

# The Beautiful White Devil.

CHAPTER XI.  
A TYPHOON.

A 5 o'clock next morning, being unable to bear the closeness of my cabin any longer, I dressed myself and went on deck. To my surprise, the schooner was stationary and wrapped in as dense a fog as ever I remember to have seen. It was most depressing, so for the sake of companionship I fumbled my way over to the starboard bulwark, and, having found it, ran it along to the bridge, where I almost fell into some person's arms. The fog was so thick that I could not see his face, so I inquired his name.

"Walworth," was the reply, "and from your voice you should be Dr. De Normanville."

"Quite right," I answered. "But what a fog this is, to be sure! How long have we been in it?"

"Very nearly three hours," he replied. "It's most unfortunate. By the way, I want to ask a favor of you on her ladyship's account. We are going to bury that poor beggar Ebington in half an hour. Will you conduct the service?"

"Did her ladyship tell you to ask me?"

He answered in the affirmative. "Then, if it is her desire, of course I will do so," I replied, "though I must own I do not very much look forward to the task."

He thanked me and went below to give the necessary instructions. I waited about, and in half an hour the body was brought on deck, neatly sewed up in a hammock and covered with a plain white ensign by way of a pall. Though we could hardly see each other or the pier, we took our place at the gangway, and I at once began to read the beautiful service for the burial of the dead at sea. When I arrived at the place where it is instructed that the body shall be cast into the deep, I gave a signal, and the stretcher was tilted so that the hammock and its grim contents slid off it and fell with a sullen splash into the water alongside. Just as it disappeared a curious thing happened.

The body could hardly have touched the water before the fog was lifted as though by some giant hand, and the sun shone brilliantly forth. The transition from the obscurity of semidarkness to bright sunshine was quite dazzling and set us all blinking like so many owls. Then I saw every face turn suddenly in one direction, and as they did so every mouth went down. Next moment the officer of the watch had bounded to the engine room telegraph, there was a confused ringing of bells in the bowels of the ship, and before a minute could have elapsed we were under way once more.

And what do you think was the reason of all this commotion? Why, there, not half a mile distant from us, full steam up and ensign streaming in the breeze, lay an enormous English man-of-war. She was evidently on our trail and by altering her course only half a point might have run us down in the fog. It was very evident she had only just become aware that she was so close to her prey or she would surely have sent a boat and attempted to take us prisoner. As it was, this sudden lifting of the fog must have caused them as much surprise as it did us, for it was a good minute before we heard the shouting of orders and blowing of bos'n's pipes aboard her. As soon as I had recovered from my astonishment I fetched a glass from the rack and brought it to bear on her, at the same time convincing myself that we were in for a warm quarter of an hour.

True to our expectations, before we had been steaming a couple of minutes there came a puff of smoke from her port bow, and an instant later a shot flew in front of us and dropped into the water a mile or so on our left side. It was evidently a signal to us to heave to without any nonsense or further waste of time. But as the boom of the gun died away Alie made her appearance from the after companion and came over to where I stood.

"Good morning, Dr. De Normanville," she said, as calmly as if we were greeting each other in Hyde park. "You see how anxious your government is to have me in its keeping. Mr. Patterson, full steam ahead."

The chief officer touched his cap, gave the order, and then resumed his promenade, stopping now and again to examine the man-of-war through his glass. "They're going to fire another gun, and then if we don't attend to that they will chase us," said Alie, who was also closely scrutinizing her great opponent's movements.

She was correct in her prophecy, for as she finished speaking another jet of flame issued from the cruiser's side, followed by a sullen roar. This time the shot passed through our rigging, fortunately, however, without doing any damage, and next moment we could see that she was under weigh. It was going to be a stern chase, and if they didn't hull us before we got out of range we knew it would be a long one.

Seeing that we did not intend to heave to, as she ordered, our antagonist sent another shot after us, but this time it fell altogether wide of the mark. Alie called the third officer to her side.

"Inquire from the engine room what we're doing, Mr. Gammel," she said.

The officer asked the necessary question, and the answer came back, "Eighteen."

"Tell them to give her every ounce of steam she is capable of carrying. We must not allow our friend yonder to get us within range again, or one of those chance shots may hull us."

Then turning to me, she continued, as

if in explanation, "You see, Dr. De Normanville, I have no desire to fall into their hands yet awhile."

I felt as though I would have given anything to have been allowed to say



Our antagonist sent another shot after us.

something at this juncture, but I remembered my compact with her and wisely held my tongue. During breakfast, of which I partook in the officers' mess, for I did not breakfast with Alie every morning, I noticed a nervous and, as I thought, a hopelessly sad look upon the chief officer's face. Could it be the presence of the man-of-war that occasioned it? I did not question him, of course, but when he halted at the foot of the ladder, glanced anxiously at the barometer and returned to the deck I asked Walworth if anything were the matter.

"Look at the glass for yourself," he said. "Don't you see that it is dropping in a most alarming fashion? And if you listen for a moment, you will hear how the wind and sea are rising."

And so they were. There could be no mistake about that. I picked up my cap and followed the chief's example.

By 10 o'clock the wind had risen to the strength of a more than moderate gale and the sea in proportion. It was most alarming, and I must confess that, seeing the strength of the wind, I was a little surprised when, about the middle of the morning, Alie appeared on deck. She came aft to where I was standing and, having looked at the compass card, gazed round her.

"If I'm not mistaken, we're in for a typhoon," she shouted, her glorious hair blowing in tangled profusion across her eyes and about her face. "Our friend the cruiser, you see, is out of sight. I expect she thinks it's useless endeavoring to chase us across such a sea." Then turning to Walworth, who was standing near, she cried, "Send Mr. Patterson to me!"

Though it was not Patterson's watch on deck, he was too anxious about the weather and his ship to go below. Immediately on receiving Alie's message he came aft and, having touched his southwestward, waited for her to speak.

"Mr. Patterson, what is your opinion of the weather?" she shouted in his ear, for it was impossible to make yourself heard by any ordinary means. "Don't you think we had better heave to and endeavor to find out how the center of the storm bears from us?"

"I was just going to do so," Patterson bellowed in reply. Then turning to his subordinate, he gave the necessary instructions in a yell that sounded like a fog horn. The yacht's nose was immediately pointed dead to the wind, which at that moment was due northeast, the requisite number of points to the right of it were taken and the center of the approaching hurricane found to be exactly south southeast of our position. At this juncture Walworth, who had been acting under instructions, returned from the cuddy and reported the barometer had fallen to 27.45. It might therefore be inferred that we were within the storm circle, and for the same reason it was apparent that our safety entirely depended upon our being able to avoid the center of the field. Having decided the direction of the storm and discovered that we lay in the due line of its advance—the most dangerous of all—it was nothing for it but to run with the wind on our starboard quarter.

Never shall I forget the scene presented as our course was changed. I looked from Alie, who, enveloped in oilskins, was clinging to the starboard railing, then to the chief officer gazing anxiously aloft and from both to the men struggling and straining at the wheel. Now, when a great wave, seemingly mountains high, dark as green jade and topped with hissing foam, would come tearing toward us, obscuring half the horizon, I would shut my eyes and wait for it to engulf us. Then I would feel the noble little vessel meet it, rise on its crest and next moment be sinking again, down, down, down into the trough. Then once more I would draw breath and open my eyes just in time to see another rise and meet her forrard, to break with a roar upon the forecastle head, carrying away a dozen feet of bulwark and one of the boats as if both were built of so much paper.

Toward the middle of the afternoon the strength of the gale began somewhat to abate, the sea lost its greater fury, and the barometer in a measure recovered its stability. It seemed incredible that the Lone Star could have come through it so safely, for, with the exception of one man washed overboard, another who had three of his ribs smashed in by a marauding sea, a portion of the port bulwark and a boat carried away, as above described, and another crushed to atoms on the davits, we had experienced no casualties worth mentioning.

By the time darkness fell the sea was almost its old calm, placid self again, so quickly do these terrible typhoons spring up and die away. As soon as we were certain all danger was past the yacht was returned to her course, and we once more proceeded on our way.

How wonderful and inscrutable is the mighty deep! Next day the weather was

as peaceful as ever I had seen it—light, fresh, gentle breezes and a sea as smooth as polished silver. After breakfast the evening, which on account of the storm had been unshipped the day before, was rigged again, and, drawing a deck chair aft, I settled myself down to read beneath its shade. A few minutes later Alie and her companion joined me. I brought them seats, and then for the first time I saw the Beautiful White Devil—for I must sometimes call her by her picturesque Chinese cognomen—engaged in needlework. Why I should have found anything extraordinary in such a circumstance I cannot say. Possibly it may have been because I had never imagined that there could be sufficient leisure in her life for such a homely occupation. At any rate, I know that to watch her bent head, with its glorious wealth of hair; to see those beautiful white fingers, unadorned by jewelry of any sort, twisting and twining among her silks, and to make out one little foot peeping beneath her snow white dress sent a thrill through me that made me tingle from top to toe.

Suddenly one of the hands engaged upon some work in the fore rigging uttered a cry in the native. Alie and her companion sprang to their feet, and though I did not understand what had happened I followed their example. We ran to the starboard bulwark, but nothing was to be seen there. Not being able to make it out, I asked what had occasioned the alarm.

"One of the hands reports a boat away to starboard," said Alie.

She turned to one of the younger officers, who was standing near, and ordered him aloft to take the boat's bearing. As soon as this was discovered the yacht was put over on a tack that would bring us close up with it, and after that there was nothing for it but to wait patiently for the result.

For some time we could not see anything; then a small black speck made its appearance about two points off our starboard bow and gradually grew plainer.

"Keep her as she goes," said Alie to the man at the wheel, while we strained our eyes toward the tiny dot.

Little by little it became more distinct until we were sufficiently near to make out with a glass that it was a man-of-war's gig pulled by two men and containing three others. Ten minutes later the yacht was hoisted, and Patterson clambered on to the rail of the bulwarks.

"Are you strong enough to bring her alongside, do you think," he bellowed, "or shall we send a boat to tow you?" The man steering, who was evidently an officer, funneled his mouth with his hands and shouted back that they thought they could manage it. Then, as if to prove his words, the men who had been rowing, but had now stopped, resumed their monotonous labor. Bit by bit the tiny craft crept over the oily surface toward us until she was close enough for us to see with our naked eyes all that she contained.

As she came alongside our gangway was lowered, and within an hour from the time of our first sighting her the boat's crew stood upon our deck. In spite of their man-of-war dress a more miserable, woe-begone appearance could not have been imagined than the party presented. It consisted of one lieutenant, a midshipman and three able seamen, and out of curiosity I glanced at the cap of the man standing nearest me. It bore the name H. M. S. Asiatic. Then I looked round for Alie, only to discover that she had mysteriously disappeared. It was left for Patterson to welcome the poor fellows to the yacht, and this he accordingly did with a hearty kindness that I should hardly have expected from him.

"Before you tell me anything about yourselves," he said, "let me arrange for the comfort of your men." Then, calling a hand to him, he continued, pointing to the three Jacks who stood sheepishly by: "Take these men forrard and tell the cook to give them all they want. You can supply them with hammocks among you and find room somewhere for them to sling them." Then, turning to the officers again, he said, "Will you be so good as to follow me, gentlemen?" and led the way down the companion to the cuddy. Thinking my professional services might possibly be required, I followed with Walworth.

On reaching the cabin they were conducted to seats, and food was immediately set before them. They fell upon it like starving men, and for some time only the sound of steady munching and the clatter of knives and forks were to be heard. When they had finished the midshipman without warning burst into a flood of tears and was led by Walworth to a cabin near by, where, when his torrent had worn itself out, the poor little chap fell fast asleep.

"Now," said Patterson as soon as the lieutenant had finished his meal, "perhaps you will tell me your story?"

"It won't take long to do that," the officer began. "I am the first lieutenant of her majesty's cruiser Asiatic. We were sent out from Singapore last Saturday in pursuit of this very yacht, if I mistake not. As you know, we almost picked you up in the fog, but when it lifted your superior steaming power enabled you to escape us. Then the typhoon caught us, and in looking after ourselves we lost sight of you altogether. We rode out the storm safely enough, but just at sunset yesterday she struck an uncharted rock and went down within five minutes."

He stopped for a moment and covered his face with his hands. "This is terrible news!" cried Patterson, while we all gave utterance to expressions of horrified astonishment. "And was yours the only boat that got away?"

"I'm very much afraid so," he replied. "At least I saw no other. Yes, you are right; it is terrible, and her majesty has lost a fine vessel and a splendid ship's company in the Asiatic."

When the poor fellow had finished his story, he was silent for some minutes. Indeed, so were we all. It seemed almost incredible that the great vessel

we had admired and feared only the day before should now be lying, with the majority of her crew, deep down at the bottom of the ocean.

"We are fortunate in having been able to pick you up," said Patterson after awhile. "An hour later and we should have changed our course and have been many miles away."

"In that case we should have been dead men by nightfall," was the reply. "As it was, we lost one man."

"How did it happen?"

"The poor devil went mad and jumped overboard. Remember, we had no water and nothing to eat, and so you may imagine it was heartbreaking work pulling in that baking sun. The miracle to me is that the boy stood it as well as he did."

"Poor little chap! It must have been a terrible experience for him."

"And what do you intend doing with us?" asked the officer, after a little pause. "For, of course, we're your prisoners."

"That I cannot say," Patterson answered. "It does not lie within my province. However, you'll hear soon enough—never fear. By the way, I suppose you will give me your word that you will not attempt to play us any tricks. You must remember, please, that to all intents and purposes we are at war!"

"I will give you my word. Is that enough?"

"Quite enough. And now that you have done so I make you free of my wardrobe and its contents."

All the time Patterson had been speaking I had noticed that the lieutenant, whose name, it transpired later, was Thorden, had been staring at his face as if trying to recall some countenance it reminded him of. Just as we were preparing to go on deck again his memory seemed to come back to him.

"I hope you will excuse what I am going to say, and stop me if I am recalling any unpleasant memories," he blurted out, "but ever since I came aboard I've been wondering where we have met before. Aren't you Gregory, who was commander of the gunboat Parsifal in the Egyptian business of 1879?"

Patterson fell back against the wall as if he had been shot. For a moment his face was as white as the paper I am now writing upon; then, with a great effort, he pulled himself together and answered:

"I have quite forgotten that I had any existence at all in 1879. May I beg that you will not recall the fact to my memory?" Then, as if to change the subject, he continued: "I expect you would like to rest after all your troubles. Pray let me conduct you to a cabin."

"Many thanks," said Thorden, and with that they went along the alleyway together, and I returned to the deck to think out what I had heard. It was, of course, no business of mine, but I was



Patterson fell back against the wall, interested in Patterson and could not help speculating as to what the reason could have been that had induced him to abandon a career in which, even so many years ago, he seemed to have attained such exalted rank.

During the afternoon I received an invitation from Alie to dine with her that evening. She stated in the little note she sent me that she had also asked the rescued lieutenant and his midshipman, and I gathered from this that something out of the common was toward.

About an hour before dusk, as I was reading in the officers' messroom, the lieutenant came out of his cabin and sat down at the table beside me. He looked round to see that we were alone, and then said in a confidential whisper:

"Your position on board this boat, Dr. De Normanville, has already been explained to me. I'm sure I sympathize with you, but for rather selfish motives I am glad you are not in league with this extraordinary woman. I have received an invitation to dine in her cabin this evening, and I want you, if you will, to tell me something about her. Do you know enough to satisfy my curiosity?"

"I won't tell you anything about her," I answered, with a laugh. "You must wait and judge for yourself. One caution, however, before you see her—beware how you behave toward her, and if I might venture a hint, make a good toilet. She's very particular, and it's well to humor her. My things are at your disposal, of course."

He thanked me, and I saw no more of him or the midshipman until a few minutes before dinner time, when I met them on deck and accompanied them to Alie's saloon. Having descended the companion ladder, I drew back the curtain for them to enter. Prepared as I was to see him show astonishment, I had no idea the lieutenant would be filled with such amazement as he betrayed when we entered the beautiful cabin I have before described. As good luck had it, Alie was not present, and so we were able to look about us undisturbed.

"Why didn't you prepare me for this?" whispered my companion after he had glanced round the cabin. "I never saw anything like it before, and I've been aboard scores of yachts in my time."

"There is but one Beautiful White

Devil," I said with serio comic earnestness.

"Curios, chairs, skins, divans, musical instruments, a grand piano even, and, by Jove, inlaid with tortoise shell and lapis lazuli! It's wonderful, it's superb! And now I want to see the woman who owns it all."

"Steady," I whispered. "If I mistake not, here she comes."

As I spoke the curtains at the other end of the cabin were parted by a tiny hand, and Alie, dressed entirely in black, stood before us. The color of her costume showed off the superb beauty of her complexion and hair, while its making exhibited her matchless figure to perfection. She stood for a moment in the doorway and then advanced toward us with that wonderful floating grace which always characterized her, giving me her little hand first and then turning toward her other guests.

To the lieutenant she bowed and said, with a smile:

"Sir, you must forgive my not having personally welcomed you to my boat, but for reasons which would not interest you I am not always able to do as much as I could wish. However, I hope my officers have taken every care of you."

She shook hands with the handsome little midshipman as she spoke, and while she was doing so I had time to steal a look at the first lieutenant's face. The astonishment I saw depicted there almost caused me to laugh. He had been amazed at the beauty of the cabin, but that was nothing compared with the admiration he betrayed for the Beautiful White Devil herself. He murmured a confused but not altogether inappropriate reply to her last speech, and then we sat down to dinner. Her companion, I learned on inquiry, was suffering from a severe headache and had elected to dine in her own cabin.

The dinner was in the chef's best style, and its cooking, serving and variety, combined with the beauty and value of the table decorations, evidently completed the effect upon the officer that the cabin had begun. Alie herself was in excellent spirits and talked with the wit and cleverness of a woman who has perfected an originally liberal education by continual and varied study of the world and its inhabitants. By the time the meal was ended and we had bidden her good night the lieutenant was in a maze of enchantment.

We went on deck together, and once there, out of earshot of the cabin, his enthusiasm broke loose. I will spare you, however, a recital of all the extravagant things he said. Let it suffice that I gathered enough to feel sure that when he got back to Hongkong he would add to rather than detract from the number of stories already in circulation about the too famous Beautiful White Devil. One promise, however, I took care to extract from both officers, and that was not to mention my name in connection with the yacht on their return to civilization. I made the excuse that if such a thing got known it might do me serious harm in the practice of my profession, and both men readily gave me their words that they would not breathe a syllable on the subject.

Their stay with us, however, was not to be of as long duration as we had expected, for early next morning we sighted a small brigantine, who, on being hailed, stated that she was bound for Hongkong. Passages for the officers and their men were soon arranged, and, within an hour of picking her up she had sent a boat, we had bidden our naval visitors goodby and were standing on our fictitious course again. As soon, however, as they were out of sight the helm was put up and we were making a bee line back to the settlement.

That evening as I was pacing the deck, smoking my cigar and wondering when the time would come for me to say farewell, I heard a light footstep behind me and next moment Alie came to my side. We paced the deck for a little while, talking commonplaces about the beauty of the night, the speed of her vessel, and the visit of the man-of-war's men; then she drew me to the stern and said:

"Do you remember your first night on board this boat, when we discussed the sea and the poets who have written of her?"

"It was the night of the first day I ever saw you," I answered. "Is it likely I should have forgotten it?"

"Some men forget very easily," she answered, looking down at the sparkling water. "But I'll do you the justice to say I don't think you are one of that kind."

"And you are right; I am sure I am not. I think if I were lying dead in my grave, my brain would still remember you."

She looked roguishly up into my face and said:

"That is rather a big assertion for a medical man to make, is it not?"

"Bother medicine," I cried impatiently. "It reminds me of the outer world. And by the same token, Alie, I want to ask you something unpleasant again."

"And that is?"

"When I am to say goodby to you?"

"Tomorrow," she answered. "Tomorrow night, all being well, we shall pick up a trading schooner off a certain island. Her owner is under an obligation to me and will take you on board and convey you to Thursday island. Thence you can travel home via Australia and the canal or Honolulu and America, as you please."

I had expected that the parting was not far distant, but I did not think it would prove as close as this. I told Alie as much.

"It is the only opportunity that may serve," she answered. "And I must not keep you with me too long for your own sake."

Under cover of the darkness I managed to find and take her hand.

"It is only for a year, Alie. You understand that, don't you? At the end of a year you are to be my wife?"

"If you still wish it, yes," she answered, but so softly that I had to strain my ears to catch it. Then with a wish-

pered good night she slipped from me and went below.

At sundown next evening, surely enough, a small topsail schooner hove in sight from behind an island, and seeing us ran up a signal. It was returned from our gaff, and as soon as I read it I



"I want you to wear it," knew that my fate was sealed. Leaving Walworth to see my luggage brought up on deck, I went down Alie's companion ladder to bid her farewell. She was seated on the couch at the farther end, reading.

"The schooner has just put in an appearance and answered our signals," I began, hardly able to trust my voice to speak. "I have come to say goodby. For both our sakes we must not let this interview be a long one. Alie, will you tell me for the last time exactly when I am to see you again and where?"

"On the first day of May next year, all being well, I will be at an address in London, of which I will take care to acquaint you beforehand."

"But since you last spoke of that I have been thinking it over. Alie, you must not come to England. The risk would be too great."

"There will be no risk at all, and I shall take every precaution to insure my own safety. You may rest assured of that," she answered. "But before you go I have a little keepsake for you, something that may serve to remind you of the Beautiful White Devil and the days you have spent with her when you are far away."

As she spoke she took from the table, beside which she was now standing, a large gold locket. Opening it, she let me see that it contained an excellent portrait of herself.

"Oh, Alie," I cried, "how can I thank you? You have given me the one thing of all others that I desired. Now in my turn I have a present for you. This ring—here I draw a ring from my finger—was my poor dead mother's last gift to me, and I want you to wear it."

I placed it on her finger and, having done so, took her in my arms and kissed her on the lips. This time she offered no resistance.

Then we said goodby, and I went on deck. An hour later the Lone Star had faded away into the night, and I was aboard the Pearl Queen bound for Thursday island and the port of London.

When I came to think of it, I could hardly believe that it was nearly four months since Walworth had found me out in the Occidental hotel, Hongkong, and induced me to become the servant and at the same time the lover of the Beautiful White Devil.

Arriving in Thursday island, one of the hottest and quaintest little spots on earth, I was fortunate enough to catch a British India mailboat in the act of starting for Brisbane.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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