



THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE DEVIL

BY GUY BOOTHBY

A BID FOR FORTUNE, DR. NIKOLA
THE MARRIAGE OF ESTHER, ETC.

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CHAPTER I.—Dr. De Normanville, an English physician at Hong Kong, hears of a woman called the Beautiful White Devil making her home on an island in the Pacific of which she is the sovereign and leading a piratical life in a white yacht on the ocean. Dr. De Normanville receives a call from a stranger who engages his professional services to go to an unknown place to treat an epidemic of smallpox. He and his wife, after an eventful voyage, find himself on board the Lone Star, the yacht of the Beautiful White Devil. IV, V and VI.—He is taken to her island home, where he fights the plague successfully and falls in love with Alié, the Beautiful White Devil.

[CONTINUED.]

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 haul 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. Alié 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 haul 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 must 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 Alié 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, Alié 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 Alié's message he came aft and, having touched his southwest, 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 im-

mediately 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—there 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 Alié, who, enveloped in silks, 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 melt, 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 forward, to break with a roar upon the forecastle head, carrying away a dozen feet of hullwork 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 bulwork and a boat carried away as above described, and another crashed 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—bright sunshine, gentle breezes and a sea as smooth as polished silver. After breakfast the awning, 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 Alié 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. Alié 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 Alié.

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 Alié 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 hoove to, 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, woebegone 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 Alié, 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 forward 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 our wardroom 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 he 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 Alié 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 Alié'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, Alié 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 Alié, 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. Alié 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 goodbye 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 Alié came to my side. We paced the deck for a little while, talking commonplace 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?"

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

"And that is?"

"When I am to say goodbye 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 Alié 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, Alié. 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 whispered 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 recall it."

knew that my fate was sealed. Leaving Walworth to see my luggage brought up on deck, I went down Alié'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 goodbye. For both our sakes we must not let this interview be a long one. Alié, 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. Alié, 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, Alié," 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 drew 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 "I do," and I went to deck. An hour later the Lone Star 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 can 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.

CHAPTER XII. THE FIRST OF MAY.

Next morning after my return to England I donned the orthodox top hat and frock coat and set off to walk South Kensington to call upon my sister Janet, who, by the way, was a widow her husband having died of malarial fever when with his regiment on the west coast of Africa.

I found her in the morning room in the act of writing a note of welcome to me. She greeted me with all her sisterly affection and when she had done so made me sit down before the fire and tell her all my adventures.

"We have heard the most wonderful tales about you," she said, with a smile. "How you were captured by a sort of female Captain Kidd of fabulous beauty, who carried you off to an island in the Pacific, where you were made to do sufficient gold to pay your ransom."

"Indeed?"

"It has been recopied into all sorts of papers," she continued. "But I've no doubt it was a mass of mere fabrication. Own the truth now, wasn't it?"

"Every bit," I answered candidly. "I have been very much annoyed by those stupid newspaper paragraphs. It is just like the rabid craving of the age for sensationalism. But before I go any further, Janet, I want to tell you something. I am going to be married."

"You, George! Why, you always used to say you had made up your mind never to do anything so foolish."

"So I did, but you see I have changed my mind."

"So it would appear. And now, who is she? Tell me where you met her and all about her."

This was what I dreaded, but it had to be met and faced.

"Well, in the first place, her name is Alié. She is 27 years of age and an orphan. Her father was a captain in the English navy, but is now dead. She is very sweet, very accomplished, and very beautiful, and I feel sure, Janet, if only for my sake, you will offer her a hearty welcome when she comes home."

"You know me well enough to be sure of that, don't you, dear old George? And is anything settled yet? How soon does she come home, and when are you going to be married?"

"To your first question I can only answer, as soon after the 1st of May as possible. On the 1st Alié will arrive in England. Now will you wish me happiness, Janet?"

"With all my heart and soul. But I am dying to know more. Tell me where you met her and indeed all about your adventures; remember, you have been away a whole year."

I told her as much as I thought prudent without revealing Alié's identity, and when my story was ended we sat chatting on till lunchtime.

When I left the house in the afternoon, I knew I had incurred a kind reception for Alié when she should arrive in England.

Now I must skip the greater part of a year and come to the middle of the last week in April, just three days, in fact, before I knew I might expect my darling.

I had her own assertion that she would be in England on the 1st of May, and I had never known her fail to keep her word. Just as that thought passed through my brain there was a ring at the bell, and a few seconds later my man brought up a telegram on a salver. With fingers trembling with eagerness I tore the envelope open and read the following message:

Arrived this morning. Bundaberg House, Surbiton. Come quickly.

There and then I ran out of the room, gave the telegraph boy in the porch half a crown for his trouble, seized my hat and stick, hailed a hansom and bade the cabman drive me with all possible speed to Waterloo. The man was a smart whip, and as he possessed a good horse we covered the ground in grand style. When we reached the station, I paid him off, purchased my ticket and ran on to the platform just in time to catch the 6:15 express. Punctually at five and twenty minutes to 7 I left the train again at Surbiton and, proceeding into the station yard, called another cab.

"Do you know Bundaberg House?" I asked the man as I took my place in the vehicle.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

From His Point of View.

"But you confess, father," protested the beautiful girl, when the father showed indications of a desire to withhold his consent, "that you do not know of a single solitary thing that is in the least derogatory to his reputation."

"That's just it," replied the old gentleman. "I don't like the idea of bringing any one into my family who is so infernally aye as all that."—Chicago Post.

Silk should never be brushed with a whisk broom or with a hard bristle brush. A soft bonnet brush will do no harm, but the best way to remove spots of mud is to wipe them off with a moist sponge and when the silk is dry rub it briskly with a bit of flannel.