved I can't tell. But if that is true, Eve Desmond—was my mother!"

"Your mother! Impossible!"

The words rang out sharp and clear, with a note of anger in them. And there were anger and incredulity in Sir Peter Markham's eyes as well.

(To be continued to-morrow.)

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'Phones, N. W., 2147; T. C., 635.
Trains leave and arrive Milwaukee Depot daily.

	Leave For.	Arrive From.
Albert Lea, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Rock Island, Moline Chicago, Burlington, Quincy and St. Louis	9:10 am / 7:10 pm	4:55 pm / 8:40 am

CHICAGO GREAT WESTERN RY.
"The Maple Leaf Route."
City Ticket Office, 5th & Nicollet, Minneapolis. Depot: Washington & 10th Ave. S.
Telephone Main 262.

aEx. Sunday. Others Daily.	Leave. Min'polis.	Arrive. Min'polis.
Kenyon, Dodge Center, Oelwein, Dubuque, Freeport, Chicago and East..	7:40 am / 8:00 pm / 10:45 pm	10:40 pm / 8:00 am / 1:25 pm
Cedar Falls, Waterloo, Marshalltown, Des Moines, St. Joseph, Kansas City..	10:00 am / 8:00 pm / 10:45 pm	8:00 pm / 8:00 am / 1:25 pm
Red Wing, Zumbrota, Rochester, Osage	* 7:40 am / 4:50 pm	* 8.00 pm / 10:55 am
Northfield, Faribault, Waterville, Mankato	a 7:40 am / 5:30 pm	a 8:00 pm / 10:20 am
Hayfield, Austin, Lyle, Mason City	7:40 am / 4:35 pm	11:20 am / a 8:00 pm
Eagle Grove, Fort Dodge..	a 7:40 am	a 8:00 pm

THE GREAT NORTHERN
Office, 300 Nic. 'Phone, Main 860. Union Depot.

Leave. aDaily. bEx. Sun. cSun. only..		Arrive.
b 8:30am / b 8:30am	St. Cloud, Cass Lake, Bemidji / ..Tintah, Aberdeen, Fargo..	b 4:51pm / b 4:51pm
a 9:55am	FLYER To Montana & Pacific Coast	a 2:00pm
b10:23am	Willmar, Sioux Falls, Fargo, ...Watertown, Sioux City....	b 5:55pm
b 5:12pm	Elk River, Milaca, Sandstone	b 9:50am
b 5:10pm	..Wayzata and Hutchinson..	b 8:55am
a 8:45pm	..Minn. and Dak. Express..	a 6:55am
a 7:40pm	Fargo, Gd. Forks, Winnipeg	a 7:10am
a 8:50pm	Willmar, Sioux Falls, Yankton, Sioux City	a 6:45am
a11:50pm / b 9:25am	Minneapolis to Duluth	a 6:10am / b 6:05pm

Sleeper for 11:50 train ready at 9 p. m.

Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway.
Ticket Office, 328 Nicollet av. 'Phone 122.

aDaily. bEx. Sun. dEx. Sat.	Leave.	Arrive.
Chicago, La Crosse, Milw'kee	a 7:50am	a10:30pm
Chicago, La Crosse, Milw'kee	a 5:25pm	a12:01pm
Chicago "Pioneer" Limited	a 8:00pm	a 8:00am
Milwaukee, La K., Winona..	a 2:20pm	a 3:20pm
Chicago, Faribault, Dubuque	a 3:50pm	a 9:20am
Red Wing and Rochester....	b 7:50am	b10:30pm
LaCrosse, Dubuq., Rk. Island	b 7:50am	b10:30pm
Northfield, Faribault, K. City	a 8:20am	a 6:20pm
Ortonville, Milbank, Aberd'n	b 9:25am	b 5:45pm
Ortonville, Aberdeen, Fargo.	a 7:00pm	a 7:00am
Northfield, Faribault, Austin	b 7:15pm	b11:20am

bDaily except Sunday.

MINNEAPOLIS & ST. LOUIS R. R. Wash. and Hen. Avs Nicollet House Corner.
'Phone No. 225. St. Louis Depot.

aEx. Sunday. Others Daily.	Leave.	Arrive.
Watertown and Storm Lake Express	a 8:47 am	a 5:15 pm
Omaha, Des Moines, Kansas City, Mason City and Marshalltown	a 9:35 am	a 6:50 pm
Estherville and Madison..	6:15 pm	10:00 am
"NORTH STAR LIMITED" Chicago and St. Louis..	7:45p.m.	8:15a.m.
Peoria Limited	7:45 pm	8:15 am
Omaha and Des Moines Limited	8:35 pm	7:25 am

Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie
Lv. Depot, 3d and Washington avs S. Ar.

9:45 am	....Pacific Express, daily.....	6:00 pm
6:35 pm	....Atlantic Limited, daily....	9:50 am

Depot, 5th and Washington avs N.

6:15 pm	...Dakota Express, ex. Sun...	8:30 am
8:55 am	..Rhinelander Local, ex. Sun..	6:05 pm