

THE PORT OF MISSING MEN

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON,
Author of "The House of a Thousand Candles"

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Chapter VII

ON THE DARK DECK.

"AM Columbus every time I cross," said under the sun. "What lies out there in the west is an undiscovered country."

"Then I shall have to take the part of the doubting and doubting crew. It is not America, and we're sure to get into trouble if we don't turn back."

"You shall be clipped into iron and steel on bread and water and turned over to the Indians as soon as we reach land."

"Don't starve me! Let me hang from the yardarm at once or walk the plank. I choose the hour immediately after dinner for my obsequies?"

"They were silent for a moment, continuing their tramp. Fair weather was peopling the decks. Dick Claiborne was engaged with a vivacious California girl, and Shirley saw him only at meals and chairs for the night."

"Shirley and Armitage talked as people will on shipboard—of everything under the sun. Shirley's enthusiasm was in themselves interesting, but she was informed in the world's larger affairs, as became the daughter of a man who was an authority in such matters, and found it pleasant to discuss them with Armitage. He felt the poetic quality in her. It was that which had first appealed to him, but he did not know that something of the same sort in himself touched her. It was enough for those days that she was courteous and amusing and gained a trifle in her eyes from the fact that he had no tangible background."

"Then came the evening of the fifth day. They were waiting a turn after dinner on the lighted deck. The stars hung faint and far through the clouds, and the wind was keen from the sea. A few passengers were out on the deck strolling about, gathering up rugs and chairs for the night."

"Time oughtn't to be reckoned at all at sea, so that people who feel themselves getting old might sail forth into the deep and defy the old man with the hoariness."

"I like the idea. Such people could become fishers—men who go very very far on such brain food."

"They wouldn't eat, Mr. Armitage. Brain food, forsooth! You talk like a breakfast food advertisement. My idea, please, please—is for such fortunate people to sail in pretty little boats with orange tated sails and pick up lost dreams. I got a hint of that in a pretty poem once—"

"Time seemed to pause a little space. I heard a dream go by."

"But out here in midocean a little boat with lateen sails wouldn't have much show. And dreams passing over the sea are pretty and are creditable to your imagination, but they don't pay. Your fancy was more militant. Now, for example, you like battle pictures," he said.

"That was a wonderful collection of military and battle pictures shown in Paris last winter. The sea half withdrew her hand from his arm and turned away. The sea winds did not wholly account for the sudden color in her cheeks. She had seen Armitage in Paris—in cafes, at the opera, but not at the exhibition of the world famous battle pictures, yet undoubtedly he had seen her, and she remembered with instant consciousness the hours of absorption she had spent before those canvases."

"It was in Paris during the exhibition," he said quietly. "Ormsby, the American painter—the man who did the 'High Tide at Gettysburg'—is an acquaintance of mine."

"It was Ormsby's painting that had particularly captivated Shirley. She had returned to it day after day, and the thought that Armitage had taken advantage of her deep interest in Pickett's charge was not unamusing, and she abruptly changed the subject. Shirley had speculated much as to the meaning of Armitage's remark at the carriage door in Geneva—that he expected the slayer of the old Armitage prime minister to be the slayer in any way in his talks with her on the King Edward. Their conversations had been pitched usually in a light and frivolous key, or, if one were disposed to be serious, the other responded in a note of levity."

"They watched the lights of an east-bound steamer that was passing near. The exchange of rocket signals—that pretty and graceful parley between ships that pass in the night—interested them for a moment. Then the deck lights went out so suddenly it seemed that a dark curtain had descended and shut them in with the sea."

"Accident to the dynamo—we shall have the lights on in a moment!" shouted the deck officer, who stood near, talking to a passenger.

"Shall we go in?" asked Armitage.

"Yes; it is getting cold," replied Shirley.

"For a moment they were quite alone on the dark deck, though they heard voices near at hand."

"They were groping their way toward the main saloon, where they had left Mr. and Mrs. Claiborne, when Shirley was aware of some one lurking near. A figure seemed to be crouching close by, and she felt its furtive movements and knew that it had passed, but remained a few feet away. Her hand on Armitage's arm tightened."

"What is that?" There is some one following us," she said.

"At the same moment Armitage, too, became aware of the presence of a stooping figure behind him. He stopped abruptly and faced about. "Stand quite still, Miss Claiborne."

"He peered about, and instantly, as though waiting for his voice, a tall figure rose not a yard from him and a

long arm shot high above his head and descended swiftly. They were close to the rail, and a roll of the ship sent Armitage off his feet and away from his assailant. Shirley at the same moment threw out her hands, defensively or for support, and clutched the arm and shoulder of the man who had assailed Armitage. He had driven a knife at John Armitage and was posing himself for another attempt when Shirley seized his arm. As he drew back a fold of his cloak still lay in Shirley's grasp, and she gave a sharp little cry as the figure, with a quick jerk, released the cloak and slipped away into the shadows. A moment later the lights were restored, and she saw Armitage regarding ruefully a long slit in the left arm of his tunic.

"Are you hurt? What has happened?" he demanded.

"It must have been a sea serpent," he replied, laughing.

"The deck officer regarded them curiously as they blinked in the glare of the lights."

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"MAMMOTH CAVE. It furnished the Saltpeter For the War of 1812.

There is an interesting bit of history connected with the cave. Few Americans are aware that it has been the country in the war of 1812 by furnishing saltpeter for the manufacture of gunpowder, but such is the case. The powder used by Old Hickory in the battle of New Orleans in 1815 is said to have been made with saltpeter from Mammoth cave. As early as 1800 a Mr. Fowler obtained, it is said, 100,000 pounds of saltpeter from the cave. It was used in the war of 1812 and then discovered in Kentucky.

In 1800 Dr. Samuel Brown of Lexington rode a thousand miles on horseback to Philadelphia to lay before the American Philosophical society, in session there, the facts about the presence of niter in these caverns, saying that the deposits would be especially valuable in case of war with any foreign power. Brown did not mention Mammoth cave by name, but some of the probability is, as local tradition asserts, that it was first discovered by whites in 1800 when a hunter named Houchins or Hutchins entered the cave in search of a wounded bear. Bayard Taylor says it was first discovered in 1812, but does not give his authority. The only value set on it at first was for the nitrous acid it contained.

"For this a Mr. McLean paid \$40 for the cave and 200 acres of land around it. He sold it to Messrs. Grant and Wilkins, who derived a fortune from the saltpeter made there during the war of 1812. The embargo cut us off from any other supply, and the output of saltpeter from this cave enabled our manufacturers to make sufficient powder to carry on the war.—New York Post.

ANCIENT CLOCKS. Curiosities in the Museum of the Town of Schramberg.

In the town of Schramberg, in the Black Forest district of Wurttemberg, Germany, where one of the clock industries is clockmaking, there is an interesting museum of timepieces. The collection displays the gradual development in the making of clocks for many centuries.

Among the curiosities are many of great historical value. There is an alarm clock constructed in the year 1680 for the use of travelers. In form it resembles a lantern, and the interior is designed to hold a lighted candle. The candle is slowly pushed forward by a spring, which also controls the mechanism of the clock. A little pair of shears clip the wick of the candle automatically every minute to regulate its light. The lantern is mounted on movable slides, so that the sleeper is not at first disturbed by the presence of light.

The alarm is set by inserting a peg in the second dial plate. When the required hour arrives the clock is sounded, and at the same time the movable slides fall, flooding the room with light.

Among the curiosities is a Japanese new clock. The inventor induces the motive power by descending a saw formed strip of metal, the teeth of which operate the wheel of the clockwork. In another Japanese clock the hand is attached to a weight, which sinks once in twenty-four hours. The time is indicated by a hand on the perpendicular scale.

Persons prosaically concerned with the present, perhaps, are not so much interested in the genealogists whose souls are obsessed with a worship of ancestry. A number of these unregenerate found amusement in the remarks of the two claimants with a long line of forefathers. The two women were cousins. They were discussing a new acquaintance.

"By the way," said one, "what did Mr. Blank mean by saying he is related to you? How is he related to you? Is it a near relationship?"

"Oh, yes," answered the other in deadly seriousness; "we are both descended from the Plantagenets."

Several heathen near by actually chuckled, but the daughter of the Plantagenets couldn't see anything to laugh at.—New York Times.

Slow Mental Ripening. Not infrequently those mentalities that ripen the slowest last the longest, and often the history of these men has been persistent neglect and worldly coldness until forty or more years have passed before their great powers have been conceded by their contemporaries. Truly "the lightning of a great genius is almost invariably one of a sad and somber tone, a walk apart from the beaten path." Such are the words of one who should know what the "doers of deeds" must endure. Be this as it may, it is now recognized that many of the finest achievements in business, statesmanship, literature and in all activities which require the slowest ripening were wrought by men long past sixty. Write one, "No strong man will accept sixty as the arbitrary limit of his ambition and working ability."—W. A. Newman Dorch in Century.

PATRICK HENRY.

A Saint in Religious Matters, but Different in Politics.

The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography has a number of letters by Roger Atkinson, a Virginia planter, who came from Cumberland, England, about 1750 and settled in-law, Petersburg. To his brother-in-law, Samuel Pleasant of Philadelphia, he writes in October, 1774, concerning Virginia's recently appointed seven delegates to the first Philadelphia congress. The spirit of the man is shrewd, but obvious in his letter.

"Ye old gentleman, Col. Washington, was bred a soldier—a warrior, & distinguished himself in early life before & at ye death of ye unfortunate but intrepid Braddock. He is a modest man, but sensible & speaks little—in action cool, like a Bishop at his prayers."

"The 4th is a real half Quaker, Patrick Henry, your brother's man—moderate & mild & in religious matter a Saint but ye very Devil in Politics—a Saint by Church-Road, but a very good Farmer will explain this—I know it is above your thumbs. He will shake ye Senate & Some years ago had like to have talked Treason in ye House. In these times a very useful man, a notable American, very stern & steady in his country's cause & at ye same time such a fool that I verily believe it w'd puzzle even a King to buy him off—he's a second Shippen—oh, that he had the handling of some of our Courtiers for instance, for as it North or South—Scottish English Welsh (ye poor Irish have enough of it in their own country) our Patrick w'd certainly be very unwell—he is no Macaroni."

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WORSE THAN HISSING.

Stone Throwing Was a Habit in Theaters of Ancient Greece.

Getting the bird, writes a correspondent, need not always prove a source of joy to the unfortunate actor, for there are still some nations that express their applause by hissing. The Basutos, for instance, and the natives of the New Hebrides employ this method of expressing their admiration. Even among ourselves any interruption of the actor who is the center of attention is quelled with the hissing "Hush!" which is intended to silence the interrupter and show our admiration for the interrupted.

But hissing and spitting little—in action cool, like a Bishop at his prayers."

"The 4th is a real half Quaker, Patrick Henry, your brother's man—moderate & mild & in religious matter a Saint but ye very Devil in Politics—a Saint by Church-Road, but a very good Farmer will explain this—I know it is above your thumbs. He will shake ye Senate & Some years ago had like to have talked Treason in ye House. In these times a very useful man, a notable American, very stern & steady in his country's cause & at ye same time such a fool that I verily believe it w'd puzzle even a King to buy him off—he's a second Shippen—oh, that he had the handling of some of our Courtiers for instance, for as it North or South—Scottish English Welsh (ye poor Irish have enough of it in their own country) our Patrick w'd certainly be very unwell—he is no Macaroni."

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MAY FIRES.

Ancient Scotch Custom Which Involved Human Sacrifices.

Sir John Sinclair's "Statistical Account of Scotland" contains notices of many old customs, which still continue to be observed in the Highlands, though they were even then fast dying out. From the eleventh volume of that great work, which was published in 1791 and the succeeding years, we learn, on the authority of the minister of Callender, Perthshire, that the boys of the township assembled in a body upon the moors on May day and proceeded to dig a circular trench, leaving the soil in the center undisturbed, so as to form a low table of green turf surfaces. This to accommodate the whole party.

They lighted a fire and prepared a custard of milk and eggs and a large oatmeal cake, which they baked upon a stone placed in the center. When they had eaten the custard, they divided the cake into as many equal portions as there were persons in the assembly and dished one of those pieces with charcoal until it was perfectly black. They then placed the pieces of cake together in a bonnet, and each in turn drew one blindfolded, the holder of the bonnet being entitled to the last piece. The boy who drew the blackened portion was destined to be sacrificed and was compelled to leap three times through the flames.

Although the ceremony had degenerated into a mere pastime for boys, it is evident that it must once upon a time have involved the actual sacrifice of a human being in order to render the coming summer fruitful.—Gentleman's Magazine.

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A QUICK TOUCH.

She Needed Money and Sent a Messenger That Would Fetch It.

A grandfather well known in a suburb telegraph office and sent to the receiver of messages that she desired to telegraph her husband, who was away in the country, to ask him for money. He pointed her to the counter and she with blank face told her the rate for a dozen words. She struggled away for a quarter of an hour and then handed in the following:

"Won't you please send me \$5 by next post?"

"I don't know whether that will do or not," she said as she felt for her purse. "If you were to receive such a telegram from your wife, would you forward the money?"

"Well, I might," he replied in doubtful tones.

"Now, you wait. I don't like the telegram at all, because I tried to keep it within twelve words. I'll write another."

She tore it up, walked over to the counter and in three minutes handed in a new one reading:

"Am out of food and fuel and want \$5 as you state you can get it here. If you can't spare it I'll pawn the parlor carpet."

"That would bring the money from me," said the counter clerk as he read the lines and marked the number of words.

"Then it will from him. Send it quick."—London Tit-Bits.

Investigating Grandpa. A grandfather well known in a English house of commons was chatting amicably with his little granddaughter, who was snugly ensconced on his knee.

"That makes your hair so white, grandpa? The little miss queried.

"I'm very old, my dear; I was in the ark," replied his lordship, with a painful disregard of the truth.

"Oh, you are Noah?"

"Are you Shem, then?"

"No, I am not Shem."

"Are you Ham?"

"No."

"Then," said the little one, who was fast nearing the limit of her Biblical knowledge, "you must be Japheth."

A negative reply was given to this query also, for the old gentleman inwardly wondered what the outcome would be.

"But, grandpa, if you are not Noah or Shem or Ham or Japheth you must be a beast!"

ASCENSION ISLAND. One Place in This Busy World Where Money is Useless.

Now and then one hears of out of the way places where the conventions of life, as they are understood, do not exist. One of these is where money is useless. This is Ascension Island, in the Atlantic.

This island is the property of the British admiralty and is governed by a captain of the royal navy. There is no private property in land, so there are no rents, taxes, etc. The stocks and herds are public property, and the meat killed is issued in rations. So are the vegetables grown on the farms.

When a fisherman makes a catch he brings it to the guard room, where it is issued by the sergeant major. The only private property are fowls and pigeons. Even the wild donkeys are under government control. They are listed on the books of the paymaster and are handed over at death. The population consists of a few bluejackets, a company of marines and some Kivoo from Sierra Leone.

The mulete