

# THE CAPTAIN OF THE KANSAS

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## CHAPTER I.

"I THINK I shall enjoy this trip," purred Isobel Baring, nestling comfortably among the cushions of her deck chair. A steward was arranging tea for two at a small table. The Kansas, with placid hum of engines, was speeding evenly through an azure sea.

"I agree with that opinion most heartily, though, to be sure, so much depends on the weather," replied her friend, Elsie Maxwell, rising to pour out the tea. Already the brisk sea breeze had kissed the Chilean pallor from Elsie's face, which had regained its English peach bloom. Isobel Baring's complexion was tinged with the warmth of a pomegranate. At sea, even in the blue Pacific, she carried with her the suggestion of a tropical garden.

"I never gave a thought to the weather," purred Isobel again as she subsided more deeply into the cushions.

"Let us hope such a blissful state of mind may be justified. But, you know, dear, we may run into a dreadful gale before we reach the strait."

Isobel laughed.

"All the better," she cried. "People tell me I am a most fascinating invalid—I look like a creamy omelet. And what luck to have a clam so disinterested as you where a lot of nice men are concerned! What have I done to deserve it? Because you are really charming, you know."

"Does that mean that you have already discovered a lot of nice men on board?"

Elsie handed her friend a cup of tea and a plate of toast.

"Naturally. While you were mooning over the lights and tints of the Andes I kept an eye—both eyes, in fact—on our compulsory acquaintances of the next three weeks. To begin with, there's the captain."

"He is good looking, certainly. Somewhat reserved, I fancied."

"Reserved!" Isobel showed all her fine teeth in a smile. Incidentally she took a satisfactory bite out of a square of toast. "I'll soon shake the reserve out of him. He is mine. You will see him play pet dog long before we meet that terrible gale of yours."

"Isobel, you promised your father—"

"To look after my health during the voyage. Do you think I intend only to sleep, eat and read novels all the way to London? Then indeed I should be ill. But there is a French count on the ship. He is mine too."

"You mean to find safety in numbers?"

"Oh, there are others! Of course I am sure of my little count. He twisted his mustache with such an air when I skidded past him in the companionway I am sure M. le Comte Edouard de Poincillit will do our French far more good than a course in Moliere."

"Am I to be included in the lessons? And you actually know the man's name already?"

"Read it on his luggage, dear girl. He has such a lot. See if he doesn't wear three different colored shirts for breakfast, lunch and tea. And, if you refuse to help, who is to take care of le petit Edouard while I give the captain a trial round? Don't look cross. There's a darling!"

"Now, Isobel, that does not matter a bit in Valparaiso, where you are known, but in Paris and London—"

"Where I mean to be equally well known. It is a passport to smart society to be a trifle risqué. Steward, give my compliments to Captain Courtenay and say that Miss Maxwell and Miss Baring hope he will favor them with his company to tea."

Elsie's bright, eager face flushed slightly. She leaned forward, with a certain squaring of the shoulders, being a determined young person in some respects.

"For once I shall let you off," she said in a low voice. "So I give you fair warning, Isobel—I must not be included in inopportune invitations of that kind."

"Good gracious! I only meant to be polite. Tut, tut, as dad says when he can't swear before ladies, I shan't make the running for you any more."

Elsie drummed an impatient foot on the deck. There was a little pause. Isobel closed her eyes lazily, but she opened them again when she heard her friend say:

"I am sorry if I seem crotchety, dear. Indeed, it is no pretense on my part. You cannot imagine how that man Ventana persecuted me. The mere suggestion of any one's paying me compliments and trying to be fascinating is so repellent that I cringe at the thought."

Isobel Baring raised her head from the cushions.

"Ventana was a determined wooer, then? What did he do?" she asked.

"He—he pestered me with his attentions. Oh, I should have liked to flog him with a whip!"

"He was always that sort of person—too serious." And the head dropped again.

The steward returned. He was a half caste. His English was to the point.

"De capt'n say he busy, he no come," was his message.

Elsie's display of irritation vanished

in a merry laugh. Isobel bounced up from the depths of the chair. Her dark eyes blazed wrathfully.

"Tell him"—she began.

Then she mastered her annoyance sufficiently to ascertain what it was that Captain Courtenay had actually said, and she received a courteous explanation in Spanish that the commander could not leave the chart house until the Kansas had rounded the low lying, red hued Cape Caranilla, which still barred the ship's path to the south, the first stage of the long voyage from Valparaiso to London.

But pertinacity was a marked trait of the Baring family. Otherwise Isobel's father, a bluff, churchwarden type of man, would not have won his way to the chief place in the firm of Baring, Thompson, Miguel & Co., mining

and export agents, the leading house in Chile's principal port. Notwithstanding Elsie's previous outbursts the steward was sent back to ask if the ladies might visit the bridge later. Meanwhile would Captain Courtenay like a cup of tea? All things considered, there was only one possible answer—Captain Courtenay would be charmed if they favored him with both the tea and their company.

"I thought so!" cried Isobel triumphantly. "Come on, Elsie! Let's climb the ladder of conquest. The steward will bring the tea things. The chart house is just splendid. It will provide a refuge when the count becomes too pressing."

There was a tightening of Elsie's lips, to which Isobel paid no heed. The imminent protest was left unspoken, for Courtenay's voice came to them:

"Please hold on by the rail. If a foot were to slip on one of those brass treads the remainder of the day would be a compound of tears and striking plaster."

Gathering her skirts daintily in her left hand, Isobel tripped up the steep stairs. Elsie followed, Courtenay, who had the manner and semblance of the first lieutenant of a warship, stood outside a haven of plate glass, shining mahogany and white paint. The woodwork of the deck was scrubbed until it had the color of new bread. An officer paced the bridge. A sailor within the chart house held the small wheel of the steam steering gear. Somewhat to Isobel's surprise, neither man seemed to be aware of her presence.

"So this is your den?" she said, throwing her birdlike glance over the bright interior before she gave the commander a look which was designed to bewitch him instantly. "Surely you do not sleep here too?"

"Oh, no! This room is the brain of the ship, Miss Baring. We are always wide awake here. My quarters are farther aft. I think I can find a chair for you if you care to sit down while I have my tea."

The captain led the way to a spacious cabin behind the chart house.

"I hope you don't mind the chairs being secured to the deck," he said, tucking off his hat. "So far above sea level, you know, everything that is loose comes to grief when the ship rolls."

"Then what becomes of your photographs?" demanded Isobel promptly, her quick eyes having discovered the pictures of two ladies in silver frames on a writing table.

"I take care to put them away. There is always plenty of warning. No ordinary sea can trouble a big hull like the Kansas."

"Is that your mother, the dear old lady in the lace cap?"

"Yes, and the other is my sister."

"Oh, really! Is she married?"

"No. Like me, she is wedded to her profession."

"Will you think it rude if I ask what that is?"

"She is a hospital nurse—the matron, indeed, of a public institution in the suburbs of London."

Isobel filled a cup of tea, asked if Captain Courtenay took milk and sugar and said demurely, with a sip of a spoonful:

"Let me see if I can guess your tastes."

Elsie's blue eyes assumed a deeper shade. Men might like that kind of

thing, but she felt that her face and right hand, but behind his back. Even in their alarm they realized that nothing very terrible would happen now. But why had the shot been fired, and what had given that tense ring to Courtenay's throat?

Venturing a little farther, they gained the bridge. On the main deck, a long way beneath, near an open hatch, a half caste Chilean was lying on his back. He had evidently been wounded. Blood was flowing from his leg. It smeared the white deck. The officer who had climbed down so speedily from the bridge was directing two other men how to lift him. Close by the chief officer, Mr. Boyle, was standing a deep cut on his chin with a handkerchief. At the same time he curtly ordered off such deck hands and stewards as came running forward, attracted by the disturbance.

The girls were gazing wide eyed at this somewhat unnerving scene when Courtenay approached.

"Better go below," he said quietly. "I am sorry this trouble should have happened, at the beginning of the voyage too. I hope it will not upset you. That rascally Chilean tried to knife Mr. Boyle, and those other blackguards were ready to side with him. I had to shoot quick and straight to show them I meant what I said."

"Is he dead?" asked Isobel, with a contemptuous coolness as to the fate of the mutineer which Courtenay found admirable.

"Not a bit of it. Fired at his legs. Only a flesh wound, I fancy."

"Poor wretch!" murmured Elsie. "Was there no other way?"

"There is only one way of dealing with that sort of skunk," was the gruff answer. The pity in her voice implied a condemnation of his act. He resented it, and so it came to pass that neither the library nor the moon had power to draw the captain of the Kansas to the promenade deck that night.

Dr. Christobal brought some additional details to the dinner table. He was not the ship's doctor. The Kansas, built for freight rather than passengers, did not carry a surgeon on her roll. Dr. Christobal's presence was due to Mr. Baring's solicitude in his daughter's behalf. It chanced that the courtly and gray haired Spanish physician had relinquished his practice in Chile and was about to pay a long promised visit to a married daughter in Barcelona. Friendship, not unaided by a good fee, induced him to travel by the Kansas.

He had been called on to attend Mr. Boyle and the wounded Chilean, and he reported now that the chief officer's injury was trifling, but the Chilean's wound might incapacitate him during the remainder of the voyage.

"So far as I can gather," he said, "Mr. Boyle had a narrow escape. Captain Courtenay fired as the knife fell. Otherwise our first mate would have attended his own funeral this evening."

"What was the cause of the affair?" Isobel asked.

"The man is not one of the ship's crew, I understand. His name is Frascuelo, and it appears that he was engaged to place some bunker coal aboard early this morning. He says that he was drugged and his clothes stolen, that he came off to the ship at a late hour and that some one flung him headlong into a hold which, luckily for him, was nearly full of cotton bales. He was stunned by the fall,

and woke it not for Captain Courtenay's custom of having all hatches taken off and a thorough examination of the cargo made before the holds are finally battened down for the voyage. Frascuelo might now be in a tight place in more than one sense."

Dr. Christobal was proud of his idiomatic English. He spoke the language with the careless freedom of a Londoner.

"Frascuelo seems to have passed an eventful day," said the little French count, who had been waiting anxiously for a chance to join in the conversation.

"But why should he want to kill poor Mr. Boyle?" inquired Isobel after giving the Frenchman an encouraging glance. Incidentally she smiled at Elsie. "Why puzzle one's brains over foreign tongues when all the world speaks English?" she telegraphed.

"Mr. Boyle is a peculiar person," said the doctor dryly. "I happen to have known him during some years. You and I might regard him as a man of few words, but he has acquired a wonderful vocabulary for the benefit of sailor men. I believe he can swear in every known lingo. His accomplishment in that direction no doubt an-

noyed Frascuelo, who became frantic when he heard that the ship would not call at any South American port. I imagine, too, that the unfortunate fellow is still suffering from the drug which, he says, was administered to him. Anyhow, you know how the affair terminated."

"I, for one, think some consideration might have been shown him," said Elsie.

"There is no time for argument when a Chilean draws a knife, Miss Maxwell."

"But if his story is true—"

"There never yet was a stowaway who did not invent a plausible yarn. Nevertheless I believe, and Mr. Boyle agrees with me, that the man is not lying."

They felt the ship swing around on a new course, and the rays of the setting sun lit up the salon table through the open starboard ports.

"Due south now, ladies!" cried Dr. Christobal cheerily. "We have rounded Cape Cardones. We practically follow the seventy-sixth degree until we approach Evangelistas Island. Thus far we are in the open sea. Then we pick our way through the strait discovered by that daring Portuguese, Fernando de Magallanes. If I am not mistaken," he added, glancing through the port windows, "we shall all have our stamina tested before twenty-four hours have passed."

Heads were turned and necks craned to see what had induced this unexpected prophecy. Behind the distant coast line the inner giants of the Andes threw heavenward their rugged outlines, with many a peak and glacier glinting in vivid colors against a sky so clear and blue that they seemed strangely near.

"Yes, this wonderful atmosphere of ours is enchanting," said the doctor when assailed by a chorus of doubts. "But it carries its deceptive smiles too far. The very beauty of the cordillera is a sign of storm. I am sorry to be a croaker, yet we are running into a gale."

"I shall ask the captain," pouted Isobel, rising.

The count twisted his mustache. He knew that both ladies were in the forbidden territory of the bridge when the fracas occurred.

"You perhaps are a good sailor," said he, addressing Elsie.

"I am afraid to boast," she answered. "I have been in what was called a No. 8 gale, whatever that may mean, and weathered it splendidly, but I am older now."

"It cannot have been long ago, seeing that you recall it so exactly."

"It was six years ago, and I was seventeen then," said Elsie, her eyes wandering to the purple and gold of the faroff mountains.

"But you are English. You are therefore at home on the rolling deep," murmured M. de Poincillit confidentially. She did not endeavor to interpret his expressive glance, though he seemed to convey more than he said.

"Not so much at home at sea as you are in my language," she replied, and she turned to Dr. Christobal, whom she had already known slightly in Valparaiso.

"Are you coming on deck?" she inquired. "I am sure you are a mine of information on Chile, and I want to extract some of the ore while the land is still visible. It is already assuming the semblance of a dream."

"You are not saying a last farewell to Valparaiso, I hope," said her elderly companion as they quitted the salon.

"I think so. I have no ties there save those of sentiment. I shall not return unless, if a doubtful fortune permits, I am able some day to revisit two graves which are dear to me."

There was a little catch in her voice, and the doctor was far too sympathetic to endeavor forthwith to divert her sad thoughts.

"I knew your father," he said gently. "He was a most admirable man, but quite unsuited to the environment of a new country, where the dollar is gold, and an unstable deity at that. He was swindled outrageously by men who stand high in the community today. But you, Miss Maxwell, with your knowledge of Spanish and your other acquisitions, should do better here than in Europe, provided, that is, you mean to earn your own living."

"I am proud to hear you speak well of my father," she said. "And I am well aware that he was badly treated in business. I fear, too, that his advocacy of the rights of the Indians brought him into disfavor. Of all his possessions the only remnant left to me is a barren mountain, with a slice of fertile valley, in the Quilota district. It yields me the magnificent revenue of \$200 per annum."

"How in the world did he come to own land there?"

"It was a gift from the Naquilla tribe. He defeated an attempt made to oust them by a big land company. The company has since asked me to sell the property and offered me a fair price, too, as the cultivable land is a very small strip, but it would be almost like betraying the cause for which he fought, would it not?"

"Yes, indeed," agreed the doctor, though his heart and not his head dictated the reply. "May I ask you to tell me your plans for the future?" he went on.

[To be Continued.]

Having a Few Quiet Laughs With The Funny Man

Alike, but Different.

Cynicus—Oh, all women are alike. Sillius—Then why should any man commit bigamy?—Life.

The Legal Route.

Black—Where there's a will there's a way. White—Yes, to break it.—Town Topics.

News to Her.

He—Concerning love, everything possible has been said and thought. She (coyly)—But not to me.

Its Size.

"What is this new fish story of Jim's about?"

"About the limit."—Exchange.

His Legacy.

"Did your rich uncle leave you much?" "Four good excuses for breaking his will."—Detroit Free Press.

His Speculations.

"How did old Rox get rich?" "Speculating. He's been married four times."—Life.

Much Pleasure

Stout Microbe—You look like a veteran, old sport. Been in many tight squeezes.

Thin Microbe—Well, I should say so. I am a kiss microbe.—Pittsburgh Dispatch.

Stability.

Teacher—Define "stability." Tommy. Tommy—Stability is what a man has who takes care of a stable.—Exchange.

Weather Query.

Frivol—In a "driving storm" does Jupiter Pluvius hold the reins? Sporty—No. He lets 'em go.

Not Talkative.

Hewitt—He doesn't talk much. Jewett—No. He is an economical sort of liar.—Exchange.

Long Courtship.

Maud—Are you engaged to Jack for good? Ethel—It looks so. I don't think he'll ever be in a position to marry me.

No, Indeed.

"A little learning is a dangerous thing."

"Yes," replied Miss Cayenne. "But the fact doesn't justify some of us in being proud of how little we know."—Washington Star.

The Proof.

"If your wife is such a terribly good cook why don't you eat more dinners at home?"

"How would I know how well she could cook if I didn't eat somewhere else?"—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The Alternative.

Figg—My wife wants a new silk dress.

Fogg—Are you going to let her have it?

Figg—Yes. It's a case of silks or sulks.—Boston Transcript.

The Reason.

"Only a human paradox can put a weather sign on a steeple."

"Why so?"

"Because he is the only kind of man who can be successful in a vane attempt."—Baltimore American.

Native Instinct.

"I wonder why Shakespeare didn't make Hamlet say he would rather be a dog and bay the moon."

"Why Hamlet?"

"Because he was already a great Dane."—Baltimore American.

Good Change.

"Auntie, can you change a dime for me?"

"How do you want it changed, dear?"

"Into a quarter, please."—Boston Transcript.

A Notable Event.

"People often preserve the pens with which historic documents are signed."

"Quite so," said his wife. "I think I'll preserve the pen with which you signed that \$5 check you gave me the other day."—Kansas City Journal.

Perfunctory Inquiry.

"Johnny, aren't you getting into the habit of asking questions about things in which you are not really interested?"

"Maybe. But that's what our teacher does."—Washington Star.



Captain Courtenay.



Elsie.