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A ROCK IN THE BALTIC

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Dorothy Amhurst, seamstress in the family of Captain Kempf, U. S. N., retired, at Bar Harbor, inherits \$15,000,000. She meets Lieutenant Alan Drummond of H. M. S. Consternation, who falls in love with her. Dorothy's chum, Katherine Kempf, meets Prince Ivan Lermontoff. Drummond is in disgrace because, while practicing firing in the Baltic, he shot at a supposed reef, which turned out to be a fortified Russian post. He proposes to go to St. Petersburg to explain. Dorothy warns him of danger. Drummond and Lermontoff go to Russia. Dorothy corresponds with Drummond and Lermontoff asks Katherine's hand in marriage. Drummond and Lermontoff are watched by Russian spies.

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

"Very, very Russian," returned the captain, drawing a deep breath. "This way, if your highness pleases. There is a rope ladder, which is sometimes a little unsteady for a landsman, so be careful."

"Oh, I am accustomed to rope ladders. Hyvasti, captain."

"Hyvasti, your highness."

And with this mutual goodbye in Finnish, the prince went down the swaying ladder.

CHAPTER XV.

"A Home on the Rolling Deep."

For once the humorous expression had vanished from Captain Kempf's face, and that good-natured man sat in the dainty drawing room of the flat a picture of perplexity. Dorothy had told him the story of the nihilist, saying she intended to purchase the yacht, and outlining what she proposed to do with it when it was her own. Now she sat silent opposite the genial captain, while Katherine stood by the window, and talked enough for two, sometimes waxing indignant, and occasionally giving, in terse language, an opinion of her father, as is the blessed privilege of every girl born in the land of the free, while the father took the censure with the unprotesting mildness of his nature.

"My dear girls, you really must listen to reason. What you propose to do is so absurd that it doesn't even admit of argument. Why, it's a filibustering expedition, that's what it is. You girls are as crazy as Walker of Nicaragua. Do you imagine that a retired captain of the United States navy is going to take command of a pirate craft of far less legal standing than the Alabama, for then we were at war, but now we are at peace. Do you actually propose to attack the domain of a friendly country? Oh!" cried the captain, with a mighty explosion of breath, for at this point his supply of language entirely gave out.

"No one would know anything about it," persisted Katherine.

"Not know about it? With a crew of men picked up here in New York, and coming back to New York? Not know about it? Bless my soul, the papers would be full of it before your men were an hour on shore. In the first place, you'd never find the rock."

"Then what's the harm of going in search of it?" demanded his daughter.

"Besides that, Johnson knows exactly where it is."

"Johnson, Johnson! You're surely not silly enough to believe Johnson's cock-and-bull story?"

"I believe every syllable he uttered. The man's face showed that he was speaking the truth."

"But, my dear Kate, you didn't see him at all, as I understand the yarn. He was here alone with you, was he not, Dorothy?"

Dorothy smiled sadly.

"I told Kate all about it, and gave my own impression of the man's appearance."

"You are too sensible a girl to place any credit in what he said, surely?"

"I did believe him, nevertheless," replied Dorothy.

"Why, look you here. False in one thing, false in all. I'll just take a single point. He speaks of a spring sending water thru the cells up there in the rock. Now, that is an impossibility. Wherever a spring exists, it comes from a source higher than itself."

"There are lots of springs up in the mountains," interrupted Katherine. "I know one on Mount Washington that is ten times as high as the rock in the Baltic."

"Quite so, Katherine, quite so, but

nevertheless there is a lake, subterranean or above ground, which feeds your White mountain spring, and such a lake must be situated higher than the spring is. Why, girl, you ought to study hydrometeorology as well as chemistry. Here is a rock jutting up in midocean—"

"It's in the Baltic, near the Russian coast," snapped Kate, "and I've no doubt there are mountains in Finland that contain the lake which feeds the spring."

"How far is that rock from the Finnish coast, then?"

"Two miles and a half," said Kate, quick as an arrow speeding from a bow.

"Captain, we don't know how far it is from the coast," amended Dorothy.

"I'll never believe the thing exists at all."

"Why, yes it does, father. How can you speak like that? Don't you know Lieutenant Drummond fired at it?"

"How do you know it was the same rock?"

"Because the rock fired back at him. There can't be two like that in the Baltic."

"No, nor one either," said the captain, nearing the end of his patience.

"Captain Kempf," said Dorothy very soothingly, as if she desired to quell the rising storm, "you take the allegation about the spring of water to prove that Johnson was telling untruths. I expect him here within an hour, and I will arrange that you have an opportunity, privately, of cross-examining him. I think when you see the man, and listen to him, you will believe. What makes me so sure that he is telling the truth is the fact that he mentioned the foreign vessel firing at this rock, which I knew to be true, and which he could not possibly have learned anything about."

"He might very well have learned all particulars from the papers, Dorothy. They were full enough of the subject at the time, and, remembering this, he thought to strengthen his story by—"

Katherine interrupted with great scorn.

"By adding verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative."

"Quite so, Kate; exactly what I was going to say myself. But to come back to the project itself. Granting the existence of the rock, granting the truth of Johnson's story, granting everything, granting even that the young men are imprisoned there, of which we have not the slightest proof, we could no more succeed in capturing that place from a frail pleasure yacht—"

"It's built like a cruiser," said Katherine.

"Even if it were built like a battleship we would have no chance whatever. Why, that rock might defy a regular fleet. Our venture would simply be a marine Jameson raid which would set the whole world laughing when people came to hear of it."

"Johnson said he could take it with half a dozen men."

"No, Kate," corrected Dorothy, "he said the very reverse; that two or three determined men on the rock with repeating rifles could defeat a host. It was I who suggested that we should throw a shell, and then rush the entrance in the confusion."

Captain Kempf threw up his hands in a gesture of despair.

"Great heavens, Dorothy Amhurst, whom I have always regarded as the mildest, sweetest and most charming of girls; to hear you calmly propose to throw a shell among a lot of innocent men defending their own territory against a perfectly unauthorized invasion! Throw a shell, say you, as if you were talking of tossing a copper to a beggar! Oh, Lord, I'm growing old. What will become of this younger generation? Well, I give it up. Dorothy, my dear, whatever will happen to those unfortunate Russians, I shall never recover from the shock of your shell. The thing is absolutely impossible. Can't you see that the moment you get down to details? How are you going to procure your shells, or your shell-firing gun? They are not to be bought at the first hardware store you come to on Sixth avenue."

"Johnson says he can get them," proclaimed Kate with finality.

"Oh, damn Johnson! Dorothy, I beg your pardon, but really, this daughter of mine, combined with that Johnson

of yours, is just a little more than I can bear."

"Then what are we to do?" demanded his daughter. "Sit here with folded hands?"

"That would be a great deal better than what you propose. You should do something sane. You mustn't involve a pair of friendly countries in war. Of course, the United States would utterly disclaim your act, and discredit me if I were lunatic enough to undertake such a wild goose chase, which I'm not; but, on the other hand, if two of our girls undertook such an expedition, no man can predict the public clamor that might arise. Why, when the newspapers get hold of a question, you never know where they will end it. Undoubtedly you two girls should be sent to prison, and, with equal undoubtedness, the American people wouldn't permit it."

"You bet they wouldn't," said Katherine, dropping into slang.

"Well, then, if they wouldn't, there's war."

"One moment, Captain Kempf," said Dorothy, again in her mildest tones, for voices had again begun to run high, "you spoke of doing something sane. You understand the situation. What should you counsel us to do?"

The captain drew a long breath, and leaned back in his chair.

"There, dad, it's up to you," said Katherine. "Let us hear your proposal, and then you'll learn how easy it is to criticize."

"Well," said the captain hesitatingly, "There's our diplomatic service—"

"Utterly useless; one man is a Russian, and the other an Englishman. Diplomacy not only can do nothing, but won't even try," cried Kate triumphantly.

"Yet," said the captain, with little confidence, "altho the two men are foreigners, the two girls are Americans."

"We don't count; we've no votes," said Kate. "Besides, Dorothy tried the diplomatic service, and could not even get accurate information from it. Now, father, third time and out."

"Four balls are out, Kate, and I've only fanned the air twice. Now, girls, I'll tell you what I'd do. You two come with me to Washington. We will seek a private interview with the president. He will get into communication with the czar, also privately, and outside of all regular channels. The czar will put machinery in motion that is sure to produce those two young men much more effectually and speedily than any cutthroat expedition on a yacht."

"I think," said Dorothy, "that is an excellent plan."

"Of course it is," cried the captain enthusiastically. "Don't you see the pull the president will have? Why, they've put an Englishman into 'the jug,' and when the president communicates this fact to the czar he will be afraid to refuse, knowing that the next appeal may be from America to England, and when you add a couple of American girls to that political mix-up, why, what chance has the czar?"

"The point you raise, captain," said Dorothy, "is one I wish to say a few words about. The president cannot get Mr. Drummond released, because the czar and all his government will be compelled to deny that they know anything of him. Even the president couldn't guarantee that the Englishman would keep silence if he were set at liberty. The czar would know that, but your plan would undoubtedly produce Prince Ivan Lermontoff. All the president has to do is to tell the czar that the prince is engaged to an American girl, and Lermontoff will be allowed to go."

"But," objected the captain, "as the prince knows the Englishman is in prison, how could they be sure of John keeping quiet when Drummond is his best friend?"

"He cannot know that, because the prince was arrested several days before Drummond was."

"They have probably chucked them both into the same cell," said the captain, but Dorothy shook her head.

"If they had intended to do that they would doubtless have arrested them together. I am sure that one does not know the fate of the other, therefore the czar can quite readily let Lermontoff go, and he is certain to do that at a word from the president. Besides this, I am as confident that Jack is not in Trogzmundoff, as I am sure

that Drummond is. Johnson said it was a prison for foreigners."

"Oh, Dorothy," cried the captain, with a deep sigh, "if we've got back again to Johnson—" He waved his hand and shook his head.

The maid opened the door and said, looking at Dorothy:

"Mr. Paterson and Mr. Johnson."

"Just show them into the morning room," said Dorothy, rising. "Captain Kempf, it is awfully good of you to have listened so patiently to a scheme of which you couldn't possibly approve."

"Patiently!" sniffed the daughter.

"Now I want you to do me another kindness."

She went to the desk and picked up a piece of paper.

"Here is a check I have signed—a blank check. I wish you to buy the yacht Walrus just as she stands, and make the best bargain you can for me. A man is so much better at this kind of negotiation than a woman."

"But surely, my dear Dorothy, you won't persist in buying this yacht?"

"It's her own money, father," put in Katherine.

"Keep quiet," said the captain, rising, for the first time speaking with real severity, whereupon Katherine, in spite of the fact that she was older than 21, was wise enough to obey.

"Yes, I am quite determined, captain," said Dorothy sweetly.

"But, my dear woman, don't you see how you've been hoodwinked by this man Johnson? He is shy of a job. He has already swindled you out of \$20,000."

"No, he asked for ten only, Captain Kempf, and I voluntarily doubled the amount."

"Nevertheless, he has worked you up to believe that these young men are in that rock. He has done this for a very crafty purpose, and his purpose seems likely to succeed. He knows he will be well paid, and you have promised him a bonus besides. If he, with his Captain Kidd crew, gets you on that yacht, you will only step ashore by giving him every penny you possess. That's his object. He knows you are starting out to commit a crime—that's the word, Dorothy, there's no use in our mincing matters—you will be perfectly helpless in his hands. Of course, I could not allow my daughter Kate to go on such an expedition."

"I am over 21 years old," cried Kate, the light of rebellion in her eyes.

"I do not intend that either of you shall go, Katherine."

"Dorothy, I'll not submit to that," cried Katherine, with a rising tremor of anger in her voice, "I shall not be set aside like a child. Who has more at stake than I? And as for capturing the rock, I'll dynamite it myself, and bring home as large a specimen of it as the yacht will carry, and set it up on Bedloe's Island beside the goddess and say, 'There's your statue of liberty, and there's your statue of tyranny.'"

"Katherine," chided her father, "I never before believed that a child of mine could talk such driveling nonsense."

"Paternal heredity, father," retorted Kate.

"Your presidential plan, Captain Kempf," interposed Dorothy, "is excellent so far as Prince Lermontoff is concerned, but it cannot rescue Lieutenant Drummond. Now, there are two things you can do for me that will make me always your debtor, as, indeed, I am already, and the first is to purchase for me the yacht. The second is to form your own judgment of the man Johnson, and if you distrust him, then engage for me one-half the crew, and see that they are picked Americans."

"First sane idea I have heard since I came into this flat," growled the captain.

"The Americans won't let the Finlander hold me for ransom, you may depend upon that."

It was a woe-begone look the gallant captain cast on the demure and determined maiden, then, feeling his daughter's eye upon him, he turned toward her.

"I'm going, father," she said, with a firmness quite equal to his own, and he, on his part, recognized when his daughter had toed the danger line. He indulged in a laugh that had little of mirth in it.

"All I can say is that I am thank-