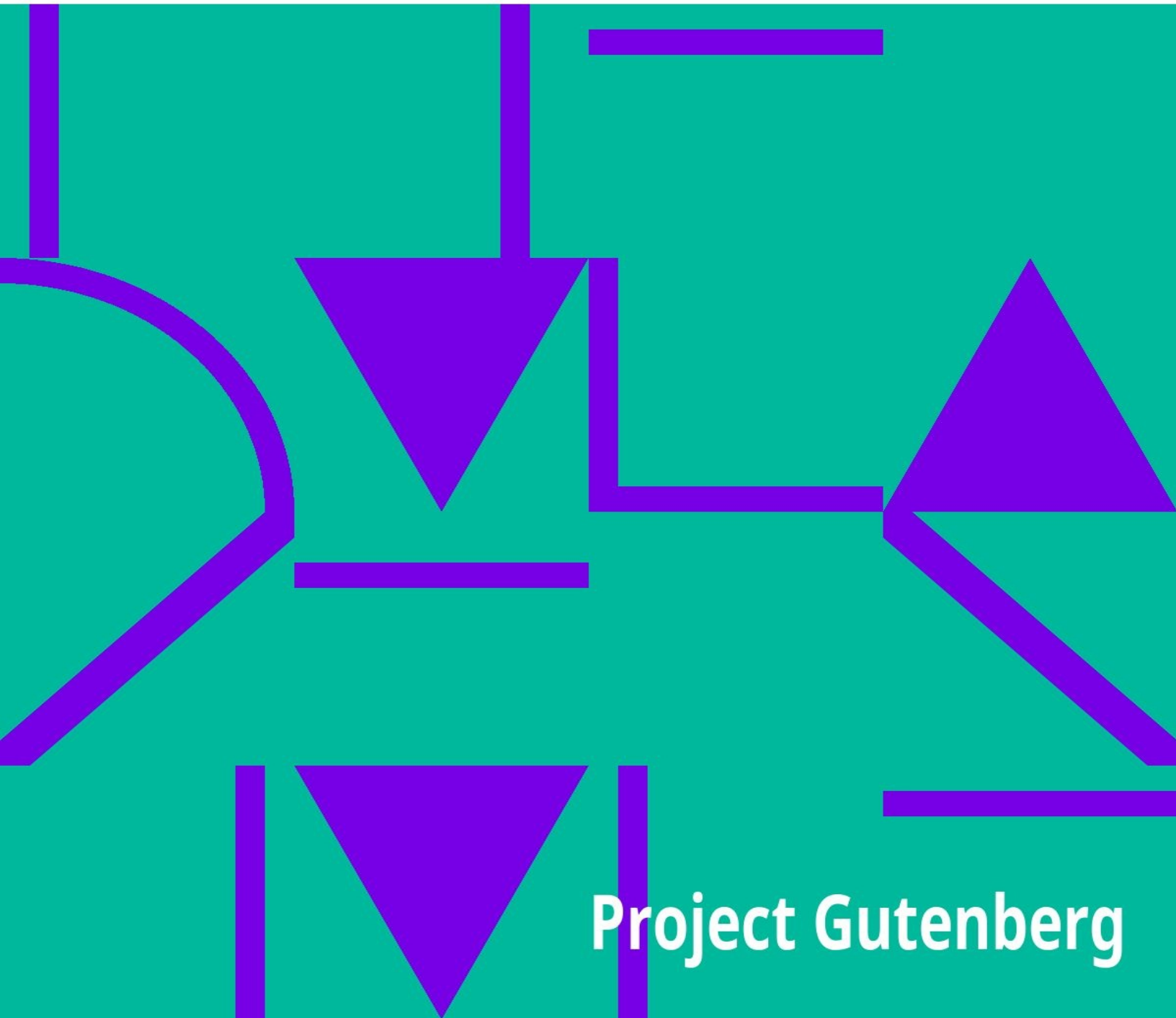
The Island Mystery

George A. Birmingham



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THE
ISLAND MYSTERY

BY

G. A. BIRMINGHAM

Author of "Gossamer," "General John Regan," "Spanish Gold," etc.

NEW YORK
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BY G. A. BIRMINGHAM

THE ISLAND MYSTERY
GOSSAMER
MINNIE'S BISHOP AND OTHER STORIES
GENERAL JOHN REGAN
THE LOST TRIBES
SPANISH GOLD
LALAGE'S LOVERS
THE SEARCH PARTY
THE SIMPKINS PLOT
THE MAJOR'S NIECE
PRISCILLA'S SPIES
THE RED HAND OF ULSTER
THE ADVENTURES OF DR. WHITTY
THE SEETHING POT
THE BAD TIMES
HYACINTH
FROM DUBLIN TO CHICAGO

NEW YORK
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TO

THEODOSIA

WHOSE DISLIKE OF SUBTLE BOOKS
AND “BRAINY” PEOPLE I SHARE

THE ISLAND MYSTERY

CHAPTER I

In 1914 there were not twenty men in England who had ever heard of the island of Salissa. Even now—I am writing in the spring of 1917—the public is very badly informed about the events which gave the island a certain importance in the history of the war. A couple of months ago I asked a well-known press-cutting agency to supply me with a complete collection of all references to Salissa which had appeared in our newspapers. I received a single short paragraph from a second-rate society weekly. It ran thus:

“Is it true that our new Minister for Balkan Problems has a curious story to tell about a certain island in the Mediterranean, and is there a lady in the case?”

The Minister referred to is, of course, Sir Bartholomew Bland-Potterton. The island must be Salissa. It is a clear proof, if proof is required, of the efficiency of our press censorship that this should be the only reference to the island in any newspaper in the course of three years. We have blundered a good deal during the war; but it cannot be said of us that we have allowed our press to supply the enemy or any one else with information likely to be of value.

Such knowledge as the public now possesses has come to it, not through newspapers, but by way of gossip. Sir Bartholomew sometimes talks, and the words of a man in his position are repeated in the smoking-rooms of clubs, round tea tables and elsewhere. Unfortunately gossip of this kind is most unreliable. The tendency is to exaggerate the picturesque parts of the story and to misinterpret motives. It is slanderous, for instance, to suggest that Sir Bartholomew was in any way attracted by the lady who bore the title of Queen of Salissa. He never spoke to her or even saw her. His interest in the Salissa affair was that of a patriotic statesman. He told me this himself, yesterday after dinner.

It was Sir Bartholomew who drew my attention to the exhaustive monograph on the Island of Salissa written by Professor Homer Geldes, of Pearmount University, Pa., U.S.A. The book was published ten years ago, but has never been widely read. I am indebted to the professor for the following information.

Salissa is derived by Professor Geldes from a Greek word Psalis, which means an arched viaduct. It is a doubtful piece of etymology, but if it were reliable the

name seems appropriate enough. The island, according to the maps published in the book, appears to be a kind of roof supported by the walls of caverns. It is possible that the professor has exaggerated this peculiarity. He was naturally anxious to make good his derivation of the name. But there are certainly many caves under the fields and vineyards of Salissa. There is one excellent natural harbour, a bay, about a mile wide, in the south coast of the island. It is protected from heavy seas by a reef of rock, a natural breakwater, which stretches across and almost blocks the entrance of the bay.

In the chapter on Ethnography I find that the people are of a mixed race. A Salissan, I gather, might boast with equal truth of being a Greek, a Turk, a Slav, or an Italian. His skull is dolichocephalic. His facial angle—but it is better for any one interested in these points to read Professor Geldes' book for himself. No regular census has ever been made on the island; but in 1907 there were forty-three inhabitants. The number has probably increased since then.

The principal industries are set down, rather grandiloquently, as agriculture and fishing. A small quantity of poor wine is made by the inhabitants for their own use. The religion of these islanders, like their race, is mixed. It seems to consist of some vague pagan beliefs and the observance of a few Christian ceremonies. The people are not in any way bigoted. Their priesthood—if it can be called a priesthood—is patriarchal. There are no taxes, no police, no courts of justice, no regular laws, indeed no government, though the island is, or was, part of the Kingdom of Megalia.

My friend Gorman, who spent some time there, says that Salissa was a delightful place to live on until the Great Powers discovered its existence. But I do not quote Gorman as a reliable authority on a question of this kind. He is an Irishman, Member of Parliament for Upper Offaly, and therefore naturally at home on an island with no government. There are people who prefer to live under settled conditions, who like paying taxes, who appreciate policemen. It is not likely that they would have been happy on Salissa three years ago. They would certainly not like to live there now.

It is scarcely necessary to add—any one who possesses an atlas can find this out for himself—that Salissa lies 47 miles (nautical) south-east of the nearest point of the Megalian coast, and thus occupies a position of supreme strategic importance. Sir Bartholomew kindly allows me to quote him on this subject. I took down the words he used and read them over to him afterwards.

“The Power,” he said, “which controls the Near East controls the world. The Power which dominates the Cyrenian Sea holds the Near East in its grasp. The Island of Salissa is the keystone of the Cyrenian Sea. The German dream of world power depends, at the last analysis, on the use of the Island of Salissa as a submarine base.”

This reads like a quotation from a political speech. It is nothing of the sort. Sir Bartholomew always talks in that way. He made this statement to me yesterday evening after dinner, when I told him that I had undertaken to write the story of recent events in the island. The pronouncement, coming from a man like Sir Bartholomew, admittedly the greatest living authority on all Near Eastern questions, justifies the writing of this book.

Whether I am the man to attempt the work is another question. Gorman, Michael Gorman, M.P., would no doubt do it better. Though he has no financial interests in the island, he was mixed up in its affairs and knows a great deal about them. But Gorman will not do it. He says, perhaps truly, that there is no money in histories of recent events. William Peter Donovan paid heavily for his knowledge of Salissa and is certainly entitled to such credit as may be won by writing a history of the recent troubles. But Donovan has devoted his later years to the cult of indolence, and he suffers from disordered action of the heart. Miss Daisy Donovan—I prefer to use her original name—might have given us a picturesque account of the events in which she played the leading part. But she is now very fully occupied with more personal affairs. Lieutenant-Commander Phillips, R.N.R., is barred by professional regulations from writing the story, and in any case he had no direct knowledge of the beginning of it. King Konrad Karl II of Megalia knows most of the facts, but it is doubtful whether the British public would tolerate a book from the pen of a man who is legally an alien enemy.

I have, at all events, leisure to devote to the work, and I have heard the story from the lips of those chiefly concerned. They have allowed me to question them on various points, and placed all, or almost all, they knew at my disposal.

CHAPTER II

Konrad Karl II began to reign over Megalia in 1908. He obtained the throne through the good offices of his uncle, who wanted to get rid of him. Konrad Karl, at that time prince, was the hero of several first-rate scandals, and had the reputation of being the most irrepressible blackguard of royal blood in all Europe. He was a perpetual source of trouble in the Imperial Court. Gorman says that the Emperor pushed him on to the vacant throne in the hopes that the Megalians would assassinate him. They generally did assassinate their kings, and would no doubt have cut the throat of Konrad Karl II if he had not left the country hurriedly after reigning two years.

As king in exile Konrad Karl made a tour of the central European courts, staying as long as he could in each. He was never allowed to stay very long because of Madame Corinne Ypsilante. This lady had shared with him the palace, but not the throne, of Megalia. She accompanied him in his flight and subsequent wanderings. In these democratic days Grand Dukes, Kings, and even Emperors, must have some regard for appearances if they wish to keep their positions. It is painfully necessary to avoid open and flagrant scandal. Madame Corinne was a lady who showed wherever she was. It was impossible to conceal her. Konrad Karl did not even try.

Some time in 1912 or 1913 he arrived, still accompanied by Madame, in London. His reputation, and hers, had preceded him. English society did not receive him warmly. He occupied a suite of rooms at Beaufort’s, the expensive and luxurious hotel which is the London home of foreign royalties and American millionaires. Kings, I suppose, can hold out longer than ordinary men without paying their bills. Konrad Karl was in low water financially. His private fortune was small. Madame Corinne had no money of her own, though she had jewels. Perhaps Mr. Beaufort—if the proprietor of the hotel is indeed a Mr. Beaufort—makes enough money out of the millionaires to enable him to entertain impecunious kings.

My friend Gorman made the acquaintance of Konrad Karl early in 1913. Gorman is a man who lives comfortably, very much more comfortably than he could if he had no resources except the beggarly £400 a year which his country pays him as a reward for his popularity with the people of Upper Offaly. He

makes money in various ways. His journalistic work brings him in a few hundreds a year. Enterprises of a commercial or financial kind add very considerably to his income. In 1913 he was interested in the Near Eastern Winegrowers' Association, a limited liability company which aimed at making money by persuading the British public to drink Greek wine. He heard of Konrad Karl, and at once invited that monarch to become one of the directors of the company. Konrad Karl was not a Greek, and his country did not produce wine which any one except a Megalian could drink. His value to Gorman lay in the fact that there was not another limited liability company in all England which had a King on its Board of Directors.

One of the least objectionable of the wines which Gorman's company sold was put on the market as Vino Regalis. The advertisements hinted without actually stating that the King had succeeded in carrying off a thousand dozen bottles of this wine out of the royal cellars when he fled from his subjects in Megalia. The bottles in which Vino Regalis was sold had yards of gold foil wrapped round their necks. They were in their way quite as splendid and obtrusive as Madame Corinne was in hers. I always think that Gorman must have had the lady before his eyes when he arranged the get-up of that wine.

The company prospered for a while, until the public became aware of the quality of the wine sold. Then came a collapse. But Gorman did pretty well out of it. The King also did pretty well. He drew fees as a director, a special honorarium in recognition of the value of his title, and his share of the profits. The profits were large, but he spent all he got as he received it. Madame Corinne is an expensive lady, and the King was just as badly off after the collapse of the company as he had been before he became a director. He consulted Gorman about his future. This was a very wise thing to do. Gorman probably knows more ways of making money than any man in London.

The consultation—the true starting point of the story of the Island of Salissa—took place in one of the King's rooms in Beaufort's. Madame Corinne was not there. She had, I think, gone to the opera. Gorman and the King dined well, as men do who can command the services of the chef at Beaufort's. The wine they drank was not Vino Regalis. After dinner they sat in front of a fire. Brandy and coffee were on a small table set between their chairs. They smoked large and excellent cigars.

"My friend," said the King, "I find myself in a tight place. I am, as the English say, broke like a stone."

The King prided himself on his mastery of that esoteric English by which the members of various sets, smart, sporting and other, conceal the meaning of what they say from outsiders, especially from foreigners who have acquired their knowledge of our language by painful study of dictionaries and grammars.

“Since the wine company went on the burst,” said the King, “I have not a stiver, not a red cent, not in all my pockets the price of one damned drink.”

“If I might venture to advise you, sir,” said Gorman.

“Advise? Certainly advise. But drop or, as you say in England, knock up calling me ‘sir.’ I am no longer a king. I resign. I abdicate. I chuck up the sponge of royalty. What the hell, my dear Gorman, is the good of being a king when there are no shekels?”

“I shouldn’t do that if I were you,” said Gorman. “After all, royalty is an asset. A title like that—kings aren’t at all common, you know—is worth money in the market.”

The King drank a glass of brandy with an air of great dejection.

“In what market? Who will buy?”

“Well,” said Gorman, “I suppose you might marry. There must be lots of wealthy girls who would like to be called queen.”

The King leaned forward and smacked Gorman heartily on the knee.

“You have hit the business end of the nail,” he said. “I am ready. I shall marry. Produce the lady, or, as you say in England, cough her up.”

Gorman had not expected this prompt and enthusiastic approval of his suggestion. He had not a list of heiresses in his pocket.

“But,” he said, “there’s Madame Ypsilante.”

“Corinne is reasonable,” said the King. “I should not, of course, show my cold shoulder to Corinne. She would share the loot. She and I together.”

Gorman knew that the King was a blackguard entirely without principle or honour; but this proposal startled him.

“I have it,” said the King. “Something has happened—no, occurred to me. There is in this hotel at this moment an American, an oof-bird, a king of dollars.”

“Donovan?”

Gorman knew Donovan pretty well; as indeed he knew all wealthy Irish-Americans. It was Gorman’s business to cross the Atlantic from time to time to get money for the support of the Irish Party. Donovan had been for many years a generous subscriber to these funds.

“There is a daughter,” said the King. “I have not put eyes on her. She may be—but it does not matter what she is, not a curse, not a damn from the Continent. I shall still have Corinne. The American oof-girl may have the eyes of a pig. I do not care.”

It is not easy to shock Gorman. Indeed, I should have said beforehand that it was impossible to shock him. But I have his assurance that Konrad Karl did it. It is true that Gorman himself had suggested marriage to the King as a way out of his difficulties. But marriage with an unnamed and unknown heiress is one thing. The King’s plan, frankly worked out, for insulting and robbing a girl whom Gorman knew personally was quite a different matter. Miss Daisy Donovan is a bright-faced, clear-eyed, romantic-souled girl. She had finished her course of study in one of the universities of the Middle-west without becoming a cultivated prig. In spite of the fact that history, economics, emasculated philosophy and a kind of intellectual complexion cream called literature had been smeared all over her by earnest professors, she had never learned to take herself, life or society at all seriously. She had all the vitality which gives American women their singular charm and none of the appalling earnestness of high endeavour which sometimes leads even very charming women into repulsive kinds of foolishness. The thought of a marriage between Miss Daisy and King Konrad Karl—with Madame Ypsilante in the near background—affected Gorman with a feeling of physical nausea.

The King possessed a certain capacity for sympathy. He guessed something of what was in Gorman’s mind.

“After all,” he said, “she would be a queen. It is something. You have said so yourself, my friend. You cannot have an omelette without the sacrifice of an egg. But I see—I see very plainly that you do not wish me to marry the Donovan oof-girl. You will not back me up. Good. I back down. I bear no malice. I wish you success. I shall eat cake at your wedding without envy. To you the American with pigs’ eyes—yes, I am sure she has pigs’ eyes. To me Corinne. To which of us happiness? eh, my friend?”

Gorman felt that it would be perfectly impossible to convince the King that he had no wish to marry Miss Daisy or her fortune.

“All right,” he said. “Leave it at that if you like.”

“I have left it,” said the King, “at that, precisely at that, though I do not like it at all.”

“And now,” said Gorman, “let’s get back to your own affairs. You say that you’re in a tightish place just for the moment.”

“I am in a hell hole,” said the King.

“Why not go back to the Emperor? He must do something for you. After all, he’s your uncle. He can’t let you go under altogether. Of course you’ll have to eat humble pie, do the repentant prodigal and all that sort of thing.”

“I should with gladness eat any pie—even pie made of the fatted calf of the prodigal; but—there is Corinne. The Emperor regards Corinne very much, my dear Gorman, as you regard me. I do not complain. You and the Emperor are no doubt right. You hit your nails on the head, both of you, when you say of Corinne and me—they are blackguards. But I prefer Corinne and no veal pie to veal pie and no Corinne. Yes, my friend, I choose Corinne every time.”

I have met King Konrad Karl once or twice, and I have, of course, heard a good deal about him. He is, unquestionably, a scoundrel. But I agree with Gorman that he is a frank and therefore an attractive scoundrel. Besides, his fidelity to Corinne is a redeeming feature, perhaps the only redeeming feature of his character.

Gorman is, if not a blackguard, at all events an adventurer, and therefore kin to the King. He saw the impossibility of leading Corinne to the foot of the imperial throne; and he felt that, after all, the King was right from his own point of view. Corinne was more desirable than many fatted calves. He cast about for some other way out of the difficult position.

“We might,” he said, “make something out of Megalia.”

“Nothing,” said the King. “I have been in Megalia and I know it. It is a one-dog country. There is nothing in it. I have tried it, and I know.”

“We might start a Megalian Development Company,” said Gorman.

“A company, perhaps,” said the King, “but development of Megalia, never.”

“I was not thinking of actually developing it. That would be the company’s business afterwards. Not that it will be easy to start the company. It won’t. Nobody knows anything about the damned place.”

“That is our best chance,” said the King. “If any one did know Megalia, the company would be—what is it you say—a scrub down—no—a wash-up—ah, I have it—a wash-out.”

“You’d grant concessions, I suppose,” said Gorman.

“I do not know exactly what a concession means,” said the King, “but if any one will pay for it I will give them permission to make the people of Megalia into sausages and kidneys. Believe me, my friend, that is the only development of which the Megalians are capable. They are pigs—Gadarene pigs.”

“We won’t suggest that in the prospectus,” said Gorman. “Our company, if we ever get it started, must be humanitarian, altruistic; I’m not sure that it ought not to be a little religious—mission of civilization. That’s the note to strike.”

“And you expect to make money out of—out of *that*? out of what you teach in your schools for Sunday?”

“It’s just exactly out of that that money is made.”

“The English,” said the King, “are a great people, very wonderful. You—even you, my friend, who are not English, but Irish—you will not let me marry because of Corinne. You wish me to eat humble pie while poor Corinne goes hungry, and yet you will make money out of a company for reforming the people of Megalia, making them civilized, Christian—a thing that is not at all possible—ever, in any way. Tell me, my friend, could you not start a company to develop, reform, improve Corinne and me. Believe me, it would be easier to do.”

CHAPTER III

Gorman realized that the development of Megalia was not an enterprise likely to attract the British capitalist. Still all things are possible in business, the business of company promoting. He set to work to collect what information he could about the country. The library of the House of Commons was useless to him. Megalia is the only country in the world about which no Blue Book ever has been published. A belief existed among certain city men interested in mining speculation, that there was copper in the mountains of Megalia; but no one had any exact information on the subject. Longwood, the Balkan correspondent of the New York Press, was in London at this time, and Gorman got hold of him. He had little to say about Megalia except that all the inhabitants are brigands. Steinwitz, managing director of the Cyrenian Sea Steam Navigation Company, professed to be interested in Megalia. He was certainly interested in the fact that Gorman was making inquiries about the country. He said that there were no harbours or possible ports of call on the Megalian coast.

“Nothing,” he said, “can be done with that country. Nothing at all. There is no trade, no traffic of any kind. And there cannot be. If there were anything to be done in Megalia, we should have had a steamer going there. Our ships pass the coast. But they do not call. Never.”

This interview, curiously enough, was the one thing which gave Gorman any hope. Steinwitz was plainly anxious to discourage inquiries about Megalia. And Steinwitz had the reputation of being a very astute man.

Gorman tabulated the information he had acquired. He produced, after some thought, a few notes on Megalia which might be embodied in a plausible prospectus.

1. A Megalian Development Company would have a clear field and no competition to face. Gorman felt that this was a fair deduction from the fact that nobody knew anything definite about the country.

2. The mineral wealth of Megalia is untapped. Nobody had ever taken any copper from the mountains and nobody denied that it was there. It was therefore fair to say that the mineral wealth of the country was untapped.

3. The inhabitants are energetic and enterprising, a vigorous and courageous race. Sluggards and decadents, so Gorman felt, do not become brigands.

That was all the material Gorman had to work with. Except the one fact, which could not be published, that Steinwitz, the director of a German Shipping Company with its headquarters in London, did not want public attention turned to Megalia. The floating of a company, even if the King offered every concession, did not seem to be a hopeful enterprise.

Gorman did not, in the end, attempt to form that company. A second dinner at Beaufort's showed him another way of saving the unfortunate King Konrad Karl from ruin. This time the invitation came from Mr. Donovan.

The Donovans occupied one of the best suites of rooms in that sumptuous hotel. The old gentleman had the satisfaction of stretching himself in beautifully upholstered chairs and dropping cigar ashes on highly gilt tables. He was suffering, so he believed, from disordered action of the heart, induced by the toil and excitement of making a large fortune. Several doctors agreed in recommending complete rest and quiet. Mr. Donovan was convinced that rest and quiet would be pleasant as well as beneficial. He left Chicago, where such things are certainly not to be found, and sought them in London. For a time he believed he had found them. He sat all day in his room at Beaufort's, waited on by footmen who wore gold-braided coats, crimson breeches and silk stockings, looking like very dignified ambassadors. He signed cheques payable to Miss Daisy. He exerted himself in no other way. But rest and quiet are hard to come by. Letters pursued him from Chicago. Thoughtless people even cabled to him. Secretaries of benevolent societies discovered him. The London agents of American financiers rang him up on telephones. Finally Miss Daisy, having drunk deep of the delights of London, became restless.

At first she had enjoyed life thoroughly. She had a marble-fitted bathroom for her sole use. She slept in a beautiful bed under a painted ceiling. She tried on dresses for hours every day in front of huge gilt mirrors. She gathered in immense quantities the peculiar treasures of Bond Street. Then she began to yearn for something more. Her father considered her demands, thought of his own disordered heart and asked Gorman to dinner.

The conversation at first ran along natural lines. The sights of London were discussed. The plays which Miss Daisy had seen and the picture galleries she

had visited were criticized. Then Gorman was called on to give opinions about the books she had not found time to read. London and its attractions were compared with Chicago and Detroit; Miss Daisy preferred London. Her father said there were points about Detroit, but that quiet was no more obtainable in one than the other. Afterwards politics were touched on. Miss Daisy gave it as her opinion that the Irish Party was rather slow about getting Home Rule. She displayed a considerable knowledge of affairs, and told Gorman frankly that he ought to have been able to buy up a substantial majority of the British House of Commons with the money, many hundred thousand dollars, which her father and other Americans had subscribed.

Gorman has always been of opinion that women are incapable of understanding politics. Miss Daisy's direct and simple way of attacking great problems confirmed him in his belief that Woman Suffrage would be a profound mistake.

He was relieved when, after dinner, Donovan himself started a new subject.

"I hear," he said, "that there is a king, a European monarch, resident in this hotel. That so?"

"King Konrad Karl II of Megalia," said Gorman.

"Friend of yours?"

"Well, yes," said Gorman. "I've had some business connection with him."

"I'm interested in that monarch," said Donovan. "It was Daisy drew my attention to him first, and then I made inquiries. He's not considered a first-class king, I reckon. Doesn't move in the best royal circles. He could be approached, without diplomatic formalities, by a plain American citizen."

"There's not the least difficulty about approaching him," said Gorman. "I don't believe you'd care for him much if you knew him, and——"

Gorman cast about for the best way of saying that King Konrad Karl would not be a desirable friend for Miss Daisy. Donovan saved him the trouble of finding a suitable phrase.

"He could be approached," he said, "by a plain American citizen, if that citizen came with a business proposition in his hand."

Gorman saw what he believed to be an opportunity. Donovan apparently wanted

to do business with the King. Such business must necessarily be connected with Megalia. A company for the development of that country could be founded without difficulty if a man of Donovan's enormous wealth took up a substantial block of shares. Gorman poured out all the information he had collected about Megalia. Donovan listened to him in silence. It was Miss Daisy who spoke at last.

"What you say about the enterprising nature of those inhabitants interests me," she said, "but I am not much taken with the notion of copper mining. It seems to me that copper mines would be liable to spoil the natural beauty of the landscape."

Gorman was, for the moment, too much surprised to speak. He had been in America several times and knew a good many American women. He realized their independence of character and mental vigour. But he did not expect that a young girl, fresh from college, enjoying the first taste of London, would take a leading part in discussing a matter of business. Before he had made up his mind what line to take with Miss Daisy, Donovan shot a question at him.

"What size is that monarchy?" he said.

"The actual boundaries are a little uncertain," said Gorman, "but I think we may say a hundred miles by about thirty."

"Inhabitants? Is it considerably settled?"

"I should guess the population at about 10,000."

Gorman glanced at his daughter. Miss Daisy's eyes gleamed with pleasurable excitement.

"I'll buy that monarchy," said Donovan, "money down, and I expect the King and I won't fall out about the price. But if I buy, I buy the section and all fixings, royal palace, throne, crown and title. I'm particular about the title."

Miss Daisy jumped from her chair and ran round the table. She flung her arms round her father's neck and kissed him heartily, first on one cheek, then on the other.

"You darling!" she said.

Donovan disengaged his head from her embrace and turned to Gorman.

“My little girl has taken a notion,” he said, “that she’d like to be a queen. The thing might be worked by marrying; but we don’t either of us care for that notion. She’d be tied up if she married, and she might tire. My idea—and hers—is that it’s better to buy what we want right out. I don’t say that Megalia is precisely the kingdom I’d have chosen for her. I’d have preferred a place with a bigger reputation, one better advertised by historians. But I realize that the European monarchy market has been cornered by a syndicate, and I can’t just step down and buy what I like. Your leading families, so I understand, have secured options on the best kingdoms and won’t part.”

Miss Daisy was still standing with her arms round her father’s neck. She hugged him as she spoke.

“I shall just love Megalia,” she said. “I’d far rather have it than one three times the size.”

“Well,” said her father, “I guess there’s no reason why you shouldn’t have it.”

Gorman saw several reasons, excellent ones, why Daisy Donovan could never be queen of Megalia. He began to explain them. Kingdoms cannot be bought and sold like horses. There are emperors and other kings to consider. There is the Balance of Power in Europe. There are ambassadors, chancelleries, statesmen. He was not at all sure that the Monroe Doctrine, in an inverted form, might not be an absolute bar to the purchase of a European kingdom by an American. Donovan brushed the difficulties aside.

“Those points,” he said, “will be considered in settling the price. I’m aware that Europe has its prejudices. I’m not out to trample on them. Genuine vested interests owned by other monarchs will be paid for. Ambassadors and chancellors will be taken on and employed at their old salaries as part of a going concern.”

Gorman is, like the Megalians, enterprising and full of courage. He did not believe that the sale of the Crown of Megalia could possibly be carried through; but something might be done which would satisfy Donovan. An estate, carrying with it a title like that of Grand Duchess, might be made over to Miss Daisy. All kings possess the power of conferring titles. If such honours are freely sold in a country like England, there could be no possible objection to the King of Megalia taking a reasonable price for creating a Grand Duchess, even, perhaps, a princess. Donovan’s next words made Gorman determine to try what he could do.

“There’ll be a rake-off from the purchase price,” said Donovan, “for the man who arranges the sale. I don’t kick against a reasonable percentage.”

CHAPTER IV

It was Gorman's misfortune that all through the Megalia negotiations he had to deal with women as well as men, indeed sometimes with women rather than men.

Donovan held it as an article of faith that anything in the world can be bought for money, if only there is money enough. But Donovan would not have insisted on justifying his faith by putting it to the test. No one does that. Not even a church, though firmly convinced of its own infallibility, will bludgeon the world into an acceptance of its claim by making decisions about matters which are susceptible of proof. Donovan would have been quite content to believe that he could purchase the Crown of Megalia without actually doing so. It was Miss Daisy, who had no theories about the power of money, who insisted on becoming a queen.

King Konrad Karl knew perfectly well that he could not sell what Donovan wanted to buy.

"I would," he said, "sell Megalia with damnable pleasure. Your friend's daughter might be Queen or Empress or Sultana. You, my dear Gorman, might be king consort when you married her. But you know and I know and Corinne knows—alas! we all know—that if I attempted a *coup d'état* of that kind the Emperor would at once put in my wheel a spoke. It is a cursed pity; but what can we do? We must, as you once said to me, Gorman, be content to leave it at that."

Madame Ypsilante was present when Gorman first suggested the sale of Megalia. She cut into the conversation with a very pertinent remark.

"The price," she said, "would be enormous."

Madame is a lady of expensive tastes and appreciates the advantage of possessing money. There was at that time in Goldsturmer's Bond Street establishment a rope of pearls which she very much wished to possess. Miss Daisy Donovan had seen it and admired it greatly. This fact rendered Madame's desire almost overwhelming.

"The price of a kingdom," she said. "Consider."

Her fine eyes opened very wide as she considered the price which Donovan might be induced to pay for Megalia. The King sighed deeply.

“Alas!” he said. “The Emperor.”

“Damn the Emperor,” said Madame.

She had every reason to wish evil to the Emperor. His malignant respect for conventional morality had driven her from the precincts of his court, had been the prime cause of the misfortunes which had nearly overwhelmed her and Konrad, and now the Emperor stood between her and the possession of the most magnificent pearls in Europe. It was no wonder that she cursed him. Konrad Karl did not rebuke her disloyalty. He merely shrugged his shoulders, feeling that it was no use damning the Emperor. That potentate would not moult a feather though Madame Ypsilante cursed him all day long. Madame herself felt the uselessness of losing her temper with some one she could not hurt. She asked the King to give her a glass of brandy. That stimulated her imagination.

“This American,” she said, “is no doubt a fool, and his daughter imbecile. Do not contradict me. All young girls are imbecile. As for the father, if he were not a fool would he wish to buy Megalia? Megalia, my God! The world is full of things desirable to buy; and he asks for that.”

The King nodded. He knew Megalia. The man who wanted to buy it was certainly a fool. Gorman was forced to admit that Donovan showed less wisdom than might be expected in wishing to spend money on a kingdom of that kind.

“Then,” said Madame, “the affair is simple. He buys. You sell. He pays. You take. We skip. I love London—yes, very well. But after all there are other cities. We skip. The Emperor acts. The American curses. What is that to us?”

The King shook his head. The plan was simple. Unfortunately the world is not big enough for the working out of really great conceptions.

“We should be pursued. They would take us by the collar. We should be compelled to disgorge the swag.”

“We should not be so compelled,” said Madame. “I should at once buy pearls and diamonds, and I should conceal them. You, Konrad, would have nothing to disgorge.”

It is certain that the King had a real affection for Madame Corinne. Gorman

called it an infatuation. No doubt he even trusted her. It is just conceivable that he would have allowed her to wander off by herself with several hundred thousand pounds worth of jewels while he argued with the Emperor and Donovan and the U. S. Ambassador. But Gorman pointed out a fatal defect in the scheme.

“I don’t deny,” he said, “that there’s a soft spot somewhere in Donovan. But he’s not that particular kind of fool. You may take it from me, Madame, that the price won’t be paid till you have delivered the goods. You won’t get more than a few thousands in advance until Miss Daisy is actually sitting on a throne with a gold crown on her head.”

“There is no crown in Megalia,” said the King. “There never was. If there had been it would not be there now. I should have brought it with me when I made my scoot.”

“Donovan won’t bother about that point,” said Gorman. “In fact, I expect he’d buy a new crown in any case. He wouldn’t like the idea of his daughter appearing in anything second-hand. What he wants for her is the right to wear a crown.”

“That,” said the King, “is exactly the pinching shoe. That she cannot have. We are at a dying—no, a dead lock.”

“Somehow,” said Madame, “we must have the money. If that girl, that miss, who is more imbecile than all other *jeunes filles*—if she obtains that rope of pearls from Goldsturmer, those pearls which ought to be mine, I shall go mad and take poison, very terrible poison, and die in front of your eyes, Konrad.”

With a view to showing how mad she could go if she tried, she threw her brandy glass on the floor and hacked at it with the heel of her shoe. The carpets in Beaufort’s hotel have the softest and deepest pile of any carpets in Europe. Madame’s first two or three hacks did no more than snap the stem of the glass. To complete its destruction she stood up and stamped on it.

Gorman may have feared that she would trample on him next. He told me that she really was a very alarming sight. Stimulated by terror, his mind worked quickly.

“Look here,” he said to the King, “I’ve got a suggestion to make. Get Madame to sit down and keep quiet for a few minutes.”

The King had an experience, gathered during six years of intimacy, of Madame's ways. He knew what to do with her. He got another glass of brandy and a box of cigarettes. He set them on a table beside a deep armchair. Madame suffered herself to be led to the chair.

"Now, my friend Gorman," said the King, "if you have a key which will open the dead lock, make it trot out."

"What Donovan wants," said Gorman, "is a kingdom for his daughter. Not Megalia in particular, but some kind of right to wear a crown. Any other kingdom would do as well."

"But there is no other," said the King. "In all the courts of Europe there is no other king in such a damned hole as I am, no other king who would sell even if he could."

"I don't know Megalia well," said Gorman, "but there must surely be some outlying corner of that interesting country—an island, for instance—which you could make over, sporting, mineral and *royal* rights, to Donovan; just as England gave Heligoland to the Germans and somebody or other, probably the Turks, gave Cyprus to the English. The thing is constantly done."

"But the Emperor," said the King. "Again and always the Emperor. All roads lead to Rome. All *Real Politik* brings us in the end back to the Emperor."

"My idea," said Gorman, "would be, to choose a small island, quite a small one, so small that the Emperor wouldn't notice it was gone. As a matter of fact I expect a small island would suit Donovan better than the whole country. He has a weak heart and has come over to Europe for rest and quiet. He won't want to be bothered with the politics and revolutions and complications which will be sure to arise in a large tract of land like Megalia."

"A revolution," said the King, "arises there regularly. A revolution is biennial in Megalia."

"In a really small island," said Gorman, "that would not happen. A man like Donovan would feed the inhabitants until they got too fat for revolutions. Now the question is, do you own an island of that kind?"

"There is," said the King, "Salissa. There is certainly Salissa. My predecessor on the throne, my cousin Otto, resided in Salissa until——. He thought it a safe place to reside because it was so far from the land. He even built a house there. It

is, I am told, a charming house. Hot and cold. Billiard and No Basement. Self-contained, Tudor and Bungalow, ten bed, two dressing, offices of the usual, drainage, commanding views, all that is desirable. But, alas for poor Otto! Salissa was not safe. He had forgotten that Megalia has a navy, a navy of one ship only, but that was enough. It cooked the goose of Otto, that Megalian Navy. The Prime Minister and the Commander of the Forces and the Admiral arrived at Salissa one day in the Navy. That was the end of Otto."

"I hope," said Gorman, "that the inhabitants of Salissa aren't a bloodthirsty lot. I wouldn't like to think of Miss Daisy being murdered. Besides, there'd be complications. The assassination of an odd prince doesn't much matter to any one. But an American millionaire! The sudden death of a man like Donovan would mean a panic in Wall Street, and there'd have to be a fuss."

"The inhabitants!" said the King. "They would not kill a baby. They are lambs, ducks, kids, doves. They bleat. They coo."

"The Prime Minister," said Gorman, "the Commander of the Forces and the Admiral could be squared, I suppose?"

"They would not want to kill her," said the King. "She would not be their queen."

"Sounds all right," said Gorman, "if you can be sure of selling the whole thing without reservation of any kind to him. The royal rights are essential. Remember that. There must be no 'subject-to-the-Crown-of-Megalia' clause in the deed."

"The Emperor need not know," said the King. "Salissa is very small, and far, very far, from the land. If we keep the transaction shady—that is to say, dark—the Emperor will not tumble into it."

Madame swallowed her last sip of brandy.

"The price?" she said.

"You cannot," said Gorman, "expect as much for a small island like that as if you were able to sell the whole kingdom; the revenue can't be anything much."

"There is no revenue in Megalia either," said the King.

"But Donovan is getting what he wants. His daughter will be a reigning queen. I daresay we'll be able to screw him up to——"

“The price of that rope of pearls,” said Madame, “is ten thousand pounds.”

“Oh,” said Gorman, “we’ll get that and a bit over.”

“At once,” said Madame, “cash down. For if we have to wait and wait for months that imbecile girl will buy the pearls. Do not say no. I know it. I have a feeling. There is a presentiment. And if she gets those pearls I shall——”

Gorman did not want her to go mad again.

“Couldn’t you see Goldsturmer,” he said, “and arrange with him to give you the refusal of the pearls, say, three months from now?”

“Goldsturmer,” said Madame, “is a devil. He will not trust me for one day, although he knows Konrad well.”

Goldsturmer would probably have said that he refused to trust Madame *because* he knew Konrad well.

Gorman promised to lay the Salissa proposal before Donovan, and to get him, if possible, to pay at least ten thousand of the purchase money in advance.

“But above all,” said the King, “let him hold tight to his tongue, and you, my friend Gorman. This is no affair about which a song can be made in the market place. If the Emperor were to hear a whisper—Gorman, you do not know the Emperor. His ears are long. If he were to hear there would be an end. There would be no sale.”

“Donovan,” said Gorman, “would probably offer the Emperor five per cent. of the purchase money if there was any trouble.”

“Five per cent.!” said the King. “The Emperor! God in heaven!”

King Konrad Karl probably feared God in heaven very little. But there is no doubt that he had a nervous dread of the Emperor.

CHAPTER V

Donovan was, I believe, relieved when he heard that he could not buy the whole kingdom of Megalia. The price would have been enormous, but he would not have hesitated to pay it if, by paying, he would have got what he wanted. The more he looked into the business of kingship, the less he liked it. The idea of Court etiquette worried him. Donovan disliked dressing for dinner, a form of activity to which he was unaccustomed. He got it into his head that the father of the reigning monarch in a state like Megalia might be called on to wear uniforms, troublesome things with unusual buttons and straps, and change them two or three times a day. He feared that such a combination of exertion and worry would still further disorder the action of his heart. He saw no prospect of quiet indolence among a people which went in for revolutions as a pastime. Salissa, on the other hand, seemed almost an ideal spot. There were not likely to be any regular postal arrangements. There was certainly no cable. Since there were less than a hundred inhabitants a liberal pension could be given to each. Pensioners are notoriously peaceful and unobtrusive people.

Miss Daisy was a little disappointed at first; but only at first. Once she hit on the idea that her kingdom would be the “dinkiest” in Europe, indeed in the world, she was pleased. The negotiations were rushed through at a pace which struck even Gorman as indecent. But everybody concerned was in a hurry. Konrad Karl was afraid that the Emperor might hear of the sale through the Megalian ambassador in London. But that gentleman—he was a Count, I think—was under the influence, probably in the pay of the Emperor, and had been instructed to ignore King Konrad Karl as much as possible. He heard nothing about the matter. Madame Ypsilante was in a hurry for obvious reasons. Miss Daisy Donovan had looked at the pearl necklace two or three times, and there was a horrible possibility that she might regard it as a suitable ornament for a queen. Miss Daisy was eager to see her island kingdom as soon as possible. Donovan himself was finding London less restful than ever. He wanted to get the Salissa business settled out of hand.

It was settled early in April. I never heard the exact date of the signing of the papers, but April the 1st would have been appropriate. An immense document was drawn up by a solicitor, a cousin of Gorman’s who lived in a small west of Ireland town. Gorman said he gave the job to this particular man because no

London lawyer would have kept the matter secret. My own impression is that no London solicitor would have undertaken the job at all. There cannot be any recognized legal form for the sale of kingdoms. However, Gorman's cousin did his work excellently. The document looked well. He attached eight enormous seals to it, and he had several of the most important clauses translated into Latin. It must have been as good as it looked. Later on nearly every ambassador in Europe had a look at the "instrument"—Gorman called it an instrument sometimes, sometimes a protocol—and they were all baffled. The American ambassador in Megalia offered Gorman's cousin a post in the U. S. A. diplomatic service, a high testimonial to his abilities. Miss Daisy and her heirs became the independent sovereigns of the Island of Salissa. Donovan promised to pay down the purchase money as soon as he was satisfied that the island really existed. The most Gorman could screw out of him in the way of an advance was £5,000.

The evening after the "instrument" was signed, Gorman had a visit from Goldsturmer, the well-known jeweller. The man, a rather unctuous, but very suave and polite German Jew, was shown into Gorman's sitting-room.

"I think," he said, "that you are a friend of his Majesty, King Konrad Karl of Megalia?"

Gorman was on his guard and determined to give away no information of any kind. The King's nervous fear of the Emperor's displeasure had impressed Gorman with the necessity of keeping the sale of Salissa as secret as possible; but he could hardly avoid admitting that he knew King Konrad Karl. The affairs of the wine company had occupied some space in the daily papers, and the names of the directors had been published. His name and the King's had appeared together very frequently.

"And perhaps," said Goldsturmer, "you also know Madame Ypsilante?"

"I have seen the lady," said Gorman.

Goldsturmer was not in the least discouraged by Gorman's reticence.

"I cannot," he said, "expect you to answer more frankly unless I am equally frank with you. I am at this time engaged in a business transaction of some importance with Madame Ypsilante. The sum of money involved is very large. It is"—Goldsturmer's tone became reverent—"£10,000."

“Can she pay?” said Gorman, “not that it’s any affair of mine whether she can or not.”

“The lady herself cannot pay; but the King—she tells me that his Majesty has recently sold an estate situated in Megalia to a wealthy American. Now if that is true——”

“Perhaps in that case the King might pay,” said Gorman.

“I wonder,” said Goldsturmer, “if the sale has taken place?”

“Shouldn’t think it likely,” said Gorman.

Goldsturmer paused. For quite a minute he sat looking at Gorman. Then he said:

“In a matter of this kind I am prepared to pay for information which would be of use to me. I shall speak frankly. It would be worth my while to give one per cent. of the sum involved to any one who could tell me whether the sale which Madame mentioned to me has really been effected.”

“Ah,” said Gorman, “one per cent. on, did you say, £10,000?”

“It would amount to £100.”

“I wish I could earn it,” said Gorman, “but unfortunately I know nothing at all about the matter.”

Political life, so Gorman has often told me, is the very best education obtainable in one respect. The politician learns to lie fluently and without discomfort. Even politicians are not, of course, always believed, but they know how to lie in a way which makes it very difficult for any one to give expression to unbelief. Goldsturmer may actually have believed Gorman. He certainly pretended to. He did not even offer a two per cent. bonus.

“I must ask you to pardon me,” he said, “for occupying your time with my inquiries. I thank you for the way in which you have received me. Good-bye.”

He bowed his way to the door. Then he turned to Gorman again.

“You will understand, I am sure, that mine was a purely business inquiry. I am not interested in any of the scandal which unfortunately is connected with the name of his Majesty, or with that of the charming lady of whom I spoke. Still less am I concerned with the state affairs of Megalia. I have no connection with

Megalia.”

Gorman sat thinking for a while after Goldsturmer left him. The jeweller’s visit and his questions were natural enough. Such inquiries are made every day. There was nothing surprising in the offer of one per cent. on the money which was to change hands in return for information. Gorman was a politician. It was not the first time he had been offered a commission. He hoped it would not be the last. What puzzled him was Goldsturmer’s final remark. Why should the man have said he had no interest in the state affairs of Megalia unless indeed he was interested, was on the track of a suspected secret?

Once more Gorman lamented the fact that women were mixed up in a business affair.

“Damn Madame Ypsilante,” he said.

Then, finding some relief for his feelings in expressing them aloud:

“Damn that woman’s tongue.”

Gorman was puzzled and therefore anxious. His commission on the sale of Salissa—his rake-off, as Donovan called it—was large, a sum which Gorman did not want to lose. He was most anxious that the transaction should be successfully completed and the money actually paid. The King’s evident nervousness about the Emperor impressed him unpleasantly. Gorman was not a student of foreign politics. He did not know precisely what the Emperor’s position was. Megalia was nominally an independent state. Its King could, he supposed, cede a portion of territory to a foreign power without consulting any other monarch. Yet the Emperor evidently had to be considered, might put a stop to the whole business. Konrad Karl had no doubts about that, and he ought to know.

I am sure that I should be doing Gorman an injustice if I were to represent him as anxious only about the commission. He had a queer liking for the unfortunate Konrad Karl. He wanted—as everybody who knew her did—to gratify Miss Daisy Donovan. And he took a sporting interest in the sale of Salissa. There was a novelty about the purchase of the position of reigning monarch which appealed to Gorman, and there were all sorts of possibilities about the situation and its future developments.

A week later, just as he was beginning to forget Goldsturmer’s visit, Gorman had fresh cause for anxiety. I remember the day very well. I was lunching at my club,

a club of which Gorman is also a member. As I entered the room I saw him sitting at a table near the window. I intended to join him, for Gorman is always good company. When I reached his table I saw that he already had a companion —Steinwitz, the director of the Cyrenian Sea Steam Navigation Company. I turned away at once, for Steinwitz is a man whom I particularly dislike. Gorman caught sight of me and called:

“Come and sit here. There’s plenty of room. The waiter can lay another place.”

“Thanks,” I said, “but I’ve just caught sight of a man at the far end of the room whom I particularly want to talk to.”

“Talk to him later on,” said Gorman, “Come and sit here now.”

There was something in Gorman’s tone which made me think he really wanted me to sit at his table, that he had a motive in pressing me as he did. But I was not going to lunch in the company of Steinwitz. I have nothing definite against the man; but I do not like him. I shook my head and found a seat at the far end of the room.

Afterwards—months afterwards—Gorman told me that he wanted me very badly that day, me or some one else. He wanted a third person at his table. Steinwitz was asking inconvenient questions, talking about matters Gorman did not want to discuss. The presence of a third person might have saved Gorman some awkwardness.

Steinwitz was insistent and determined. He laid hold on Gorman before lunch and clung to him until they sat down together.

“You remember asking me,” said Steinwitz—“let me see, it must have been a couple of months ago—you remember asking me for information about Megalia.”

“Did I?” said Gorman.

“And I told you it was a rotten country—no trade, no harbours, no tourist traffic, no anything. Well—rather an odd thing happened yesterday. A man came into my office—by the way, you know him, I think—Donovan, the American millionaire——”

“Oh, yes, I know him. Owns a pretty daughter, doesn’t he?”

“She was with him,” said Steinwitz—“a romantic sort of girl, I should say, by the look of her. Head stuffed full of silly fancies.”

Steinwitz’ eyes were on Gorman all the time he was speaking. Gorman says he felt very uncomfortable, but I am sure he did not show it.

“I scarcely know the girl,” said Gorman. “What did old Donovan want with you?”

“Wanted to charter a steamer, captain, crew and all, one of our boats. Said he was going for a cruise off the coast of Megalia and wanted a biggish ship and officers who know the Cyrenian Sea thoroughly.”

“Odd fancies the Americans have,” said Gorman. “However, he can pay for what he wants. If half what they say about him is true, he could buy up your whole fleet without missing the money.”

“He certainly did not boggle over the figure I named.”

“Oh, you let him have the ship then?”

“Certainly. Trade is dull in those parts now. As a matter of fact the *Ida* was lying up.”

Gorman pretended to yawn by way of showing how very little interest he took in the matter.

“Hope he’ll enjoy the trip,” he said. “Doesn’t sound an attractive country by your account.”

“Well,” said Steinwitz, “there are some interesting things to see. There’s the Island of Salissa, for instance.”

Gorman was startled by the mention of Salissa. He may possibly have shown his surprise. Steinwitz went on:

“By the way, talking of Salissa, Goldsturmer told me a curious thing the other day. You know Goldsturmer, don’t you?”

“The jewel man?”

“Yes. He says your friend Donovan has bought the island of Salissa from that picturesque blackguard King Konrad Karl. I wonder if that can be true. Goldsturmer says he has it on the best authority.”

“Those ‘best authorities’,” said Gorman, “are invariably liars. I have known scores of them.”

“I daresay you’re right,” said Steinwitz; “anyhow, in this case the authority wasn’t one that I should care to rely on. It was Madame Ypsilante—a very charming lady, but——”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“I wouldn’t care to bet my last shilling,” said Gorman, “on the truth of a statement made by Madame Ypsilante.”

“In this case,” said Steinwitz, “her story was a ridiculous one, absurd on the face of it. She said that the American girl wants to set up as a monarch and that Konrad Karl had sold her the right to call herself Queen of Salissa.”

“Either Goldsturmer was pulling your leg,” said Gorman, “or Madame was pulling his. Was she trying to get anything out of him?”

“Pearls,” said Steinwitz. “There is a certain rope of pearls——”

“That accounts for the whole thing,” said Gorman.

Steinwitz seemed quite satisfied that it did. But he was not inclined to drop the subject altogether.

“A sale of that sort,” he said, “would be impossible. The Emperor wouldn’t permit it.”

Then Gorman made a mistake. For the first time he showed a real interest in what Steinwitz said. There is every excuse for him. He wanted very much to understand the Emperor’s position; and Steinwitz had already heard—possibly believed—the story of the sale of Salissa.

“What on earth has the Emperor got to do with it?” said Gorman. “Megalia is an independent state, isn’t it?”

Steinwitz laughed.

“Very few states,” he said, “are independent of the Emperor.”

There was something in the way he spoke, a note of arrogance, a suggestion of truculence, which nettled Gorman.

“Donovan,” he said, “is a free citizen of the United States of America. That’s what he says himself. I don’t expect he cares a damn about any emperor.”

“Ah well,” said Steinwitz, “it does not matter, does it? Since he has not bought the Island of Salissa, no question is likely to arise. The Emperor will not object to his wandering round the Cyrenian Sea in the *Ida*.”

Gorman was singularly dull when he joined me in the smoking-room after luncheon. I do not recollect any other occasion on which I found him disinclined to talk. I opened the most seductive subjects. I said I was sure Ulster really meant to take up arms against Home Rule. I said that the Sinn Féiners were getting stronger and stronger in Ireland, and that neither Gorman nor any member of his party would be returned at the next General Election. Gorman must have wanted to contradict me; but he did not say a word. It was only when I got up to go away that he spoke; and then he made a remark which had no bearing whatever on anything which I had said.

“Women,” he growled, “are hell. In business they’re red hell.”

CHAPTER VI

The Donovans started for Salissa within three weeks of the completion of the sale of the island. This was a remarkable achievement, and the whole credit is due to the amazing energy of Miss Daisy. She was all eagerness to enter into the possession of her kingdom; but she had no idea of going to an unknown island without proper supplies. She bought furniture for her house. King Konrad Karl was of opinion that there must be furniture in it. The Prime Minister, the Commander-in-Chief and the Admiral had almost certainly carried off any jewellery or plate there might have been, after the assassination of the late king. Tables, chairs, carpets and beds, they must, he thought, have left behind, because the Megalian Navy was not big enough to carry very much cargo. But Miss Daisy took no risks. She bought everything necessary for a house of moderate size, and had the packing cases put into the hold of the *Ida*.

She gave large orders for every kind of portable provisions. She entrusted a wine merchant with the duty of stocking the royal cellars. Certain dressmakers—eight, I believe—were kept busy. The new queen did not actually purchase royal robes; but she got every other kind of clothes from the most fantastic teagowns to severe costumes designed for mountaineering. There might be a mountain in Salissa. The Queen liked to be prepared for it if it were there.

She engaged a staff of servants, hitting on twenty as a suitable number for the household of a queen of a small state. The chief of this band was a dignified man who had once been butler to a duke. Miss Daisy gave him the title of major domo, and provided him with a thick gold chain to hang round his neck. There were alterations to be made in the *Ida*, a steamer not originally intended to carry passengers. These were left to Steinwitz; but Miss Daisy managed to run down every day to see that the work was being done as quickly as possible. She had interviews with Captain Wilson, who commanded the *Ida*, and Mr. Maurice Phillips, the first officer. She asked them both to dinner. Captain Wilson, a Scot, was taciturn and suspicious. He regarded the job before him as an objectionable kind of practical joke, likely, before it was over, to impair his natural dignity. Mr. Phillips was filled with delight at the prospect. He was a young man with curly fair hair and cheerful eyes.

The start might have been made in even less than three weeks, if it had not been

for the Heralds' Office. Miss Daisy wanted a banner to hoist over the royal palace in Salissa. She consulted Gorman, and gathered from what he told her that heralds are experts in designing banners. She found her way to the office and explained what she wanted to a suave, but rather anæmic young gentleman who talked about quarterings. Miss Daisy was not to be cowed by jargon.

"Put in any quarterings you fancy," she said. "I'm not particular. If ghules, argents and ramparts are extra, I am prepared to pay. But don't you meditate too much on the unforgotten glories of the past. Get a move on."

That it appeared was the one thing the Heralds' Office could not do. Miss Daisy stormed at its doors. She telephoned at short intervals all day. She even tried to persuade her father to take part in the persecution. But Mr. Donovan was too wise.

"There are things," he said, "which cannot be done. No man living, not even a railway boss—can speed up a state department."

"Any firm in New York," said Miss Daisy, "would have sent in designs for a dozen banners in half the time that young man in the Heraldry Office has been thinking about one."

"Heralds," said Mr. Donovan, "are mediæval. If they laid hold on the idea of an automobile and went in for speed, they'd lose grip on the science of heraldry."

In the end, goaded and worried by Miss Daisy into a condition of bewildered exasperation, the Heralds' Office produced a large pale-blue flag. In the middle of it was a white flower, said to be a daisy. It arrived at Southampton by the hand of a special messenger just before the sailing of the *Ida*. Later on—when that flag became a subject for argument among diplomatists—the heralds disclaimed all real responsibility for it. They said that they had no idea they were making a royal standard. They said that they understood that they were preparing a flag for a young lady's house-boat. Miss Daisy asserts, on the other hand, that her orders were quite distinct. She told the anæmic young man at their first interview that she wanted a "Royal Banner, done according to the best European specification."

Nine of the servants refused to sail at the last moment. They alleged that the sleeping accommodation on board the *Ida* was not what they were accustomed to. The major domo only agreed to go on board when he was given the cabin originally intended for Miss Daisy. She occupied that which had been allotted to a kitchen-maid, one of the deserters. Steinwitz and Gorman, who saw the party

off, induced the other ten servants to go on board, apologizing humbly to them and explaining that the cabins in the *Ida* had necessarily been very hurriedly made. For all the use any of the servants were on the voyage, or afterwards, they might as well have stayed at home. The major domo shut himself up in his cabin and was resolutely seasick even in the calmest weather. The others, though not as sick as he was, pretended to be incapable of doing anything.

The Donovans, Captain Wilson and Mr. Phillips were waited on by a steward, a man called Smith who had been brought from London and added to the ship's company at the last moment by Steinwitz. He proved to be an excellent servant and a man of varied talents. He took a hand in the cooking, mixed cocktails, and acted as valet to Mr. Donovan, waited at table, made beds and kept the cabins beautifully clean. He even found time to save the major domo from starvation by bringing him soup and dry toast occasionally.

Captain Wilson, who could not get over the idea that he was being made to look ridiculous, remained rather aloof during the voyage. He accepted the cigars which Donovan pressed on him, and was civil to Miss Daisy, but he made no pretence of enjoying himself. Mr. Phillips was in high spirits the whole time. He fell in love with Miss Daisy the moment he saw her. But there was nothing mournful or despairing about the way the great passion took him. He never brooded in silence over the hopelessness of his prospects; though as a subordinate officer in the merchant service, he had not much chance of marrying one of the richest heiresses in Europe. His devotion was like that of a frisky terrier which gambols round an adored mistress. Miss Daisy found him a most agreeable young man.

It was he, and not Captain Wilson, who came to her one evening with the news that they might expect to sight Salissa next morning. Miss Daisy scarcely slept. At five o'clock she was on the bridge. Captain Wilson told her that she might safely go to bed again till seven or eight. But she stayed where she was. Mr. Phillips fetched a cup of tea for her at six and another at seven. She drank both and ate a good deal of bread and butter. When at last the island appeared, a dim speck on a clear horizon line, she danced with excitement, and sent Mr. Phillips below to fetch her father. Mr. Donovan was at breakfast, attended by Smith, and flatly refused to stir. Captain Wilson, satisfied that the island lay just where he expected it, left the bridge and joined Mr. Donovan. Miss Daisy and Mr. Phillips stood together, their eyes fixed on the island.

Salissa is a beautiful island and had the good fortune to look its best when its

new queen saw it. The sky was cloudless. The sea was almost calm. The island rose, clear outlined, from the blue water. There are some islands, as there are some complexions, which are best looked at in a light which is not too clear, which require a dimness, a little mist, to make them beautiful. Salissa—Phillips would have said the same of Salissa's mistress—was at its loveliest on a clear May morning. The island appeared first as a flattened cone, intensely green. Then, as the steamer drew nearer, the cliffs which embraced the natural harbour shone out dazzlingly white. The sea rolled lazily, a belt of foam across the reef which almost blocked the entrance to the bay. Beneath the cliffs, right under them, the colour of the water turned to the palest blue. On the south side of the bay was a sandy beach, and above it a small village, seen to be a village afterwards, at first no more than splashes of bright colour, blue and red. Behind the village, sloping upwards, was a broad stretch of cultivated land.

"Vineyards," said Mr. Phillips, who had voyaged much about the Cyrenian Sea.

On the north side of the bay, opposite the cottages, a promontory ran out into the water. On it, sometimes on its very edge, sometimes drawn a little back with a space of smooth rocks in front of it, was the house built by King Otto, Konrad Karl's unfortunate predecessor on the Megalian throne. Perhaps that king himself had a taste for the fantastic. Perhaps he was only a commonplace man who had the luck to employ an architect of airy genius. The house was the palace of a dream of fairyland. It was built of the white stone of the island. Long windows opened on balconies supported on white pillars which stood in the water. There were little glistening spires which rose from steep patches of red roof. There were broad shaded porches and flights of shallow white steps which led down into the water. The ground plan of the house followed the outline of the promontory on which it stood. Only in the upper storey did the eye find rest in a straight line. There nine great windows, green jalousied, gave upon a wide balcony. At one place where the rock had been eaten into by the sea, the architect had built over water which sighed and gurgled among mysterious green shades under vaulted roofs among the foundations of the house.

Miss Daisy, standing on the bridge, clapped her hands and then stood silent and motionless in an ecstasy of delight. Mr. Phillips, his eyes on the girl, rang the ship's engines to "Dead Slow" and sent a man to summon Captain Wilson.

The steamer slid slowly through the water towards the opening at the south end of the protecting reef. Captain Wilson came on deck. Mr. Donovan followed him. He stood leaning over the bulwarks just forward of the bridge. Miss Daisy

ran to him and seized his arm.

“Father,” she cried, “isn’t it all lovely? Isn’t it just a dream? Look at the two cottages. Look at the cliffs and the blue water. Did you ever see such blue——? and now——”

The ship swung slowly round the south end of the reef. The house on the promontory came full in view.

“And now look at the castle. It’s too fairy for anything, isn’t it?”

“Reminds me quite a bit,” said Donovan, “of the hotel at the south end of the Marine Parade at Atlantic City. Kind of fanciful.”

“It’s a dream come true,” said Miss Daisy.

Mr. Donovan turned round. Behind him, in a respectful attitude, stood the major domo. A little further back, grouped together, were his ten fellow-servants, all in respectful attitudes.

“Beg pardon, sir,” said the major domo.

The man, though engaged by Miss Daisy, had from the first refused to recognize her as his mistress. The negotiations in Southampton about the cabin had been carried on with Mr. Donovan. It was to Mr. Donovan that he spoke now.

“Beg pardon, sir,” he said, “but does the family propose to reside here for any length of time?”

Mr. Donovan waved his hand towards Miss Daisy. She realized that, as queen of the island, it was her business to decide the movements of the court.

“Always,” she said. “For ever and ever and ever. I shall never live anywhere else, and when I die I’ll be buried here.”

“In that case, sir,” said the major domo, still ignoring the queen, “I must request, in the name of self and the rest of the staff, to return to England at once, sir, and if I may add a suggestion, sir, I’d say by rail. This ship is not what we’ve been accustomed to in places where we’ve lived before.”

“Well,” said Mr. Donovan, “you can go back if you like. Salissa is a free state, though not a republic; but there’s liable to be some delay if you wait for a train.”

“You nasty beasts!” said Miss Daisy. “You’ve spoiled the whole thing now by

being cats. Just when everything was beautiful and I was so happy. I'd like to tell you what I think of you all. Oh, I do wish Mr. Phillips was here. He'd——Oh, father, would you? I'm sure you could."

Mr. Donovan looked at her and waited. In time, such was his experience, Miss Daisy usually explained what she wanted pretty clearly.

"I once heard Mr. Phillips talking to one of the sailors," she said. "He didn't know I was listening, of course. The sailor had been messing things about in a wrong way, and Mr. Phillips——"

"Language?" said Mr. Donovan.

"It was splendid. I never knew before that there were such words."

"Well," said Mr. Donovan, "I haven't cursed any for quite a bit; but I'm willing to try. But you'd better run up the bridge, Daisy, right now, before I start. I might be kind of held back from some expressions if I knew you were listening."

Miss Daisy, who was sometimes quite an obedient girl, reached the bridge in time to hear the order given, and to see the anchor splash into the blue water.

Mr. Donovan began to speak slowly and very quietly. It took the women servants nearly two minutes to realize that he was using the most atrocious language. Then they fled. The three footmen stood their ground a little longer. Mr. Donovan raised his voice a little. He felt old powers returning to him. He became fluent. One by one the footmen slank away. Mr. Donovan went on, without passion or heat. He arrived at a terrific malediction which he had found effective many years before in dealing with Italian navvies. The major domo cowered, his hands held to his ears, and vanished into the cabin.

Mr. Donovan took from his pocket a large purple handkerchief. He wiped away the sweat which had gathered on his upper lip. Then he looked round him with an air of satisfaction. There was no one left near him except Smith, the ship's steward, who stood in a respectful attitude apparently waiting for an opportunity to speak.

"I don't know," said Mr. Donovan, "that I can do any more real high-class cursing, without preparation; but if you're not satisfied I'm willing to try."

"I was only going to suggest, sir," said Smith, "that if it would be any convenience to you, sir, and to her Majesty——" Mr. Donovan started. It was

the first time Miss Daisy had been given her new title.

“I’d be very glad, sir, to remain with you and do all I can, sir, to make you comfortable—subject to Captain Wilson’s permission. Of course you’ll understand, sir, that I signed on as ship’s steward. I couldn’t leave my duty, sir, if Captain Wilson required me.”

“Smith,” said Mr. Donovan, “you’re a white man. I’ll square things up with Captain Wilson. He can have the use of that sausage skin of a butler on the voyage home. I hope he’ll just set those able-bodied wasters of footmen to shovel coal in the stokehole. I shan’t say a word if he corrects the women with a rope’s end every time they’re seasick. I’m a humanitarian, Smith, opposed to executions and corporal punishment on principle, in a general way; but I’m not a hide-bound doctrinnaire. There are circumstances—I kind of feel that the British domestic servant is one of these circumstances.”

“Yes, sir,” said Smith. “Quite so, sir.”

CHAPTER VII

History says little about them, but there doubtless have been queens who lacked dignity, queens with high spirits and little sense of decorum, queens who outraged pompous chamberlains and brought shame into the lives of stately chancellors. The behaviour of the new queen of Salissa caused no scandal; but that was only because there was no one in her small court who had any sense of the dignity proper to queens. The major domo's feelings would certainly have been outraged if he watched Queen Daisy make her first royal progress. But he was shut up in his cabin. The other servants might have quivered with shame and disgust if they had seen—but they saw nothing, having turned away their eyes from beholding vanity.

After the cable had ceased rattling through the hawse hole Miss Daisy demanded a boat. Scarcely waiting for Captain Wilson's word, Mr. Phillips rushed to lower one. Lashings were cast loose, the boat was swung outboard and manned with a speed which would have done credit to a smart yacht's crew. Miss Daisy ran to her cabin. The oarsmen sat ready to push off. Mr. Phillips stood in the stern sheets, the tiller between his feet. Miss Daisy appeared at the top of the accommodation ladder. She held a large parcel in her hand.

"Catch," she said to Mr. Phillips, "it's the flag."

She flung it. Mr. Phillips with a wild grab saved it from the sea. Miss Daisy laughed joyously.

"Catch again," she said, "the palace keys."

A bunch of keys crashed on the floor boards of the boat between the feet of the man who rowed stroke. Mr. Phillips picked them up. Miss Daisy, disdaining a helping hand held out by Smith, skipped down the steps; her skirt held tight in one hand she leaped into the boat.

"Quickly," she cried, "oh, quickly, quickly! Please don't be long."

"Shove off," said Mr. Phillips, "and pull like—pull like——"

"Say it," said Miss Daisy, "say it, if it will make them go quicker."

“Pull,” said Mr. Phillips, “pull like—billy-o.”

The men pulled. Not even the expected invocation of bloody hell would have stirred them to greater exertions. The boat sprang forward. She sped towards the palace. The water bubbled round her bows, swished and foamed in the wake astern of her. Mr. Phillips brought her up alongside a broad flight of white steps. The men clawed at the smooth stone with their fingers. The Queen stepped ashore.

She stood on the lowest step, a figure poised for swift eager motion, a flushed excited girl, a queen with palpitating heart and eyes full of dancing merriment. The steps, blazing white in the sunshine, led up to a broad platform where a tall flagstaff stood. Behind was all the fantastic wonder of the palace, the porticoes, slender carved columns, stone lacework of flying buttresses, spires, hollowed spaces of dark shade, points of sparkling light, broad surfaces of dazzling whiteness. Mr. Phillips leaped ashore and passed the Queen, bounding up the steps to the platform. He carried in his hand the parcel which she had flung into the boat. He reached the flagstaff. He knotted a light line round his waist. He swarmed up the bare pole. He rove the line through the block at the top of the staff and slid to earth again. He bent the halyard to the flag. It ran up, a neat ball. With a sharp chuck at the line Mr. Phillips broke it out. The Royal Standard of Salissa fluttered in the morning breeze, pale blue, glorious.

Mr. Phillips shouted:

“Long live the Queen! long live the Queen!”

The Queen, still standing on the bottom step, gave a little cry of delight. The men in the boat sat still, with puzzled grins on their faces. Mr. Phillips bounded down to them, leaping the steps in threes and fours.

“Cheer, you blighters,” he said, “unless you want your silly skulls smashed. Cheer like billy-o. Long live the Queen!”

The men scrambled to their feet and responded. Their cheers rang out. One of them, moved to enthusiasm, seized his oar and beat the water with the flat of the blade. Like a man with a flail he raised the oar high and brought it down with loud smacks on the water, splashing up sparkling drops, rocking the boat in which he stood. He was not a native of Salissa, not a subject of the Queen, but his action expressed the enthusiasm of devoted loyalty.

The Queen bowed, blushing, laughing, breathless with excitement.

Across the bay came the sound of shouting from the men on board the *Ida*, ragged cheers. The steamer's syren shrieked. Mr. Donovan stood on the bridge, the rope which controlled the syren in his hand. The Queen waved to him. Five revolver shots rang out in quick succession.

"Good old Wilson!" said Mr. Phillips. "I wouldn't have thought he had it in him to fire a royal salute."

He gave Captain Wilson credit which was not his due. It was Smith, the steward, who fired the revolver. Afterwards that loyal servant excused himself to Mr. Donovan.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, "perhaps I oughtn't to have fired without orders; but it seemed the proper thing to do, sir."

"Do you always carry a gun in your pocket?" said Mr. Donovan.

"Only when I'm among Eastern peoples, sir. It's wiser then. Not in England, sir."

The Queen, standing radiant in the sunshine before her palace, gave her first royal command.

"Mr. Phillips," she said, "take the keys and come along."

They ran up the steps together, past the flagstaff, crossed a space of smooth white rock, and reached the great door which faced them. Mr. Phillips fitted the key and flung the door wide. A gloomy cool space lay before them. They were standing in bright sunshine and a glow of reflected light. Their eyes failed to penetrate the darkness before them. It was as if a thick black curtain hung inside the door. The Queen hesitated on the threshold. Mr. Phillips entered the room. He threw open the shutters and flung the great windows wide. Broad belts of light crossed the room. The sunshine flooded it. The morning breeze blew in, driving before it the heavy stagnant air.

The Queen entered.

She stood in a great hall. Round the walls hung pictures in tarnished frames. Rich furniture, damp-stained and worm-eaten, stood stiffly arranged as if for some great function. Only here and there was evidence of some disorder. A table was upset near the fireplace. The covering of a chair had been torn, and the hair

stuffing of its cushions bulged through the rent. The ashes of a wood fire and the charred remains of half-burnt logs were on the hearth. Some papers lay scattered on the floor near one of the windows.

The Queen, subdued, quieter, went on tip-toe round the room. She touched the furniture and the pictures softly, as she passed them. There was in her a feeling, half fear, half reverence, for the things which had once belonged to the dead King Otto. Phillips, moved by an impulse of curiosity, crossed the room to where the torn papers lay. He stooped down and picked up some of the fragments. For the most part they were blank. On one or two there were words in a language he did not understand. Only one fragment interested him. It was the corner of a torn envelope. It bore an English stamp and a London postmark.

“Your Majesty,” he said.

She did not hear or did not reply. Mr. Phillips was not used to intimate association with royal persons. He tried another form of address. “Your Serene Highness,” he said.

The Queen looked round.

“Do you mean me?” she said.

“Yes, your Excellency,” said Phillips.

The Queen laughed aloud. The sound of his voice and her own, the ready merriment of her laughter, awoke her from the fear and reverence, scattered the vague feeling of mystery which hung over her.

“Don’t you do it,” she said. “I’m queen of this island right enough, but I don’t mean to spend the rest of my life walking on stilts. I’m not that kind of queen. I’m a genuine democrat all the time. Don’t you forget that. Now call me Miss Daisy, same as you used to on board.”

Mr. Phillips blushed.

“Miss Daisy,” he said, “how long is it since the last king lived here?”

“I don’t know,” she said, “and I don’t care. Centuries and centuries, I expect. Come and explore, I want to see the whole of the palace and let the light and air into every room.”

She had shaken off entirely all vestiges of the sense of oppression which had

come on her when she first breathed the heavy stale air of the hall and saw it with its decayed furniture, huge and dim before her. It was full of sunlight now and she was merry again in the sunlight and fresh air.

She ran from room to room, pulling shutters back, flinging wide the windows. Phillips followed her, listened to her while she planned these for her father's rooms, those for her own, how breakfast should be laid on summer mornings on a balcony right over the water, how midday meals should be eaten in a shaded portico.

"And this," she said, "shall be your room, for you're to spend all your holidays here. See, if you open the window you can take a header right into the blue water —Oh, isn't it a beautiful colour?—and have a morning swim."

Phillips was ready to take a header from any window at the Queen's command. He would ask nothing better than to spend, not holidays only, but all his days there on the island with her. If he could enter her service—he wondered whether the Queen of Salissa would start a Royal Navy of her own.

They passed from room to room. They ran up winding staircases and emerged in tiny turret chambers, glass enclosed like the tops of lighthouses. They found a roof garden set round with huge stone urns full of dry caked earth. Once, no doubt, flowers had bloomed in them. Flowers, so the Queen determined, should bloom in them again. They descended to cool, spacious kitchens, to cellars where wine had been stored. They passed through a narrow doorway and found suddenly that the sea was lapping at their feet. They were underneath the centre of the house. Around them were high walls. From the water itself arose thick round pillars, supports of the vaulting on which the great hall rested. The light, entering for the most part through the water, was blue and faint. The stones beneath the water gleamed blue. The pillars as they rose changed from blue to purple. The water sighed, murmured, almost moaned. It seemed as if it tried to cling to the smooth stone work, as if it sank back again disappointed, weary of for ever giving kisses which were not returned. They stood in silence, looking, listening. Then Phillips spoke. His voice sounded strangely hollow. He sank it to a whisper.

"Miss Daisy," he said, "how long is it since the last king lived here?"

"Why do you ask me that again?" she said. "I don't know. A hundred years ago, perhaps. They killed him, you know. I wonder if they threw his body into the sea there?"

“Was it last December?”

“Of course not. How can you be so silly? As if any one would kill a king last December! They only did things like that centuries ago.”

Phillips took from his pocket the torn envelope he had picked up in the great hall.

“Look,” he said, “I found that near the fireplace in the hall we went into first.”

“It’s an old envelope,” she said. “It must have belonged to the king they killed. How interesting! Fancy their having had envelopes in those days!”

“The postmark on it,” he said, “is London, and the date is December 15, 1913. Some one was in the house since then, living in it.”

The Queen clapped her hands.

“Oh, splendid,” she said. “A mystery. It was the one thing I longed for. A mystery, a ghost, a secret chamber and all those beautiful things. I was quite afraid the house was too sunny for mystery until we came down here. There might be anything here, in this blue light, brigands or wandering spirits, or the old gods of the island. Now I call it just perfect. Thank you so much, Mr. Phillips, for finding me that paper. Now we can just brood on that brigand. It must have been a brigand. Or do you think the assassins came back, driven by pangs of conscience, to the scene of their crime, and just dropped that envelope so as to give a clue? There always are clues, aren’t there? Oh, I am glad you found it.”

As she spoke there came a thin high sound, a ghostly wail. It echoed back from the walls, repeating itself. The sound was broken among the pillars, came confusedly to the listening ears. The waters stirred uneasily, sucking at the walls and the pillars with a kind of fierce intensity. Her hand sought his arm, caught it, held it tightly.

“It’s the steamer’s syren,” said Phillips. “They must be signalling.”

She loosed her hold of his arm and turned from him.

“How can you say such a thing? Just when I thought it was the ghost of the murdered king crying for vengeance.”

“I am sure they’re signalling for us,” he said. “We’d better go.”

CHAPTER VIII

The Queen, closely followed by Phillips, hurried through the cellars, along narrow passages, up a dozen different flights of stairs. They lost themselves several times. Twice they arrived by different routes at the large central kitchen. Twice they left it by different doors. They grew hot with laughter and bewilderment. Then they heard the steamer's syren and grew hotter still with impatience. At last, breathless and flushed, they reached the steps at which they had landed.

Eight boats lay clustered round the steamer. One of them was her own, a heavy white boat, carvel built, with high freeboard. Four men sat in her, resting on their oars. The other seven were island boats, gaily painted red and green, high prowed, high sterned. The biggest of them had a mast stepped right forward, a mast which raked steeply aft, across which lay the yard of a lateen sail. Six oarsmen sat in her. The other island boats were smaller. There were only two rowers in each. They had the same high bows and high sterns curving inwards, the same low freeboard amidships where the rowers sat. In them were many women and children.

On the deck of the *Ida* stood a little group of men. Captain Wilson's neat alert figure was easily recognizable. Mr. Donovan's white Panama hat was unmistakable. Phillips declared that the smaller man who stood beside Mr. Donovan was Smith, the steward. A little apart from them stood a tall bare-headed man. He had a long white beard. There seemed to be some kind of consultation going on. When the Queen and Phillips appeared on the steps below the castle the group on the steamer broke up. Captain Wilson, Mr. Donovan and Smith took places in the *Ida's* lifeboat. The old man went into the largest of the island boats. He stood in the stern, his hand on the carved end of her huge tiller. The eight boats, tailing out in a long procession, rowed slowly towards the castle steps.

"They must be your subjects," said Phillips. "They are coming to swear allegiance."

"My!" said the Queen. "What shall I say? What shall I do? What will they do? They can't all kiss my hand. There must be forty of them."

“I think,” he said, “that you’d better stand beside the flagstaff. It’s a commanding sort of position. They’ll have to climb up the steps to get to you. I wish the breeze had not died away. The flag would look ever so much better if it blew out.”

The Queen climbed the steps and took her place beneath the limp royal standard. Mr. Phillips bared his head and stood behind her.

The boats reached the steps. Mr. Donovan landed. Smith stepped ashore after him. Captain Wilson bade his men push off. He remained, a critical observer of the scene, some twenty or thirty yards from the shore.

“Daisy,” said Mr. Donovan, “there’s going to be a pageant. The inhabitants of this island are going to demonstrate.”

“How shall I talk to them?” said the Queen. “What language do they speak?”

“Don’t you fret any about that. I’ve brought Smith along. Smith is the only living Englishman who speaks the Megalian language. He’s been explaining the situation to the high priest of the island for the last half-hour while we blew bugle calls on the syren to attract your attention. Smith is a wonderful man, worth any salary to a firm with a big foreign business.”

Smith bowed.

“It’s hardly a language, sir,” he said. “A dialect, a patois. Partly Turkish, partly Slavonic, with a Greek base.”

“Some language that,” said Mr. Donovan. “It would interest our college professors. If you found a university on the island, Daisy, you must institute a system of visiting lecturers from the colleges on our side.”

“Oh, here they are!” said the Queen. “How lovely! Look at all their bright dresses. And the men are as gay as the women. Oh! there’s the dinkiest little baby with a brown face. He’s smiling at me. I know I shall just love them all, especially the brown babies.”

The islanders were disembarking from their boats. They crowded together on the lower steps of the staircase which led up to the flagstaff. They talked rapidly in low voices and gazed with frank curiosity at the little group above them. Women held babies high in their arms. Men took up toddling children and set them on their shoulders. Evidently all, even the youngest, were to have their chance of

gazing at the new queen.

The old man who had stood at the tiller of the leading boat disengaged himself from the crowd. He mounted the steps slowly, pausing now and then to bow low. He was a picturesque figure. He wore a short black jacket, heavily embroidered with gold thread. Underneath it was a blue tunic reaching to his knees. Round his waist was a broad crimson sash. He advanced with a grave dignity. Each bow—and he bowed often—was an act of ceremonial courtesy. There was no trace of servility, nor of any special desire to please or propitiate in his manner. He reached the step below the terrace on which the flagstaff stood. He bowed once more and then stood upright, looking straight at the Queen with calm, untroubled eyes.

He spoke a few words in a soft, low tone. Smith stepped forward to explain and interpret.

“This is Stephanos,” he said, “the Elder of Salissa.”

“Minister of religion?” said Donovan.

“He acts as such, sir,” said Smith, “at marriages and such-like among his own people; but I don’t know that the Church of England would consider him as a regular clergyman. He appears to be more of the nature of a Lord Mayor than an Archbishop.”

“What does he say?” asked the Queen.

“Does your Majesty wish me to translate literally?”

The Queen nodded.

“I Stephanos,” Smith began, “elder of Salissa and father of the dwellers on the island.”

“Does he mean that they’re all his children?” asked the Queen, “even the babies?”

“I think not, your Majesty,” said Smith, “though I expect he’s father or grandfather of half of them.”

“Go on,” said the Queen.

“I Stephanos, elder of Salissa and father of the dwellers on the island, bid the

English lady welcome. All that we have is hers."

"Oh," said the Queen, "how lovely! But of course I won't take anything from them—tell him that—though I would rather like a brown baby to play with, just loaned to me for a few hours every day, and of course I would pay the mother whatever she asked."

"And you might explain," said Donovan, "that we're American citizens, not English."

"I'll tell him, sir," said Smith, "but I expect it'll be the same thing to him."

Smith made a long speech. Apparently he failed to make the difference between an Englishman and an American clear to Stephanos, but he conveyed the Queen's request for a baby.

Stephanos' answer was translated thus:

"Every baby from three years old and under shall be laid at the white feet of the English lady and she shall take them all. There are five such on the island. They are hers."

Stephanos turned while his speech was being translated, and addressed his people. Apparently they were quite prepared to fulfil the promise he had made on their behalf. Five smiling young women with babies in their arms detached themselves from the crowd. They mounted two steps and then stood, with bowed heads, waiting for the next command.

"The darlings," said the Queen. "But I don't want them all laid at my feet. They'd be sure to roll away and fall into the sea. Tell them to-morrow will be time enough, and—and I'd like mothers to come too. I'm not sure that I could manage a baby all by myself."

She did not wait for Smith to translate this speech. She ran down the steps to where the five young women stood. She took one of the babies in her arms. She kissed another. The women stood round her, smiling shyly. The babies cooed and gurgled. She kissed them all, and took them one after another in her arms. She sat down on the steps and laid a crowing baby on her lap. The mothers smiled and drew nearer to her. Other women from the crowd below gathered round her. Their shyness disappeared completely, too completely. They stroked her hair. They patted her face and hands. They were filled with curiosity about her clothes. They felt the texture of her dress, fingered the brooch she wore, knelt

down and took her feet into their hands that they might examine her shoes. They explored the clocks on her stockings. Miss Daisy—no queen for the moment—was seriously embarrassed. She jumped to her feet, thrust the baby she held into its mother's arms.

"You mustn't pull my clothes off altogether," she said.

She smoothed her skirt down with her hands and brushed exploring fingers from her blouse. But the island women were not easily repulsed. They were ready to give their babies to her if she asked for them. They would not forgo if they could help it the delight of examining new and fascinating kinds of clothes. Miss Daisy—still Miss Daisy, not a queen—burst from them and ran, with tossed hair and ruffled garments, up the steps again.

"Oh, Smith," she said, "tell them that they mustn't do it. I'm sure they don't mean any harm, but I can't bear to be pulled about."

Smith translated; but it is doubtful if the women understood or even heard. There was a babble of soft voices. They were discussing eagerly the strange garments of the English lady.

Stephanos spoke again, gravely, gently.

"It is in my mind," so Smith translated, "that one of our daughters should be the servant of the English lady; seeing that she has no maidens of her own people round about her. Kalliope is the fairest and the deftest. If it be the good pleasure of the English lady Kalliope shall serve her day and night, doing in all things the bidding of the Queen wherein if Kalliope fail by one hair's breadth of perfect service, I, Stephanos the elder, her grandsire, will beat her with pliant rods fresh cut from the osier trees until the blood of full atonement flows from her."

"My!" said the Queen. "After that I shan't dare say a word to Kalliope even if she steals the last hairpin I own."

"Tell that high priest," said Donovan, "that I admire his loyalty. He may trot out the young woman. You must have a maid of some sort, Daisy, and I expect Kalliope will do her darnedest with that threat hanging over her."

Stephanos the elder was an old gentleman of quick apprehension. He did not wait for Smith to translate what Donovan said. He turned to the women crowded below him. He raised one hand. Their babbling ceased at once. Through the silence Stephanos the elder spoke.

“Kalliope.”

A young girl, perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age, came forward. Bowing low at each step she mounted, she climbed slowly towards the flagstaff. Her bowing suggested profound humility, but her eyes, when she raised them, sparkled, and her lips were parted in a gay smile. She was evidently in no fear of an immediate beating with fresh-cut osier rods. Yet Kalliope had some cause to be afraid. It was she who had endeavoured to explore to their source the clocks on the Queen’s stockings.

Stephanos the elder spoke to her briefly but very solemnly. Kalliope remained unimpressed. She took quick glances at the Queen’s face and her eyes were full of laughter and delight. Stephanos took her by the hand, led her forward and formally presented her to the Queen. Kalliope immediately fell on her knees and kissed the toes of the Queen’s shoes.

“Tell the high priest,” said Donovan, “that I’ll pay the girl the same wages that I undertook to give to the pampered English maid who went on strike this morning.”

Kalliope completed her obeisance and realized almost at once that she had won the position of lady’s maid to the Queen. She took her place meekly behind her mistress. There she stood smiling at her sisters and cousins who stood below. She was at the moment the most fortunate, the most envied young woman on the island. Hers would be the inexpressible joy of examining at her leisure all the wonderful clothes worn or possessed by the Queen. She realized this; but neither she nor any other woman on the island guessed, or, by the wildest flight, could have imagined, how many and how various were the garments packed by the English maid into the trunks which lay in the steamer’s hold.

Kalliope was never beaten by her grandfather with osier rods. She devoted herself utterly to the service of the Queen. The only fault that could be found with her was that her devotion was too complete, her service too untiring. At meals she stood behind the Queen’s chair. During the day she followed the Queen from room to room. She would stand silent in a corner for an hour waiting while her mistress read or talked. There was no escaping from the girl. At night she slept on the floor at the end of the Queen’s bed, wrapped in a rug, her head pillowed on her own arm. She was quick to learn what was wanted, and acquired, after a while, an uncanny power of anticipating the Queen’s wishes.

CHAPTER IX

Next morning the work of unloading the ship began. It went on at high pressure for three days. On the fourth it slackened. Before the end of the week everything was landed.

The donkey engine on the *Ida's* fore-deck clanked and snorted. Down in the hold the sweating sailors toiled. Packing-cases, great and small, huge bales and brass-studded trunks were hoisted high, swung clear of the ship's bulwarks and lowered, with much rattling of chains and gear, into the waiting boats. The ship's lifeboats and the five largest of the island boats plied to and fro between the steamer and the shore. On the palace steps, islanders—men, women and children—waited to take charge of the cargoes which the boats brought. Captain Wilson was in command on board the *Ida*. On shore Mr. Phillips directed the unpacking. He had the cases and bales hauled up the flagstaff terrace. There they were prised or cut open. Tables, chairs, carpets, beds, bedding, every article of household furniture were unpacked and carried into the rooms of the palace. The islanders worked willingly. Only when they set down a load in its appointed place, a tall mirror perhaps or a wardrobe, they stood in a group around it, admiring, wondering. Often Mr. Phillips had to pursue them, drag them, push them, to induce them to return for some new burden.

Smith, the steward, worked with amazing energy. Very early on the first day of the unloading, Phillips found him in the large hall of the palace. He was sweeping up the hearth. He had already gathered and burnt the litter of torn papers which lay on the floor. It was a natural act in a good servant; but it seemed to Phillips a waste of energy. Smith apologized at once.

"Yes, sir, as you say, sir, it'll be time enough to clean up when we get things a bit settled. Perhaps I oughtn't to have done it, sir. But it seemed to me as how I'd like to clear away the mess, sir, when her Majesty would be passing through the room."

Phillips was annoyed. The torn papers had interested him. He intended to have collected them all. But Smith, with ill-directed zeal, had burnt them. Not a scrap was left, except the torn envelope which Phillips had in his pocket.

Afterwards Smith proved most useful. He acted as interpreter on shore or aboard

whenever an interpreter was wanted. He was active in the opening of packing-cases, careful and skilful in handling glass and china. He planned store-rooms for the provisions which came ashore, arranged the wine in cool cellars, had linen packed away securely.

The Queen ran eagerly from room to room. The arrival of each piece of furniture was a fresh joy to her. She kidnapped small parties of women from among Phillips' workers and set them to laying carpets or hanging curtains, explaining what had to be done by means of vivid gestures. She moved things which seemed comfortably settled from room to room. Whenever she came across Smith or met Phillips she talked excitedly about colour schemes. She spent a good deal of time in rescuing the brown babies from peril. The mothers, determined to miss no chance of handling strange and wonderful things, laid their infants down in all sorts of odd places, behind doors or in corners at tops of staircases. The Queen tripped over them occasionally, went all the time in terror that one of them would be crushed by passing feet.

Kalliope was deliriously happy. She was a quick-witted girl. Very early in the day she grasped the fact that packing-cases never contained clothes; that trunks might or might not, but generally did. She learned almost at once four English words from the sailors—"damned box" and "bloody trunk." Armed with the full authority of maid in waiting to the Queen, she stood beside the boats when they arrived. With a gesture of contempt she committed each "damned box" to the care of the men and the less favoured women. She took possession of all personal luggage. Only her special friends were allowed to handle the Queen's trunks. She put herself in command of four girls, and marched in front of them as they staggered under the weight of great trunks. She had them carried up to the Queen's rooms. Then with joyful cries of "Bloody trunk, bloody trunk," she ran through the palace seeking her mistress and the keys. Kalliope unpacked all the clothes herself. Not even the most favoured of her helpers was allowed to touch a garment. It was enough for the others to gaze.

Mr. Donovan took no part whatever in the unloading of the ship or the unpacking on the island. He said frankly that he disliked fuss intensely, and that the weather was far too hot for movement of any kind. He added to Captain Wilson—it seemed necessary to excuse himself to Captain Wilson—that the action of his heart always became more disordered if he mixed himself up with people who suffered from activity. The deck of the *Ida* was no place for him. The cabins were stuffy and the clamour of the donkey engine made him restless. He went ashore. Smith, who was a wonderfully sympathetic man, led him to a

high balcony, well shaded, pleasantly airy. There Mr. Donovan established himself on a deck chair. He smoked a great deal and slept a little. He drank the cocktails which Smith found time to prepare for him. He ate the food Smith brought up to him. He found Salissa a pleasant island and looked forward to great peace, when the *Ida*, her cargo unloaded, should sail away. He had only one real trouble. Not even Smith could find ice on Salissa. Mr. Donovan sighed over his own want of foresight. The patent freezer had been packed in the very bottom of the hold.

Early in the third day the Queen tired of unpacking and arranging furniture. The excitement of running to and fro through the rooms of the palace faded. The merriment which came of seeing kitchen chairs placed in her bedroom palled. She began to feel that Mr. Phillips would never fully understand the beauty and value of a colour scheme. Her clothes were all safely gathered, unpacked and stored away in fragrant heaps. She wanted rest from the ceaseless laughter of the islanders and the noise of pattering bare feet.

“Kalliope,” she said, “we’ll go for a row.”

Kalliope smiled joyously. “Go row,” she repeated. She had not the faintest idea what the thing meant, but life was for her a passing from one rapturous experience to another. “Go row” was no doubt some untried pleasure. She stood smiling, waiting further enlightenment.

The Queen made the motions of a rower with her arms. Kalliope, pathetically eager to understand, repeated, “Go row, go row.”

The Queen led her to a window and pointed to one of the island boats which had just left the steamer. She went through the pantomime of rowing again. She touched her own breast with her forefinger, then Kalliope’s. The girl understood. She ran from the room, through passages, down steps. She reached the landing place.

“Go row,” she cried.

Then, condescending to the language of her people, she spoke to the men who sat in one of the smaller island boats. In obedience to her command they stepped on shore. They gave their coats and their coloured sashes to the girl. She piled them in the stern, a cushion for her mistress. She took the oars. The Queen came down the steps, carrying in her arms one of the brown babies. She had tripped over it at the end of the passage leading from her room. She sat on the cushion

prepared for her with the baby on her knees. Kalliope rowed out across the harbour.

That night the Queen slept for the first time in her new palace. A bed had been arranged for her, and she was eager to leave the small close cabin on the ship. The great room she had chosen for herself attracted her. She thought of the cool night air blowing in through the window, of the wide balcony on which she could sit awhile till sleepiness came over her. No other room in the palace was ready for use. Nor did Mr. Donovan seem anxious to go ashore.

Mr. Phillips was a lover. He was also a young man. He reverenced the lady who was mistress of his heart and queen. He also, as is the way of lovers very much in love, suffered from a conviction that she ought to be guarded and protected. It seemed to him wrong that she, with no other companion than Kalliope, should sleep in a great lonely house on an island where strange people lived. Thus young men, the best of them, show contempt for the courage and ability of the women they admire. The Queen herself laughed at his fears. Mr. Donovan rebuked him.

“Your notions about girls,” he said, “are European. You take it from me, young man, that an American girl knows how to take care of herself. Daisy can go without a leading rein. She can take hold on any situation likely to arise.”

No situation was in the least likely to arise. It was impossible to suspect the gentle islanders of wishing any harm to their new queen. There were no wild animals, no animals at all, except a dog or two and some small cattle.

Phillips was a lover and therefore a prey to anxiety; but he was a healthy young man and had worked hard all day. He turned into his berth and went to sleep at once. Very early in the morning, about three o’clock, he awoke. Nor, for all his twistings and turnings, would sleep come to him again. His imagination, picturing a hundred impossible dangers for the Queen, tormented him. Suddenly he remembered the torn envelope which lay in his pocket. He puzzled himself to find some explanation of its being on the island, in the palace. Some one must have brought it there. Some one sitting in the great hall had read the letter that envelope contained. Some one with assuredly no right to be there, some one—the inference seemed inevitable—with evil in his heart had entered the palace and dwelt there.

Phillips could stand his imaginings no more. He got up, dressed himself and went on deck.

The man who kept—or was supposed to keep—the anchor watch lay fast asleep, coiled up under the shadow of the bridge. The ship was silent save for the lapping of the water against her sides. The island lay, a grey mystery in the half light of earliest dawn. The light increased, and Phillips, standing in the shadow of the deck-house, could fix his eyes on the windows of the room where the Queen lay. He heard, suddenly, the splash of oars, dipped very gently in the water. He looked round and saw a boat, one of the island boats, moving from the ship's side. There was one man in her, Smith the steward. Phillips reasoned quickly. Smith must have left his cabin stealthily, must have come on deck, must have dropped on board the boat and cast her loose without making a sound. What was he doing? What did he want?

Phillips, deep in the shadow of the deck-house, stood and watched. The boat moved more quickly as she drew further from the steamer. She headed for the sandy beach below the village. A man stood on the shore awaiting her. The light grew brighter every moment. Phillips recognized the waiting man—Stephanos the elder. His long white beard and stately figure were not easily mistaken. The boat grounded and Stephanos stepped on board. Smith pushed off, and rowing rapidly now, coasted the shore of the bay, keeping close inland. The boat was hard to see, for she moved in the shadow of the cliffs. Suddenly she disappeared altogether. Phillips waited and watched. In half an hour the boat appeared again, plainly visible now. She came from the mouth of a great cave, a darker space in the grey face of the cliff. Smith pulled hard. In a few minutes he had landed Stephanos and was on his way back to the steamer.

Phillips met him as he climbed the side and came on board.

"You're out early this morning, Smith," he said.

"Yes, sir, pretty early, sir. There's a lot to be done in the day. I thought as how, if I went ashore, sir, I might get a couple of eggs for Mr. Donovan's breakfast. He likes a fresh egg."

"Seagulls' eggs," said Phillips.

Smith looked up quickly. For an instant there was a sharp gleam of suspicion in his eyes. Then he dropped them again.

"No, sir; hens' eggs. There's hens on the island, sir."

"Got any?" said Phillips.

“Two, sir, only two.”

He took them from his pocket as he spoke and held them out for inspection. He had certainly got two eggs. Phillips was puzzled. Men seldom search for hens’ eggs—they never find them—in sea caves.

“Just enough for Mr. Donovan’s breakfast, sir.”

“Do you happen to know, Smith”—Phillips asked his question abruptly —“whether any one has been living in the palace lately? Last year, for instance, or at any time since the last king was murdered there?”

“Murdered, sir, how horrible! Was it long ago, sir?”

The assassination of King Otto had been mentioned, even discussed, a dozen times while Smith was waiting at table. Very good servants—and Smith was one of the best—are able, it is believed, to abstract their minds from the conversation of their masters, will actually hear nothing of what is said in their presence. Yet it seemed to Phillips as if Smith were overdoing his pose of ignorance.

“It was years ago, I believe. What I want to know is whether any one has been living in the palace since.”

“Don’t know, sir, I’m sure. Never been here before till I arrived with you, sir. Would you care for me to make inquiries? Some of the natives would be sure to know.”

“Ask that patriarch,” said Phillips, “Stephanos or whatever he’s called. Ask him next time you take him out for a row at six o’clock in the morning.”

He knew that he had startled Smith once when he referred to the seagulls’ eggs. He hoped to take him off his guard this time by showing that he had watched the whole of the morning row. But this time Smith was not to be caught. He made no sign whatever that anything unexpected had been said. He was not looking at Phillips. His eyes were fixed on the palace.

“I beg pardon, sir,” he said after a slight pause, “but perhaps we ought to leave the deck, to go below. Seems to me, sir, that the Queen is going to bathe. She mightn’t like it, sir, if she thought we were here watching her.”

The Queen was descending steps clad in a scarlet bathing dress. It is not likely that she would have resented the presence of spectators on the deck of a steamer

nearly half a mile distant. Nor, indeed, is it likely that Kalliope would have been seriously embarrassed, though she saw no sense in wearing clothes of any kind when she intended to bathe. But Mr. Phillips was a young man and modest. One fleeting glimpse of Kalliope poised ready for her plunge was sufficient for him. He turned and left the deck. Smith was already busy with his cooking.

CHAPTER X

The peculiarity of Smith's proceedings highly stimulated the curiosity of Mr. Phillips. The envelope in his pocket helped him to the belief that he held the clue of an exciting mystery. He pondered the matter while he shaved. He was dull company at breakfast because he could not get it out of his head. He made up his mind at last to confide his vague suspicions to Mr. Donovan. This was a difficult decision to arrive at. He would have much preferred to unravel his mystery himself, to go to the Queen with evidence completely sufficient to condemn a whole band of conspirators. But he saw no chance of getting any further in his investigations. Smith's morning expedition remained obstinately unconnected with the torn envelope. A sense of loyalty to his employers combined with devotion to the Queen decided him to tell Mr. Donovan all he knew.

The work of unloading the *Ida* went on briskly all the morning. Mr. Donovan sat, remote from the turmoil, on his balcony. Mr. Phillips, seeking a moment when Smith was busy elsewhere, climbed to the balcony. Mr. Donovan welcomed him.

"Sit right down," he said. "There's another chair knocking about somewhere. Take a cigar."

Mr. Phillips hauled a deck chair from the sunshine into the shade and stood leaning over the back of it.

"This island," said Mr. Donovan, "seems likely to be restful. Once we're through with the job of landing our trunks we shall be able to settle down and just stay put. I don't say but it's pleasant for a man like me who's worked some in his time to sit here and watch other people sweating——"

He waved his hand towards the islanders, who staggered up the steps under their loads. He included with a sweeping gesture two boats which had just left the ship's side. The day was exceedingly hot. All these men were certainly sweating. The clanking and rattling of the donkey engines were plainly audible across the water. The engineman was probably sweating too. Captain Wilson, standing erect in the full blaze of the sun on the steamer's fore-deck, cannot possibly have been cool. Mr. Donovan sighed with satisfaction.

“I don’t deny that it’s pleasant,” he said, “kind of aggravates the sense of restfulness; but for real calm give me a country where nobody works at all. That’s what I am looking forward to. That’s why I reckon this island is going to suit me.”

“Mr. Donovan,” said Phillips, “there’s a matter I want to speak to you about. I daresay there’s nothing in it; but I can’t help feeling——”

Mr. Phillips’ hand went to his breast pocket. He clutched the torn envelope.

“Here’s something I picked up the day before yesterday,” he said.

Smith stepped suddenly between him and Mr. Donovan. Smith was a hard worker, and a loud shouter when shouting was desirable. He was also, as Phillips knew, a quiet mover when he chose. He held a tray in his hand with two glasses on it. He handed one to Mr. Donovan and the other to Phillips.

“Beg pardon, sir,” he said, “but there’s some cases of books come ashore, sir. I thought you’d like to arrange about them yourself, sir, seeing as how I don’t understand libraries.”

He spoke to Phillips. He did not expect Mr. Donovan to arrange anything.

“You’re young, Phillips,” said Mr. Donovan. “According to the prophets and other wise men it’s a good thing to be young. I’m getting on for sixty, but there are compensations. I don’t feel called on to see after things. I don’t have to toil any. Smith!”

“Yes, sir.”

“There exist in the U. S. A. more than two hundred formulæ for the compounding of cocktails. They vary from the simple dry Martini to the more poetic Angel’s Smile. How many of them do you know, Smith?”

“About eight, sir, eight or ten.”

“Few men, except professional bar-tenders, know more,” said Mr. Donovan. “But you can learn. I see before you, Smith, years of artistic endeavour. Eight from two hundred leave a hundred and ninety-two. I think I have a book containing the formulæ. It was compiled by one of our leading citizens after a term of residence in a dry State. I shall give you the book, Smith. My digestion remains unimpaired up to date. I shall sample the results of your labours.”

Mr. Phillips swallowed his cocktail and went away without saying any more about the torn envelope. He had no intention of telling his story in the presence of Smith.

He tried again an hour later. He calculated on not being interrupted this time. Smith had gone off to the steamer. From time to time he had to go to the steamer to act as interpreter there. Captain Wilson seemed curiously incapable of making himself understood by the islanders.

“That you again, Mr. Phillips,” said Donovan. “Sit down. Take a cigar and sit down.”

“There’s something I want to speak to you about, sir,” said Phillips.

“If you must speak,” said Donovan, “I hope you’ll sort of murmur. That engine has stopped clanking for a moment and Smith isn’t shouting any at those poor devils of islanders. ‘Silence,’ says the poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes, ‘like a poultice came to heal the wound of sound.’ It’s a kind of advanced sample of what this island’s going to be.”

This was not encouraging to Mr. Phillips. He hesitated. Far away, under the shadow of the cliffs, a small boat moved slowly. In it was the Queen, seated in the stern with a huge box of chocolates in her lap. Kalliope rowed, her mouth full of chocolates. Phillips could not see the box or Kalliope’s mouth. The boat was too far away for that. But he knew the chocolates were there. Early in the day the Queen had come to him and demanded candies. She had come at a fortunate moment. He was in the act of opening a large case, sent out, so the label declared, by Fuller, and Kalliope had carried down to the boat a huge box of chocolates. It was the sight of that boat—perhaps, too, the thought of the chocolates—which spurred Mr. Phillips to tell his tale in spite of all discouragement. Is there anything which is more eloquent of innocent helplessness, anything which makes a stronger appeal to the protective instinct of a man, than the vision of two girls eating chocolates?

“The day I first landed, sir,” he said, “I found this.”

He handed the torn envelope to Mr. Donovan.

“The postmark, sir,” he said, “is London, December 15, 1913. Now how do you think it got here?”

Donovan looked at the envelope curiously. He turned it over, felt the texture of it

with his fingers. At last he spoke.

“Mr. Phillips,” he said, “I may be wrong in my interpretation of facts. I don’t know that any recognized minister of religion would support me; but it’s my belief that if Eve hadn’t stirred that serpent up, kind of annoyed him by poking round, the creature would have lain quiet enough and there’d have been no trouble about the apple. That’s the nature of snakes. I’ve seen quite a few and I know. Now this island is about the nearest thing to a real restful paradise that I’ve bumped into since I first started my pilgrimage through this vale of tears. I don’t say there’s no snakes in it. There may be. But my notion is to let those snakes lie unless they start in molesting me.”

“But,” said Mr. Phillips, “there must have been somebody in the house here, somebody who had no right to be in it. Otherwise how would that envelope with the London postmark——”

“The British nation,” said Donovan, “is at the present moment exciting itself quite a bit about the effect of the Movies—what you call cinemas your side—on the minds of the young. What your leading reformers say is that it upsets the budding intellect of the rising generation to present life to it as life is not. As a general rule I’m not much taken up with eminent reformers. They’re a class of citizens I don’t admire, though I admit they have their uses in supplying loftiness of view and generally keeping up the more serious kinds of charm practised by the female sex. But in the matter of the effect of movies on the young mind those reformers may be right. It seems to me you’ve gathered in some foolish notions about life, Mr. Phillips. Desperate villains dropping envelopes and generally scattering clues along their tracks would be interesting things, a darned sight more interesting than eminent reformers. Only there aren’t any. They don’t exist outside of novels and picture houses.”

Mr. Donovan held out the torn envelope. Phillips took it and stuffed it into his pocket again. He was unconvinced. Cinema exhibitions are responsible for many vain imaginings, no doubt; but his envelope was a fact. He had found it. The postmark was plain and clear. He moved over to the edge of the balcony and gazed out across the sunlit bay. It seemed impossible then and there to tell the story of Smith’s morning expedition. Mr. Donovan’s logical rationalism was invincible.

“If you happen to come on that book about cocktails,” said Donovan, “just give it to Smith. It’s somewhere. In giving the order for the library for this island, I

specially mentioned that book along with complete illustrated editions of all standard American and European authors."

Phillips turned and left the balcony. It was, after all, absurd to worry and puzzle over his envelope. It could have no meaning. Some stray tourist perhaps, sight-seeing far from all beaten tracks, had made his way into the house. Tourists are notorious for leaving paper behind them. As for Smith and his boating at dawn—could Smith possibly have gone to search for breakfast eggs in a sea cave?

He glanced once more at the bay before he returned to his work. The Queen's boat was no longer in sight. The girls had landed perhaps in some quiet creek, or the Queen had taken a fancy to cross the bay and explore the village where her subjects lived.

Kalliope rowed easily and was well content to go on rowing all day. She was almost perfectly happy. Fuller's sweets were a revelation of unimagined delight to her, and she could gaze without interruption at the Queen. There was little in the world left for her heart to desire.

The girls rowed round the shore of the bay. The shadow of the white cliffs was grateful. The Queen delighted to drag her hands through the cool water. The sound of its lapping against the steep rocks soothed her. She liked to peer into the blue depths. When she looked up it was pleasant to meet Kalliope's soft brown eyes and to see the ready smile broaden on the girl's lips. Now and then, laughing, she leaned forward and pressed a chocolate into Kalliope's mouth. The Queen's fingers were often wet with salt water, but that did not spoil the flavour of the sweets for Kalliope.

The boat slipped past high sheer cliffs, past little coves, on whose sand men's feet had surely never trodden, past the mouths of great caves, gloomy, mysterious, from the depths of which came a hollow murmuring of water. The caves had a strange fascination for the Queen. Her eyes followed their steep walls up to the arches of their high dripping roofs, tried to pierce the dim and darkening shades within, gazed down through the water at round boulders and flat shelves of rock, seen magnified and strangely blue in the depths. At first she was half fearful and would not allow the boat to be taken near the mouths of the caves she passed. At the mouth of one cave Kalliope shouted suddenly. Echoes answered her from within, repeating her shout and repeating it till the cries seemed to come from far off, from the very centre of the island. Opposite another cave Kalliope shouted again and banged her oars against the gunwhale

of the boat. A flock of grey birds, some kind of rock pigeons, flew out, making a sound of rushing with their wings. The Queen became, little by little, less fearful and more curious.

They came at last to a cavern with a wide entrance. The daylight shone far inside. The water was blue far into the depths, not purple or black as it seemed to be just inside the narrower caves. The Queen signed to Kalliope. The boat turned, slipped into the wide entrance, rose and fell upon the swelling water under the high roof. Kalliope rowed on. For awhile she rowed with her oars full stretch on their rowlocks. Then the walls narrowed more and more till she must ship her oars. The boat glided on slowly from the impulse of her last stroke. The walls narrowed still. Kalliope stood up. Pushing against one wall and then the other with an oar grasped midway in her hands she drove the boat forward. Suddenly the space widened. The roof was higher, almost out of sight. The boat passed into a huge cavern very dimly lit. The Queen gasped, sat open-mouthed in breathless silence for a moment; then looking round she saw that the cavern was lit by several thin shafts of pale-blue light. More than one of the caves whose entrance the boat had passed led into this great cavern. Kalliope, laughing, plunged an oar into the waters. It shone silver like some long fish. The Queen gazed at it. She plunged her own arm in and saw it turn silver too.

The water was still deep and seemed scarcely to shallow at all as the boat moved forward into the depths of the cavern. Suddenly the Queen saw before her a steep beach covered with large, round stones. The boat grounded. Kalliope leaped on shore. She held her hand out to the Queen. The two girls stood together on the beach. Kalliope, still holding her Queen’s hand, led the way upwards, away from the boat and the water. Her bare feet moved lightly over the stones which shifted and rolled under the Queen’s shoes, making a hollow sound. Echoes multiplied the sound until the air was full of hollow mutterings, like the smothered reports of very distant guns. Kalliope led on. To her the way was familiar. The dim light and hollow noises were commonplace. At last she stopped and with a little cry pointed forward.

The Queen looked. Her eyes were well accustomed now to the dim light. She saw.

There in the depths of the mysterious cavern, it would not have surprised the girl to see strange things. She would scarcely have been astonished if Kalliope had pointed to a group of mermaids combing damp hair with long curved shells. Old Triton with his wreathed horn would have been in place, almost an expected

vision, if he had sat on a throne of rock, sea carved, with panting dolphins at his feet. The Queen saw no such beings. What she did see called from her a little cry of surprise, made her cling suddenly to Kalliope's arm.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh, Kalliope, what are they?"

"Damn boxes," said Kalliope.

Before the eyes of the Queen, stretching along the back of the cave, was a long row of large galvanized iron tanks, strongly made, with heavily studded seams, each with a great copper tap. They were ranged in a most orderly line, like some grey monsters carefully drilled. They were all exactly the same width, the same height, and the copper spouts exactly matched each other.

"Damned boxes," said Kalliope cheerfully.

Any one looking at them might almost have agreed with her. They were not precisely boxes. They were cisterns, tanks, but they gave the impression of being damnable and damned.

"But," said the Queen, "what are they for? What's the meaning of them? How did they get here? Who brought them?"

Kalliope did not understand the questions, but guessed at what her mistress asked. She had been learning English for three days only. She had been quick to pick up certain words from the Queen, words in frequent use between them. But in face of questionings like these the vocabulary of millinery and hair dressing failed her hopelessly. She fell back on what she had picked up from the sailors' lips and from her brothers who were already enriching the island language with English slang.

"Blighters," she said, "mucky ship—go row, go row—damn boxes."

In spite of the pale light and the sinister mystery of the tanks in front of her the Queen laughed aloud. The pursuing echoes made Kalliope's English irresistibly absurd. Then she pondered. Men—whether "blighters" in Kalliope's mouth conveyed reproach or were simply a synonym for men she did not know—men in a ship—"mucky" described the ship as little probably as "damn boxes" described the packing-cases of furniture or "bloody" her trunks of clothes. Men in a ship had brought the tanks, had rowed them—"go row" was plain enough—ashore in boats.

“But who,” said the Queen, “and why?”

Kalliope was beaten. Who and why were too much for her, as indeed they have been for people far wiser than she. Are not all theology and all philosophy attempts, and for the most part vain attempts, to deal with just those two words, who and why?

“Blighters,” said Kalliope, and the echoes repeated her words with emphasis, “blighters, blighters, blighters,” till the Queen came to believe it.

Then Kalliope, memory wakened in her, grew suddenly hopeful. She began to hum a tune, very softly at first, making more than one false start; but getting it nearly right at last. The Queen recognized it. She had heard it a hundred times in old days at prayers in the chapel of her college. It was a hymn tune. The words came back to her at once. “Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God.” She took Kalliope by the arm and led her back to the boat.

“Come away,” she said, “quick, quick. I’m going mad.”

Kalliope entered into the spirit of a new game. She ran down across the rolling pebbles.

“Go row,” she said. “Quick, quick.”

The boat, Kalliope pushing, dragging, rowing, burst from the cavern, fled beyond the shadow of the cliffs, glided into the blaze of sunshine and the sparkling water of the outer bay. The Queen lay back in the stern and laughed. Kalliope, resting on her oars, laughed too. The Queen’s laughter passed into an uncontrollable fit. Tears rolled down her cheeks. Her sides were sore. She gasped for breath. The thought of that row of portentously solemn grey tanks was irresistibly comic. They looked like stranded codfish with their tongues out. They looked like a series of caricatures of an American politician, a square-headed ponderous man, who had once dined with her father. He had the same appearance of imbecile gravity, the same enormous pomposity. The copper spouts were so many exaggerated versions of his nose.

Her imagination flew to a vision of the men who had brought the tanks and cisterns there in a “mucky ship.” She seemed to see them, thin scarecrows of men, crawling over the rusty sides of some battered tramp steamer; mournful men with brown faces and skinny arms, singing their hymn with sharp cracked voices while they laboured at their utterly preposterous task. Laughter conquered

the Queen. She lay back helpless in the merciless grip of uncontrollable merriment. Kalliope could not laugh so much. The joke was beyond her. She sat with a wavering half-smile on her lips watching the Queen. The box of chocolates lay in the bottom of the boat. Kalliope stretched her foot out, touched the box, pushed it gently towards the Queen. It seemed to her waste of a golden opportunity to leave the box, no more than half empty, at their feet. The movement broke the spell of the Queen's laughter. She picked up the box, pushed chocolates into Kalliope's mouth, filled her own with them.

CHAPTER XI

I find it necessary to remind myself from time to time that the Queen of Salissa is a young girl, in mind and experience little more than a child. If I think of her as a woman or allow myself to credit her with any common sense, that blight which falls on the middle-aged, her actions become unintelligible.

She ought, no doubt, to have gone straight to her father and told him about the cisterns in the cave. That was the sane thing to do. Donovan was a man of clear understanding and wide knowledge. He would have—I do not know precisely what he would have done, but it would have been something entirely sensible. The Queen dreaded nothing so much as that. She found herself for the first time in her life in touch with a mystery, surrounded by things fascinatingly incomprehensible. Her island held a secret, was the scene—there could be no doubt about it—of a deep, dark, perhaps dangerous plot. She was thrilled. The more she thought of the cavern and the mysterious tanks, the more delightful the thrills became.

She made a confidant of Phillips, choosing instinctively the only person on the island likely to be in full sympathy with her. Phillips was older than she was. He was twenty-eight; but he was a simple, straightforward young man with his boyish taste for adventure unspoiled. He was also deeply in love with the Queen.

I have found it very difficult to get either from the Queen or from Phillips a complete and coherent account of what happened between the discovery of the cisterns and the day when the *Ida* sailed, taking Phillips away from the island. I gather that they were both the victims of a bad attack of detective fever. They have talked to me quite freely and cheerfully of the “Island Mystery.” That was the Queen’s phrase. About a much more important matter the Queen will not speak at all, and Phillips cannot be induced to dwell on details. I have been obliged to depend mainly on Kalliope for information, and even now Kalliope does not speak English well.

“We have three clues,” said the Queen hopefully, “three really good clues. We ought to be able to unearth the mystery. Detectives hardly ever have so many.”

Phillips named the three clues, ticking them off on his fingers.

“First, the torn envelope; second, Smith’s expedition to the cave before dawn ____”

“Before dawn,” said the Queen with rapture.

“Third, the cisterns in the cave. Let’s go and see the cisterns.”

“No,” said the Queen. “The great thing is not to be carried away by passion. We must be cold, purely intellectual. We must be thoroughly systematic. We’ll begin with the torn envelope. It happened first.”

They retired to a shady corner of the balcony outside the Queen’s rooms and studied the torn envelope for two hours. They were analytical, keenly and minutely observant, coldly cautious in forming conclusions. They tried every method of detection known to detective science. They held the envelope up to the light in order to discover a watermark. They examined the texture of the paper, the ink and the postage stamp, carefully through a powerful magnifying glass. They scraped one corner of the envelope with the blade of a penknife. They took four photographs, two of the front and two of the back, with the Queen’s hand camera. They talked a good deal about fingerprints.

Phillips had a logical mind and a capacity for synthetic induction. The Queen was perhaps the more careful observer. She had certainly the more brilliant imagination. After two hours’ work they summed up their conclusions, making careful notes with the Queen’s fountain pen on the blank pages at the end of a large diary.

“A man or men——” said Phillips.

The Queen wrote down “A man or men” in the diary.

“Has,” said Phillips, “or have, been present on the island of Salissa at some date between December 15, 1913, and April 30, 1914. The said man or men was or were during part of that period in occupation of the royal palace.”

“Royal palace,” said the Queen, writing rapidly.

“This man—or men, of course—was in correspondence with some person at present unknown, resident in the city of London.”

“That’s very important,” said the Queen. “Anything more?”

“No,” he said, “that’s all I’ve got.”

The Queen handed over the diary. It was Phillips' turn to write.

"I observed," she said, "that the envelope is of the kind used by business men, an office envelope; also that the stamp is put on crooked."

Phillips looked at the stamp. It was put on crooked.

"From this I infer," said the Queen, "either that the man in London——What did you call him?"

"Person at present unknown," said Phillips.

"Either that the person at present unknown was (a) habitually careless about details, or that (b) though usually careful he was in a hurry when he despatched this letter."

"By Jove!" said Phillips, "but, I say, mightn't somebody else, an office boy or some one, have put on the stamp?"

"Not on a letter of this kind," said the Queen. "The writer wouldn't have trusted any one else."

"It's frightfully clever of you," said Phillips, "to have thought of all that."

"It does not lead to anything very definite yet," said the Queen. "But you'll find it will all fit together—like a jigsaw puzzle you know—when we get to work on the other two clues. We can't expect to solve a mystery of this sort straight off. We've only been at it two hours."

Kalliope stood all the time at the far end of the balcony watching the Queen. She knew nothing about the investigation of the island mystery which was going on under her eyes. But she was a young woman who had lived a simple and natural life. In some things she was far wiser than her mistress. She seems to have realized that the Queen and Phillips were making, without knowing it, considerable progress into the heart of another, much more enthralling, mystery. As a chaperone Kalliope was negligible.

"The next clue," said the Queen, "is Smith. We must shadow him."

"Day and night," said Phillips.

"And Stephanos. Stephanos was with him when he went to the cavern that morning."

“Stephanos is in it up to the neck,” said Phillips. They shadowed Smith for the rest of that day. They stole on tip-toe about the house and burst suddenly into rooms where Smith was at work, coming upon him unexpectedly. They hid in cupboards and behind curtains in rooms which Smith was likely to enter. They left letters, written in cipher, and marked coins in prominent places where Smith could hardly fail to see them. Kalliope conceived that an elaborate game of hide-and-seek was being played. She joined in, enthusiastically but unintelligently, concealing herself in various parts of the house without regard to Smith’s habits. Once she remained obstinately hidden for more than an hour under the Queen’s bed.

The results were most unsatisfactory. Smith spent his day sweeping floors, making beds, cooking food and compounding cocktails for Mr. Donovan. His few leisure moments were spent in polishing silver. He was totally uninterested in cipher documents and never looked at marked coins.

Smith still slept on the steamer, so it fell to Phillips to keep guard over him at night. He adopted the ingenious, though not very novel plan of pasting a strip of paper across the door of Smith’s cabin. In the morning, very early, he went to look at the door. The paper was intact.

So far as could be discovered Smith led a dull, laborious but innocent life, working hard all day and sleeping sound at night. But the time spent in shadowing him was not wholly wasted. The Queen and Mr. Phillips enjoyed themselves thoroughly. So did Kalliope. So, I have no doubt, did Smith.

“I do call this sleuth work jolly,” said the Queen. “Let’s try old Stephanos.”

They gave a whole day to Stephanos the Elder. During the early hours he sat outside the door of his cottage, rolling cigarettes in thin brown paper and smoking them. When the Queen came near him he stood up and bowed gravely. When she passed he sat down again. At noon he went indoors and dined. The Queen sent Kalliope across the harbour to the palace with a note to Smith. She returned with a large basket. The Queen and Phillips picnicked on the beach.

Early in the afternoon Stephanos walked through the vineyards which lay behind the village and sat down under a mulberry tree. The Queen stalked him. She made her approach in a most approved fashion, creeping through some low bushes with the utmost caution. She was even careful to advance against the wind in case Stephanos should have an unusually acute sense of smell. Phillips and Kalliope watched her from a hiding-place near the village. When she got

within twenty yards of the old man, he rose to his feet, laid his hand on his heart and bowed to the Queen with dignified courtesy. If he felt any surprise at seeing the Queen crawling along the ground on her stomach he did not show it. His face expressed paternal but quite respectful benignity. The Queen returned from this expedition very much heated, with her hair dishevelled. Kalliope spent some time trying to rub the dirt off the front of her frock.

An hour later Stephanos climbed slowly to the high plateau of the island and sat down on the edge of a cliff. This time Phillips stalked him, making his way up the steep gully which led to a part of the cliff behind the old man's seat. Stephanos sat gazing at the sea, apparently unconscious that any one was near him. But when Phillips emerged from his gully the old man was there waiting for him, bowing with placid politeness just as he had bowed to the Queen.

The complete failure of this sleuth work would have been a disappointment to many people. The Queen and Phillips remained perfectly cheerful and laughed happily at their own misfortunes.

Kalliope regarded them with some wonder. The ways of highly civilized people were strange to her. She became slightly contemptuous of Phillips and wondered that the Queen tolerated him so long. Kalliope had a lover of her own, a young man much more direct and rapid than Phillips was. She was of opinion that a very diffident lover was unsatisfactory. He wasted time. It seemed to her foolish to spend hours talking and consulting in the corner of a balcony, playing hide-and-seek about a house, and a whole day climbing over an island, when it was quite easy to kiss and be happy at once. She longed to express her sympathy, condole with the Queen over Phillips' insulting apathy. It was, perhaps, fortunate that Kalliope's English was wholly insufficient for such confidences.

Before the next day was over Kalliope thought better of Phillips.

The envelope yielded little useful information. The shadowing of Smith and Stephanos was entirely useless. But neither the Queen nor Phillips lost heart. They were as eager as ever to solve the mystery. There remained the third clue, the cisterns in the cave.

The Queen, Phillips and Kalliope started early next day. They went in the small island boat which Kalliope rowed. Smith was on the palace steps to see them off. He had with him a large basket packed with food.

"Thank you, Smith," said the Queen. "I expect we'll be back for luncheon, but

we may not. One never knows. We meant to be back yesterday, but——”

“Yes, your Majesty,” said Smith. “Not knowing where you thought of going, I packed the basket.”

“Oh, not far,” said the Queen. “Still, we may not be back.”

Smith stood respectful as a footman who has closed his mistress’ carriage door until the boat pushed off. Then he sat down on the steps below the flagstaff and lit a pipe. It was, perhaps, an idle morning with Smith. He seemed in no hurry to go back to his work. He sat smoking and watched the boat as she crossed the harbour. He saw her reach the mouth of the cave and disappear into its depths. Soon afterwards another boat put off from the beach below the village. Smith watched it too. There was one man on board. It also headed for the mouth of the cave. Smith knocked the ashes out of his pipe, stood up and went into the palace.

Kalliope poled the boat through the narrow part of the cave, rowed her briskly across the lagoon within and beached her on the steep slope beyond. Phillips leaped ashore and held out his hand to the Queen. They stumbled a little on the round stones. It is very difficult to walk steadily over stones which roll under the feet. The Queen laid her hand on Phillips’ arm. She went more securely with this support, so she held to it, leaning a good deal of her weight on it.

“There!” she said. “Look at them. Aren’t they the most ridiculous things you ever saw?”

No doubt the tanks, with their grey fronts and great spouts sticking out of them, had an absurd appearance. They reminded Phillips of the prehistoric monsters which artists sometimes draw in our comic papers. They had the same look of stupid largeness. There was the same suggestion of gaping malevolence. In the cool blue light of the cave they looked grotesquely inappropriate. Phillips’ first impulse was to laugh aloud. But he was a young man with a conscience. It was his duty to examine the cisterns, to find out if possible what they were, not to make fun of them.

He walked up to the nearest one and turned on the tap. Nothing came out. He tried the next one with the same result. He walked along the whole line of tanks and turned on every tap. The tanks were apparently empty. Mr. Phillips picked up a stone and struck each tank several times. The sound was hollow. If there had been any doubt about that the echoes would have convinced him. There was a fusillade of hollow tappings.

Phillips, placing his foot on the tap of one of the tanks, climbed up.

“Well,” said the Queen from below. “What have you found?”

“They’re very large,” said Phillips. “They go back a long way. They’d hold gallons and gallons of whatever they’re supposed to hold, and there are round lids with handles to lift them off by.”

“Oh,” said the Queen. “I would like to see. I think I could get up.”

Phillips thought so too. He stretched out a helping hand. The Queen put her foot on a tap and grasped the hand. Phillips pulled. The Queen sprang upwards, holding the hand tight. She reached the top of the tank breathless and sat down. Phillips still held her hand.

It is doubtful whether the Queen ever realized the full size of those tanks, or even saw the lids which Mr. Phillips had mentioned. The light was very dim. The situation, in spite of the grotesque appearance of the tanks, was exceedingly romantic. Long stalactites hung, faintly gleaming, from the roof. The water, strangely blue, mourned against the stones of the beach, sighed through the deep recesses of the cave. The world and all common things seemed very remote.

Ten minutes later the Queen suddenly started. She wriggled rapidly along the edge of the tanks until she sat five or six yards away from Phillips.

“Oh,” she cried, “there’s Kalliope!”

They had left Kalliope at the boat, but she had not stayed there. She was standing in front of the tanks looking up at the Queen and Phillips. She stood quite still. It was impossible to know how long she had been there.

“Damn Kalliope!” said Mr. Phillips fiercely.

Kalliope smiled quietly. She showed no signs of embarrassment. She did not pretend to be looking in any other direction. She had been kissed herself more than once by her own lover, and had found it pleasant. It did not strike her as in any way odd that the Queen should like kisses too.

“Help me down, quick,” said the Queen.

She did not wait for the help she asked. Disdaining even the foothold of the tap she slid over the edge of the tank and came down with a crash on the rolling stones at Kalliope’s feet. Phillips followed her with a single bound.

Kalliope pointed with her finger to a boat, another boat, which had just grounded on the beach. Stephanos the Elder stepped from it and bowed low to the Queen, bowed so low that his long beard almost touched the ground.

“Well, I’m blest!” said Phillips.

“My!” said the Queen, “isn’t it lucky I saw Kalliope just when I did? Fancy if that old fellow had caught us! I don’t so much mind about Kalliope, though of course it was awful. But I never could have looked the old man in the face if he had seen us.”

Later on, while they sat at luncheon on the sand of a little cove near the entrance of the cave, the Queen suddenly burst into a peal of merry laughter.

“Say,” she said, “he stalked us rather better than we stalked him yesterday, didn’t he?”

Next day the *Ida*, with Phillips on board, set sail for England.

CHAPTER XII

"GRAND HOTEL DES CHAMPS D'ÉLYSÈES, PARIS,
June 4, 1914.

"

My dear Gorman,—

"I arrive at the excellent Beaufort's Hotel the day after to-morrow. I hope that you will dine with me that evening at 8 p.m. There are matters of importance. Corinne accompanies me. She is adorable as ever, in good form and full of peas. We have had a time of a life, rattling, since I saw you. Now—alas and damn—there are matters of importance. The Emperor—but I can write no more—Corinne awaits me. We go to paint Paris blue, she and I, once again. Then—damn and alas—London and the virtuous life of your English middling class.

"KONRAD KARL."

Gorman did not hesitate for a moment. He made up his mind to accept the invitation even if he had to miss the most important division which Parliament enjoyed during its whole session. The prospect of seeing Konrad Karl and Madame Ypsilante practising middle-class virtue in Beaufort's Hotel was by itself sufficiently attractive. The promise of important affairs for discussion was another lure. Gorman loves important affairs, especially those of other people. But the mention of the Emperor interested him most. The introduction of his name made it certain that the important affairs were those of Salissa. And Gorman had always been anxious to understand in what way the Emperor was mixed up with Megalia and how he came to exercise an influence over that independent state.

Gorman was dressing for dinner—was, in fact, buttoning his collar—when his landlord entered his room and handed him a card. Gorman looked at it.

"FRIEDRICH GOLDSTURMER,
Dealer in Jewels and Precious Stones,
Old Bond Street."

Written across the corner of the card were the words: "Business important and

urgent.”

Gorman glanced at his watch. He had no time to spare if he meant to be at Beaufort’s at eight. Punctuality was no doubt one of the middle-class virtues which the King and Madame Ypsilante were at that moment practising. Gorman hesitated. The landlord, who had once been a butler, stood waiting.

“Tell him,” said Gorman, “to call to-morrow at eleven.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” said the landlord, “but the gentleman says his business is most pressing.”

Gorman reflected. If Goldsturmer had given the landlord five shillings—and this seemed likely—the business must be very pressing indeed; and King Konrad Karl could not yet have become an absolute slave to the virtue of punctuality.

“Show him in here,” said Gorman; “that will save time.”

Goldsturmer slipped into the room and stood meekly near the door.

“Sit down,” said Gorman. “Sit on the bed if you can’t find a chair, and tell me what you want with me, as quickly as you can.”

“It’s very kind of you,” said Goldsturmer, “to receive me at this hour. Nothing but the very pressing nature of my business—but I will get to the point. You will doubtless remember a certain rope of pearls. Let me see, it must have been in March——”

“I don’t remember any rope of pearls,” said Gorman. “I take no interest in pearls.”

“No? Still I hoped you might recollect those pearls. They were the finest I ever had in my hands.”

Goldsturmer spoke in a tone of pained regret. It seemed to him a sad thing that there should be any man in the world who took no interest in pearls.

“Madame Ypsilante bought them,” said Goldsturmer.

“There’s no use coming to me,” said Gorman, “if you’ve failed to get your money. I’ve nothing to do with the lady.”

Goldsturmer smiled.

“She paid,” he said. “Otherwise she would not have got the pearls. There was another lady who might have bought them, an American, a Miss Donovan.”

“But Madame got them,” said Gorman.

“Yes. But perhaps Miss Donovan might have them now, through me, at the original price.”

Gorman began to be interested.

“Madame tired of them?” he asked. “Wants to sell?”

“Tired of them!” said Goldsturmer. “No. For any one who loves pearls that would be impossible. But desires to sell. Yes.”

“Well,” said Gorman. “That’s her affair and yours. I don’t see that I have anything to do with it.”

“Before I agree to buy,” said Goldsturmer, “I should like to be sure that the American lady, Miss Donovan, still wishes for the pearls. I do not want to lock up my capital. I cannot afford to lock up so large a sum. I must be assured of a purchaser before I buy from Madame Ypsilante. It is not every one who can pay for such pearls. Ah! if you had seen them! They are suited for the wearing of a queen. Only a queen should have them.”

Miss Donovan was, of course, a queen. Gorman wondered whether Goldsturmer knew that. He looked at the little Jew sharply. Goldsturmer’s face wore a far-away dreamy expression. He seemed to be thinking of his pearls draped round the neck of an Empress, a Czarina or some other lady of very high estate who would wear them worthily.

“Only a queen,” he murmured, “should wear those pearls.”

“Madame Ypsilante is the next best thing to a queen,” said Gorman.

A faint smile flickered across Goldsturmer’s mouth.

“I would rather,” he said, “that a real queen, a queen by right of law, wore them. Tell me, Mr. Gorman, is Miss Donovan still willing to buy them?”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” said Gorman. “I haven’t seen her for weeks. She’s yachting in the Mediterranean with her father. If I were you I’d give up Miss Donovan and look out for a queen.”

“Thank you,” said Goldsturmer. “But if I give up Miss Donovan I think I shall not buy the pearls from Madame Ypsilante. There are, alas, few queens.”

Gorman was not, after all, more than five minutes late for dinner. The King was waiting for him, but without any sign of impatience. Madame Ypsilante entered the room a minute or two later.

She was wearing a purple velvet dress which struck Gorman as a very regal garment. Round her neck was a magnificent rope of pearls. Gorman had no doubt that they were those of which Goldsturmer had spoken. They were finer than any he had ever seen. It was easy to believe that there was no other such necklace in the world and that only a queen should wear them. But they suited Madame Ypsilante. She would, so far as her appearance went, have made a very fine queen.

During dinner the conversation was about Paris. The King spoke of pleasant adventures there, of the life he and Madame had lived, of the delight of having money to spend, really enough of it, in a city like Paris. He told his stories well, his vehemently idiomatic English emphasizing his points. He became lyrical in his appreciation of the joys of life. When dessert was on the table and port took the place of champagne he lapsed into a philosophic mood.

“The damned gods of life,” he said, “are blind of one eye. They are lame and they limp. They are left-handed. They give the oof, the dollars, the shekels, and do not give the power to enjoy. The Americans—your Donovan, for example. What does he know of pleasure? The English of your middling classes. What is Paris to them? They have money but no more. Those left-handed gods have given a useless gift. On me and on Corinne they have bestowed the power, the knowledge, the skill to enjoy; and we, damn it all, have no money.”

The King sighed deeply. Madame Ypsilante had tears in her eyes. She was in full sympathy with the King’s new mood. Gorman was astonished. The price which Mr. Donovan had paid for the crown of Salissa was a large one. Even after ten thousand pounds had been spent on Madame Ypsilante’s pearls there was a sum left which it would be difficult to spend in a few weeks.

“Surely,” he said, “you haven’t got rid of all the money yet? You can’t have spent it in the time. I didn’t think you could be hard up again so soon. Even when I heard that Madame wanted to sell her pearls——”

“Sell my pearls!” said Madame. “But never! Never, never!!”

There were no tears in her eyes then. The mood of self-pity induced by the King's reflections on left-handed gods had passed away. She looked fierce as a tigress when she shot out her next question to Gorman.

"Who has said that I wish to sell my pearls? Who has said it? I demand. I insist: Tell me his name and I will at once kill him. I shall pluck out his heart and dogs shall eat it."

Gorman did not care whether Goldsturmer's heart was eaten by dogs or not. He did want to understand how it came that the astute Jew expected to have the pearls offered to him. It was plain that Madame Ypsilante did not want to sell them and that she had not suggested the sale.

"It was Goldsturmer," said Gorman, "who told me. He seemed to think that Miss Donovan might buy them."

Madame at once knocked down two wine-glasses and a vase of flowers.

"That cursed offspring of the litter of filthy Jews who make Hamburg stink! Tell him that I will pull out his hair, his teeth, his eyes, but that never, never will that American miss touch one of my pearls. I will not sell, will not, will not."

The King looked round. He satisfied himself that the waiters had left the room.

"Alas," he said, "alas, my poor Corinne! But consider. There is an English proverb: the horse needs must trot along, trot smart, when it is the devil who drives."

"He is the devil, that Emperor," said Madame. "But not for any Emperor will I part with one single pearl."

"Look here," said Gorman. "There's evidently been some mistake about Goldsturmer and the pearls. I don't profess to understand what's happening, but if I'm to help you in any way——"

"You are to help damnably," said the King. "Are you not our friend?"

"In that case," said Gorman, "before I go a step further into the matter I must know what on earth the Emperor has got to do with Madame's pearls."

"The Emperor," said Madame Ypsilante, "is a devil."

"Take another glass of port," said the King. "No? Then light a cigar. If you will

light a cigar and fill for yourself a glass of brandy—also for Corinne—I will tell you about the Emperor."

Gorman filled Madame's glass and his own. He was particular about Madame's. Brandy had a soothing influence on her. He did not like her habit of throwing things about in moments of excitement. He also lit a cigar.

"I will make my breast clean of the whole affair," said the King. "Then you will understand and help us. The Emperor has spilt cold water all over Salissa—that is over the sale of the island to the American."

"The Emperor must have very little to do," said Gorman, "if he has time to waste in fussing about a wretched little island like Salissa. How did he hear about the sale?"

"I think," said the King, "that Steinwitz must have permitted the cat to jump out of the bag. Steinwitz smelt rats, of that I am sure."

"I daresay you're right," said Gorman. "I rather thought Steinwitz was nosing around. But why does the Emperor mind? That's what I'm trying to get at."

The King shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows?" he said. "*Real Politik,* perhaps. What you call——How do you call *Real Politik*?"

"Haven't got a word for it," said Gorman. "For the matter of that we haven't got the thing. We manage along all right with sham politics, Ireland and Insurance Acts and the rest of it. If real politics lead to trouble over places like Salissa I prefer our home-made imitation. But *Real Politik* or not, the thing's done; so what's the good of the Emperor talking?"

"The Emperor," said the King, "says 'Buy back. Take again your island. Foot—no, it is foot of a horse—hoof, or boot away the American. Give him his price and let him go.' And I cannot. It is no longer possible to give back the oof."

"I quite understand that," said Gorman. "Your six weeks in Paris and Madame's pearls——"

"The Emperor shall not touch my pearls," said Madame Ypsilante. "Rather would I swallow them."

"The American," said the King, "will perhaps accept a reduced price. The island

is not an amusing place. Dull, my friend, dull as ditch mud. By this time he has found out that Salissa is as respectable as Sunday, as golf, as what you call a seasonable ticket. He will not want to keep it. He will accept a price, perhaps, if I offer."

"I don't expect he'll accept a price at all," said Gorman, "reduced or increased. I don't *know*, of course. He may be dead sick of the place already; but I'll be surprised if he is. You'll find when you ask him that he'll simply refuse to part with the island."

"But," said the King, "he must. As I have just said to Corinne, when the devil drives the horse to water it needs must take a drink. The Emperor has said that Salissa is once more to return to the Crown of Megalia."

"The Emperor may say that," said Gorman, "but it doesn't at all follow that Donovan will agree with him."

"But the Emperor——! It is not for Mr. Donovan to agree or disagree with the Emperor. When the Emperor commands it is a case of knuckles down. But you do not know the Emperor."

"I do not," said Gorman, "but I'm inclined to think that you take an exaggerated view of him. After all, what can he do to Donovan or to you for that matter? Come now, suppose you won't or can't buy back the island, what happens? What's the alternative? There must be an alternative of some sort."

"There is—yes, there certainly is an alternative."

The King paused and looked apprehensively at Madame Ypsilante.

"He can't lay hands on you," said Gorman, "if you stick to Paris or even London. That Emperor isn't particularly popular in either city."

The King, his eyes still fixed on Madame Ypsilante, nodded sideways towards Gorman. The nod was a very slight one, barely perceptible. It suggested the need of extreme caution. Gorman is a quick-witted man and he saw the nod, but he failed altogether to guess what the alternative was.

Madame Ypsilante noticed the expression of the King's face when he looked at her. She also saw the nod that was meant for Gorman. She became uneasy. Her eyes had a hard glitter in them. Gorman at once refilled her glass. That soothed her a little. She did not break anything. But she spoke:

“Konrad, at once tell me all that the Emperor said.”

“Corinne,” said the King, “my beloved Corinne, it will make no difference to you. The future and the past will be as six to one and half a dozen to the other. You will always be Corinne. Have no fear, and—as my friend Gorman would say, do not take off your hair.”

“Tell me,” said Madame.

“The Emperor,” said the King, “has said to me, ‘Buy back the island or else marry the American.’ In that way also Salissa would return to the Crown of Megalia.”

Gorman fully expected that Madame Ypsilante would at once have broken every glass on the table. It would not have surprised him in the least if she had torn handfuls of hair off the King’s head. To his amazement she laughed. It was a most unpleasant laugh. But it was not the laugh of a lunatic. It was not even hysterical.

“That imbecile,” she said, “that miss!”

Her contempt for the girl left no room for jealousy. Madame Ypsilante did not seem to care whether the King married or did not.

“I don’t think much of that plan,” said Gorman. “Your Emperor may be the everlasting boss you seem to think——”

“In the register of Lloyd’s,” said the King, “he takes place in the class A 1st.”

“But,” said Gorman, “he hasn’t much sense if he thinks that a girl like Miss Donovan can be married off in that way to any one he chooses to name. I’m not saying anything against your character, sir——”

“My Konrad,” said Madame Ypsilante, “is Konrad.”

“Exactly,” said Gorman. “Those are my points put concisely in two words. First he’s yours and next he’s himself. No. I don’t think that you’ve much chance of buying back the island, but you’ve no chance at all of marrying the girl.”

“I do not want either the one or the other,” said the King. “I do not care the cursing of a tinker, not a two-a-penny damn if I never put my eye on the island or the girl. Arrange which you prefer. I place both into your hands, my dear Gorman. I leave them there. I shall put my foot on the bill if you buy and the

price is moderate. I shall toe the scratch if you arrange that I lead the American to the altar of Hymen. Settle, arrange, fix down which you will."

Gorman gasped. He was always ready to give disinterested advice in the King's affairs. He was even willing to lend a helping hand in times of difficulty; but he was startled at being asked to act as plenipotentiary for the sale of a kingdom or the negotiation of a royal marriage.

"Do you mean to say," he said, "that you expect me to arrange the whole thing?"

"You have tumbled to the idea with precision," said the King. "You have caught it on. You are wonderful, my friend. Thus everything arranges. You go to Salissa and tell the American the wishes of the Emperor. Corinne and I return to Paris. If a sale is arranged——"

"I will not part with my pearls," said Madame. "Neither for the Emperor nor for any one."

"Corinne!" said the King reproachfully. "Would I ask it of you? No. If a sale is arranged I give a bill to the American, a bill of three months, and for security I place at his disposal—I pledge the revenue of Megalia for ten years; for a hundred years. If it seems more desirable that I marry; good, I am ready. The American girl comes to Paris. I meet her. We marry. The Emperor is satisfied. It is upon you, my dear Gorman, to fix it down."

"I don't see," said Gorman, "how I can possibly undertake——It's asking a lot, you know. Besides——"

"You are my friend," said the King. "Can I ask more than too much from my friend?"

"Besides," said Gorman, "it's no kind of use. Donovan isn't likely to sell. He certainly wouldn't accept your bill if he did sell. And marrying the girl is out of the question. What's the good of my undertaking impossibilities?"

The King stood up. With his cigar between his fingers he raised his right hand above his head. He laid his left hand upon his shirt front. It was an impressive and heroic attitude.

"For Gorman, M.P.," he said, "there are in the world no impossibilities. For his talents all careers are open doors. When Gorman, M.P., says 'I do it,' the damned thing at once is done. I offer——But no. I do not offer where I trust——I confer

upon Gorman, M.P., the Order of the Royal Pink Vulture of Megalia, First Class. You are Knight Commander, my friend. You are also Count Gorman if you wish."

Madame Ypsilante slipped from her chair and knelt down at Gorman's feet. She took his right hand and kissed it with every appearance of fervour.

"You will do it," she said, "for the sake of Konrad Karl. Oh, Sir Gorman, M.P., you would do it at once if you understood. Poor Konrad! He is having so much delight with me in Paris. This time only in our lives it has come to us to have enough money and to be in Paris. It is cruel—so cruel that the Emperor should say: 'No. Give back the money. Go from Paris. Be starved. Have no pearls, no joy.' But you will save us. Say you will save us."

Gorman's position was an exceedingly difficult one. Madame Ypsilante had firm hold on his hand. She was kissing it at the moment. He was not at all sure that she would not bite it if he refused her request.

"I'll think the whole thing over," he said. "I don't expect I can do anything, but I'll look into the matter and let you know."

Madame mouthed his hand in a frenzy of gratitude. She wept copiously. Gorman could feel drops which he supposed to be tears trickling down the inside of his sleeve. The King seized his other hand and shook it heartily.

"It is now as good as done," he said. "Let us drink to success. I ring the bell. I order champagne, one bottle, two bottles, three, many bottles in the honour of my friend Sir Gorman who has said: 'Damn it, I will.'"

Under the influence of the second bottle of champagne the King escaped from his heroic mood. Gorman began to realize that a certain cunning lay behind the preposterous proposal he had listened to.

"I shall inform the Emperor," said the King, "that you go to Salissa to arrange according to his wish. I shall say: 'M.P. Count Sir Gorman goes. He is a statesman, a financier, a diplomat, a man of uncommon sense.' The Emperor will then be satisfied."

"He'll probably be very dissatisfied when I come back," said Gorman.

"That will be—let me consider—perhaps eight weeks. In eight weeks many things may happen. And if not, still Corinne and I will have had eight weeks in

Paris with oof which we can burn. It is something.”

CHAPTER XIII

In the end Gorman made up his mind to go to Salissa. I do not suppose that the King's gift of the Order of the Pink Vulture had much to do with his decision. Nor do I think that he went out of pure kindness of heart, in order to give Konrad Karl and Madame Ypsilante eight weeks of unalloyed delight in Paris. I know that he never had the slightest intention of trying to persuade Donovan to part with the island, and—Gorman has not much conscience, but he has some—nothing would have induced him to suggest a marriage between Miss Daisy and the disreputable King. He went to Salissa because that island seemed in a fair way to become a very interesting place.

On the very evening of Gorman's dinner with the King I happened to meet Sir Bartholomew Bland-Potterton at another, a much duller dinner party. Sir Bartholomew was not yet Secretary of State for Balkan Problems, but he was well known as an authority on the Near East, and was in constant unofficial touch with the Foreign Office. He is a big man in his way, and I was rather surprised when he buttonholed me after the ladies had left the room. I am not a big man in any way.

"Do you happen to know a man called Gorman?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "Michael Gorman. I've met him. In fact, I know him pretty well."

"Nationalist M.P.?"

"Sits for Upper Offaly," I said. "Can't blame him for that. Four hundred a year is something these times."

"Bit of a blackguard, I suppose? All those fellows are."

Now, an Irishman can call another Irishman a blackguard without offence. We know each other intimately and are fond of strong language, but we do not like being called blackguards by Englishmen. They do not understand us and never will. Sir Bartholomew's description of Gorman was in bad taste and I resented it. However, there was no use trying to explain our point of view. You cannot explain anything to that kind of Englishman.

"He's a Member of Parliament," I said, "of your own English Parliament. I

believe that all members are honourable gentlemen."

Sir Bartholomew is a wonderful man. He actually took that remark of mine as a testimonial to Gorman's character. The thing is almost incredible, but he evidently felt that the word honourable, as officially used, had a meaning something like that of trustworthy.

"I wonder," said Sir Bartholomew, "if he's a man to whom one could talk safely on a rather confidential subject?"

"There's always supposed to be a kind of honour among thieves," I said.

I was still rather nettled by the contemptuous assumption that Gorman must be a blackguard simply because he is an Irish Nationalist. After all, Sir Bartholomew's own profession is not a very respectable one. He is a diplomatist, and diplomacy is simply the name we have agreed to give to lying about national affairs. I cannot see that Sir Bartholomew has any right to take up a high moral tone when speaking of Gorman or any other Member of Parliament, Irish or English.

"I'll look up the man to-morrow," said Sir Bartholomew. "I daresay I'll find him in the House of Commons during the afternoon."

Sir Bartholomew gave me no hint about the nature of his confidential business. I suppose he did not feel I could be trusted. However, Gorman told me all about it next day.

Sir Bartholomew came on Gorman in the smoking-room of the House of Commons. He was wearing, so Gorman assures me, the very best kind of official manner, that interesting mixture of suavity and pomposity with which our mandarins approach the public. They hope, in this way, to induce us to believe that they have benevolent dispositions and immense ability. I do not know whether any one is ever deceived by this manner or thinks of a mandarin otherwise than as a fortunate person who earns a large salary by being stupid. Certainly Gorman was not in the very least impressed. Being an Irishman, Gorman knows the official class thoroughly. Ireland is a kind of laboratory for the culture of the mandarin bacillus.

"May I," said Sir Bartholomew, "intrude on your time, and ask you one or two questions on a matter of some little importance?"

Gorman had no objection to being asked questions. Whether he would answer

them or not was another matter.

“I think,” said Sir Bartholomew, “that you know King Konrad Karl of Megalia.”

That was not a question, so Gorman gave no answer. He merely puffed at his pipe which was not drawing well and looked at Sir Bartholomew’s round plump face.

“A rather wild young man,” said Sir Bartholomew. “Dissipated would perhaps be too strong a word. What do you think?”

“It is a strongish word,” said Gorman.

Sir Bartholomew tried another cast.

“Mr. Donovan is a friend of yours, I think,” he said, “and his daughter?”

“I’ve met them,” said Gorman.

Sir Bartholomew realized that he was not getting on very fast with Gorman. He relapsed a little from his high official manner and adopted a confidential tone.

“There has been a certain amount of talk in diplomatic, or shall we say semi-diplomatic circles, about King Konrad Karl, mere gossip, of course, but——”

“I never listen to gossip,” said Gorman.

This was untrue. Gorman listens to all the gossip he can and enjoys it thoroughly.

Sir Bartholomew found it necessary to unbend a little more. He unbuttoned, so to speak, the two bottom buttons of the waistcoat of pomposity which he wore.

“I was told a story the other day,” he said. “Perhaps I’d better not mention the name of my informant; but there can be no harm in saying that he is one of the attachés of the Embassy of a great Power, a friendly Power.”

I expect Sir Bartholomew thought this way of talking would impress Gorman. It impresses most people. Your story has a much better chance of being believed and repeated if you tell it on the authority of some one unnamed and vaguely described than it has if you merely say “young Smith, the cashier in my bank, told me to-day, that....”

“I am alluding,” said Sir Bartholomew, “to a report that has reached us of an

escapade of Miss Donovan's. That young lady—very charming I'm sure—and her father's immensely rich, but—well, you know what young girls are."

"Got engaged to a Royal Duke?" said Gorman, "or run away with the chauffeur?"

"Oh no, nothing of that sort. Not at all. The statement with which I'm concerned is that her father has bought an island and some kind of title for her from that unfortunate young King of Megalia."

"So long as he paid for it," said Gorman, "I don't see that it's anybody else's business."

"You don't understand," said Sir Bartholomew. "I haven't made myself clear. The fact is——" He sank his voice to an awed whisper. "The young lady is understood to claim sovereign rights over the Island of Salissa. She calls herself—it's almost incredible, but she calls herself a queen."

"Well," said Gorman, "why shouldn't she?"

"But, my dear sir! To set up a new independent kingdom! In the existing state of Balkan affairs, when the Great Powers——But of course it can be nothing but a girlish joke, a piece of light-hearted playfulness. She can't mean——"

"Then why worry?" said Gorman. "Why should you and that attaché of the Embassy of a Friendly Power, the fellow you've been talking about—why should you and he start fussing?"

"My dear sir! my dear sir! Nothing, I assure you, is further from our wishes than fuss of any kind. But unfortunately, the Emperor—the Emperor—I respect and admire him, of course. We all do. But if the Emperor has a fault it is that he's slightly deficient in humour. He does not easily see a joke. He's a little—well ——"

"Elephantine?" said Gorman.

Sir Bartholomew looked round hurriedly. The Division bell had just rung. The smoking-room was almost empty. This was fortunate. It would have been very awkward for a man in Sir Bartholomew's position to be caught in the act of hearing an Emperor called elephantine.

"The Emperor," said Sir Bartholomew, "has approached the United States

Ambassador on the subject, indirectly, I need scarcely say. He requests, indeed insists that Salissa shall at once be restored to the Crown of Megalia. Now our idea is—and I think I know the views of the Foreign Office on the subject—our idea is that this little matter ought to be settled unofficially. A word to Mr. Donovan from a friend. A hint about the present critical condition of European politics. He might——”

“I don’t suppose,” said Gorman, “that Donovan cares a damn about European politics.”

Sir Bartholomew’s eyebrows went up in shocked surprise.

“It is of the first importance,” he said, “of absolutely vital importance that at the present moment, standing as we do, as all Europe stands to-day, on the verge of the smouldering crater of a volcano——”

“This is the House of Commons, of course,” said Gorman, “so I suppose you can talk that kind of language if you like. But we don’t usually do it in the smoking-room.”

Sir Bartholomew had not attained to the eminent position he occupied without learning a few lessons in tact. He changed his tone at once.

“The fact is,” he said, “that just at present we all want to avoid friction with the Emperor.”

“Ah,” said Gorman, “and your idea is——?”

“Mr. Donovan must be persuaded to give up that island. Pressure could be put on him, of course, by his own Government and by ours. His position is preposterous. He can’t set his daughter up as a European sovereign simply by writing a cheque. But we don’t want—nobody wants any publicity or scandal. If Mr. Donovan would agree, privately, to resign all claim on Salissa——”

“Why not ask him?”

Sir Bartholomew’s manner became most ingratiating.

“We feel that the good offices of a mutual friend, some one who occupies no official position, some one unconnected with the Foreign Office——In short, Mr. Gorman, would you undertake this rather delicate mission?”

“Why the devil do you hit on me for the job?”

“Ah,” said Sir Bartholomew, smiling, “you see we all know something about you, Mr. Gorman. Your business ability, your unfailing tact, your——”

“Taken as read,” said Gorman.

Sir Bartholomew cannot possibly have liked Gorman’s manner. No public men discuss serious and confidential matters with this kind of flippancy. But he had been obliged to meet even more disconcerting people in the Balkans. He prided himself on being able to negotiate with men of any manners or none.

“Knowing the work you have done for your party in America,” he went on, “knowing your friendship with the Donovans and your acquaintance with the King of Megalia, it seemed to us—not to me, you know. I don’t really matter. It seemed to us that you were the best possible person.”

“I see. Well, supposing I undertake the job, what am I to say to Donovan? He’s paid a big price for that island. Is he to get his money back?”

“Of course, of course. No one expects Mr. Donovan to make any financial sacrifice.”

“Who’s going to pay?”

“The King. King Konrad Karl.”

“That King,” said Gorman, “isn’t very good at paying.”

“In this case he will have no choice. The Emperor will insist on his paying.”

“The Emperor is a powerful man,” said Gorman, “but even he would hardly be able to make King Konrad Karl fork out what he hasn’t got. You may safely bet your last shilling that most of what Donovan paid for that island is spent, chucked away, gone scat.”

“The Emperor,” said Sir Bartholomew, “will be responsible for the return in full of the purchase price.”

“Very well,” said Gorman, “and now suppose Donovan won’t sell. Suppose he simply says ‘No.’”

“There is an alternative policy,” said Sir Bartholomew. “It has occurred to some of us who are interested in the matter—I am not now speaking with the authority of any ambassador, certainly not with the formal approval of our Foreign Office.

It has occurred to *me*—I will put it that way. It has occurred to me that the matter might be settled quite satisfactorily to all parties, to the Emperor certainly if——The King of Megalia is, I think, unmarried."

"There's Madame Ypsilante," said Gorman, "a lady——"

"A lady! Pooh! In these cases there is always a lady. But the King is unmarried. Miss Donovan, so we understand, wishes to be a queen. You catch my meaning?"

"Perfectly. You want me to arrange a marriage between——"

"My dear Mr. Gorman! I want nothing of the sort. I do not ask you to arrange anything. I merely say that if such a marriage were to take place the Emperor would probably be satisfied. I am aware that the personal character of King Konrad Karl is not such——But he is a young man. There are possibilities of improvement."

"There's certainly room for it."

"Exactly. And the influence of a good woman is just what is needed. A young, sweet, innocent girl has a marvellous influence. She appeals to that best which is present even in the worst of us." Sir Bartholomew liked this phrase. He repeated it. "That best, that astonishing best, which is always present even in the worst of us. She might call it out. She might make a new man of King Konrad Karl."

Gorman looked at Sir Bartholomew with an expression of grave and interested inquiry.

"You think that if Miss Donovan married the King she would save him from the clutches of Madame Ypsilante."

"Not a doubt of it. And what a splendid thing that would be! It's just the sort of an idea which would make a strong appeal to a girl. Women like the idea of reforming their husbands. Besides, the prospect for her is in other respects most brilliant. She would be recognized by the Emperor. She would be received in the most exclusive Courts of Europe. But I need not expatiate. You understand the position."

"I don't remember any case of an American heiress marrying a king," said Gorman.

“Just so. This would be unique, splendid. And I need not say, Mr. Gorman, that if you see your way to oblige us in this matter your services will not go unrecognized. If there is any particular way in which you would like us to show our appreciation you have only to mention it. The next Honours List——”

“All right,” said Gorman, “I’ll go. Where is Salissa?”

“In the Cyrenian Sea. It’s an island. Quite charming, I believe. I am sure you will enjoy the trip. Your best plan will be to see Steinwitz about the matter. Steinwitz is managing director——”

“Quite so. I know him. Cyrenian Sea Steam Navigation Company.”

“His ships go there,” said Sir Bartholomew. “I have no doubt that he will arrange for you to make the voyage comfortably. I may mention, between ourselves, that Steinwitz is interested in the success of the negotiations.”

“Acting for the Emperor?”

“Well, yes. Unofficially. He is in a certain sense the agent of the Emperor.”

“All right,” said Gorman. “I’ll see him. And if I pull the thing off I may count on ——?”

“You may ask for what you like,” said Sir Bartholomew. “You’ve only got to drop me a hint. Anything in reason. A knighthood? Or a baronetcy? I think we could manage a baronetcy. A post in the Government? A Civil List pension? Your services to literature fully entitle you——”

“On the whole,” said Gorman, “I think I’ll ask for Home Rule for Ireland.”

“Ah,” said Sir Bartholomew, “you Irish! Always witty! Always sparkling, paradoxical, brilliant! I shall tell the Prime Minister what you say. He’ll enjoy it. What should we do without you Irish? Life would be dull indeed. What is it the poet says? Wordsworth, I think. ‘Turning to mirth, All things of earth, As only boyhood can.’ You are all boys. That is why we love you. Your freshness. Your delightful capacity for the absurd. I feel that in choosing you for this delicate mission we have chosen the right man. Only an Irishman could hope to succeed in an affair of this kind. Good-bye, Mr. Gorman, and be sure to let me know in good time what we are to do for you. I’ll charge myself with seeing that your claim is not overlooked.”

CHAPTER XIV

“

I’m going, of course,” said Gorman. “The whole thing is interesting, quite exciting.”

He had just given me a detailed account of his interview with Sir Bartholomew Bland-Potterton, and a rather picturesque version of the way King Konrad Karl presented his case.

“Do you expect,” I said, “to be able to persuade Donovan to sell?”

“Of course not,” said Gorman. “I don’t even mean to try.”

“Gorman,” I said, “I’m accustomed more or less to political morality, I mean the morality of politicians. I recognize—everybody must recognize—that you can’t be expected to tie yourselves down to the ordinary standards. But——”

“What *are* you talking about?”

“Oh, nothing much. Only you’ve accepted a Pink Vulture from Megalia and a baronetcy from England as a reward for services you don’t mean to render. Now is that quite—quite——?”

Gorman looked at me for a minute without speaking. There was a peculiar twinkle in his eyes.

“If I were you,” he said at last, “I’d go back to Ireland for a while. Try Dublin. You have been too long over here. You wouldn’t say things like that if you weren’t becoming English.”

I accepted the rebuke. Gorman was perfectly right. In English public life it is necessary to profess a respect for decency, to make aprons of fig leaves. In Ireland we do without these coverings.

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said Gorman, “if I got some sort of decoration out of the Emperor too before I’m through with this business. Once these ribbons and stars begin to drop on a man, they come thick and fast, kind of attract each other, I suppose. I wonder,” he added with sudden irrelevancy, “what the Emperor’s

game is. That's what I've been trying to make out all along. Why is he in it?"

"He wants the Island of Salissa restored to the Crown of Megalia," I said. "You've been told that often enough."

"Yes, but why? Why? The island isn't worth having. As well as I can make out it's simply a rock with a little clay sprinkled on top of it. What can it matter to the Emperor who owns the place? It isn't as if it were his originally or as if it would become his. It belongs to Megalia. With all the fuss that's being made you'd think there was a gold mine there."

The puzzle became more complicated and Gorman's curiosity was further whetted before he started for Salissa. After leaving my rooms he went to Cockspur Street and called at the office of the Cyrenian Sea Steam Navigation Company. Steinwitz was expecting him and received him in the most friendly manner.

"Sir Bartholomew Bland-Potterton," said Steinwitz, "rang me up this morning, and told me that you'd undertaken our little negotiation. I need scarcely say that we're quite satisfied. We feel——"

"By we," said Gorman, "you mean yourself and the Emperor, I suppose. Now what I want to know is this: Why is the Emperor so keen on——?"

Steinwitz waved that question away with a motion of his hand.

"I do not discuss the policy of the Emperor," he said.

"You must be the only man in Europe who doesn't," said Gorman. "However, I don't mind. I suppose the Emperor must have some pretty strong reasons for wanting to get Donovan out of Salissa, or he wouldn't offer to pay a fancy price —it was a fancy price, you know."

"King Konrad Karl will pay," said Steinwitz.

"No, he won't. He can't. He hasn't got it. There's a cool ten thousand gone on a pearl necklace, as well as——"

"Goldsturmer is prepared to buy back the necklace," said Steinwitz. "I have arranged that."

"Well," said Gorman, "it's your affair, of course. But I wouldn't be too sure. I don't think Madame Ypsilante will sell at any price."

“Madame Ypsilante will do what she must,” said Steinwitz. “The Emperor——”

“I don’t envy the Emperor the job of tackling her,” said Gorman. “He won’t find it a bit pleasant. I daresay he doesn’t know Madame Ypsilante. He wouldn’t be so cocksure of himself if he did. She’s the kind of woman who throws things about if she’s the least irritated. If the Emperor suggests her selling those jewels there’ll be a riot. But it’s no business of mine. If that Emperor of yours really enjoys a rag with a woman like Madame Ypsilante—I should have thought a man in his position wouldn’t care to be mixed up in the sort of scene there will certainly be.”

Steinwitz stiffened visibly. His hair always stands upright on his head. It actually bristled while Gorman was speaking.

“I do not,” he said, “discuss the Emperor in that way. It is enough for you to know this. Madame Ypsilante will sell. Goldsturmer will buy. I myself will settle these matters.”

Gorman was enjoying himself greatly. Nothing in the world gives him more pleasure than intercourse with a man who takes himself seriously. Steinwitz was a real delight. He was solemnly and ponderously serious about himself. He was pontifical about the Emperor.

“Goldsturmer,” said Gorman, “is a Jew, and the Jews are a cautious race. However, if you go to him and say ‘The Emperor’ in an *Open Sesame* tone of voice he’ll no doubt give in at once.”

“Exactly,” said Steinwitz gravely.

Gorman collapsed then. Steinwitz’ portentous solemnity was too much for him. Sticking pins into a man or an ape is a pleasant sport. They have skins of reasonable density. It is dull work pricking a rhinoceros, even with a rapier.

“About going to Salissa,” he said meekly. “Can you manage to send me there?”

“Certainly,” said Steinwitz. “How soon can you start?”

“At once,” said Gorman. “I’ll buy a tooth-brush on my way to the steamer. I realize that I must waste no time when conducting business for the Emperor.”

“That is so,” said Steinwitz, “but you cannot start before to-morrow. To-morrow at 9 a.m. the *Ida* leaves Tilbury. She is the steamer which Mr. Donovan chartered

from us. She returns to the island according to his orders. If you care to sail on her——”

Steinwitz took up the receiver of the telephone which stood on his desk.

“Is Captain Wilson in the office?” he called. “Captain Wilson of the *Ida*. Oh, he’s not, but Mr. Phillips is. Very well. Ask Mr. Phillips to come up and speak to me here. Mr. Phillips,” he explained to Gorman, “is first officer on the *Ida*. I shall give him orders to be ready for you to-morrow.”

There was a brisk tap at the door. Phillips walked in.

“Mr. Phillips,” said Steinwitz, “Mr. Gorman will sail with you to-morrow on the *Ida*. You will see that a cabin is prepared for him, and tell Captain Wilson, with my compliments, that Mr. Gorman is to be made as comfortable as possible. If there are any particular directions you’d like to give, Mr. Gorman——”

“I prefer Irish to Scotch,” said Gorman, “but I don’t insist on it.”

“Irish? Scotch?” said Steinwitz. “Ah, yes, whisky, of course. Make a note of that, if you please, Mr. Phillips.”

“And I detest tinned salmon,” said Gorman.

“You need not be uneasy,” said Steinwitz. “On our ships no passenger is ever asked to eat tinned salmon. As the guest of the company——”

“Of the Emperor,” said Gorman.

He deliberately winked at Phillips when he mentioned the Emperor. Phillips has a nice, round, sun-burned face, clear eyes and curly hair. Gorman felt that it would be easy to make friends with him. Phillips laughed and then checked himself abruptly. He saw no joke in a reference to the Emperor, but Gorman’s wink appealed to him strongly. Steinwitz frowned.

“That will do, Mr. Phillips,” he said.

He turned to Gorman when the young man left the room.

“You will let me hear from you,” he said. “I shall expect a letter. The *Ida* will, no doubt, return after she is unloaded. You can give your letters to Captain Wilson.”

“I suppose there’s no other way of sending letters?”

“A coasting steamer, perhaps,” said Steinwitz, “or a fishing boat might put in at the island; but the *Ida* will be your best means of communicating with me.”

“All right,” said Gorman. “I’ll let you know how things go on. But don’t be too sanguine. Donovan may refuse to sell.”

He rose to go as he spoke. Steinwitz made one more remark before the interview closed.

“One way or other,” he said, “I hear very often from the island.”

The words were spoken in a colourless tone; but Gorman felt vaguely that they were a kind of threat. Steinwitz said that he heard frequently from the island. Gorman thought the statement over. Evidently Steinwitz had a correspondent there, some one who made use of the *Ida*, of any coasting steamer which turned up, of the fishing boats which put in. Steinwitz would not be entirely dependent on Gorman’s account of his mission. He would hear about it from some one else, would know whether the sale had been pressed on Donovan.

Gorman left the office a little puzzled. The threat suggested by Steinwitz’ last words was veiled but hardly to be mistaken. It certainly seemed to Gorman that he was to be watched by some one on the island, his life spied on, his actions reported to this perfectly absurd German shipowner; by him, no doubt, again reported to the Emperor. The thing seemed almost too good to be true. Gorman, himself a clever man, found it difficult to believe that another clever man—Steinwitz certainly had brains of a sort—could possibly be such an idiot as to practise melodrama, spies, secret reports and all the rest of it, quite seriously.

Gorman found himself wondering what on earth Steinwitz expected to learn from his correspondent in Salissa and what use the information would be to him when he got it. Would Donovan be threatened with the implacable wrath of the Emperor? Would he himself, Michael Gorman, M.P. for Upper Offaly, incur some awful penalty if he did not persuade Donovan to sell, if he did his best—he certainly meant to do his best—to prevent a marriage between Miss Donovan and King Konrad Karl? He chuckled with delight at the prospect and was more than ever glad that he had promised to go to Salissa.

The voyage turned out to be a very agreeable one. Captain Wilson was not, indeed, a cheerful companion. He maintained the attitude of stiff disapproval with which he had all along regarded Salissa and everything connected with that island. He gave Gorman to understand that he meant to do his duty to his

employers, to obey orders faithfully, to carry ridiculous things and foolish people to and fro between Salissa and England; but that he in no way approved of the waste of a good ship, quantities of coal and the energies of officers like himself over the silly fad of a wealthy young woman.

Phillips, on the other hand, was friendly from the start. He and Gorman spent many hours together on the bridge or in the cabin. The weather was fine and warm. The *Ida* slipped quietly across the Bay, found calm days and velvety nights off the coast of Portugal, carried her good luck with her through the Straits of Gibraltar.

A much duller man than Gorman would not have failed to discover that Phillips was deeply in love with the young Queen of Salissa. All talk worked back to her sooner or later. And Phillips became eloquent about her. With naïve enthusiasm he praised her beauty. He raved about the sweetness of her disposition. He struggled hard for words which would describe her incomparable charm.

Gorman says he liked listening to the boy. He himself has never married, so far as I know has never been in love. I suppose there was a certain freshness about Phillips' raptures. He must have been an attentive listener and he must have shown some sort of sympathy, for in the end Phillips became very confidential. I daresay, too, that Gorman found the whole thing highly amusing when he recollected the Emperor's plan of marrying Miss Donovan to King Konrad Karl. Phillips was just the sort of obstacle which would wreck the plan, and the Emperor would never condescend to consider that a subordinate officer in the British Merchant Service could be of any importance. There was a flavour about the situation which delighted Gorman.

"When do you mean to marry her?" he asked, one evening.

"Marry her!" said Phillips. "I never thought—I mean I never dared to hope——It would be such beastly cheek, wouldn't it? to expect——"

He looked at Gorman, pathetically anxious for some crumb of encouragement.

"She's a queen, you know," said Phillips, "and an heiress, and all that. I'm only ——I haven't a penny in the world except what I earn."

The boy sighed.

"I don't see why that should stop you," said Gorman.

“Do you really think—I mean wouldn’t it be frightful cheek? It’s not only her being a queen and all that; but other things. She’s far too good for me in every way. I’m not clever or anything of that kind. And then there’s her father.”

“I shouldn’t worry about him, if I were you,” said Gorman. “What you’ve got to consider is not the father but the girl. If she’s as much in love with you as you are with her——”

“She couldn’t possibly be,” said Phillips.

“I don’t suppose she could,” said Gorman. “Let’s say half. If she’s half as much in love as you are she’ll manage the old man.”

“I think——” said Phillips, “I really think she does like me a little.”

Then he told Gorman something, not very much, about the scene in the cave. He spoke in broken sentences. He never quite completed any confidence, but Gorman got at something like the facts.

“If you’ve gone as far as that,” he said. “If, as I understand, you’ve kissed her, then——I don’t profess to give an expert opinion in matters of this kind, but I think you ought to ask her to marry you. In fact, it will be rather insulting if you don’t.”

“And you really think I have a chance? But you don’t know. She might marry any one in the world. She’s the most beautiful girl that any one has ever seen. Her eyes——”

Gorman knew that Miss Daisy Donovan was a nice, fresh-looking, plump young woman with no particular claim to be called beautiful. He stopped listening. His mind had suddenly fixed on a curious point in Phillips’ story of the scene in the cave. He waited until the boy, like Rosalind’s “very good lover,” was “gravelled for lack of matter.” Then he said:

“Where did you say that you were when that happened—the kissing, I mean?”

“In a cave,” said Phillips. “In a huge cave. I had helped her to climb up on to the cisterns, and——”

“Cisterns!” said Gorman. “What the devil did you put cisterns into a cave for?”

“We didn’t put them. They were there. Galvanized iron cisterns. Huge things. Oh, I promised I wouldn’t tell any one about those cisterns. They’re part of the

secret of the island. The Queen made me promise. I wish I hadn't told you."

"You've broken your promise now," said Gorman. "You may just as well go on."

It took some time to persuade Phillips to go on; and all Gorman's sophistries would not induce the boy to say another word about the cisterns in the cave. They were the Queen's part of the mystery of the island and he would not speak of them. But he did at last confide in Gorman to some extent.

"I think," he said, "I may tell you about this. I found this out myself."

He took a letter-case from his pocket and produced from it a corner torn off an envelope.

"Look at that," he said. "Look at it carefully."

Gorman stared at the scrap of paper.

"Bit of an envelope," he said. "Penny stamp, London postmark."

"Now look at this," said Phillips.

He handed Gorman part of another envelope, torn in exactly the same way. Gorman looked at it.

"Same sort of envelope," he said. "Same postmark, different dates."

"That last one," said Phillips, "is a corner of an envelope which I got through the post ten days ago. It came from the office, Mr. Steinwitz' office. The first one I found in the hall of the Queen's palace the day we landed on Salissa."

"Well," said Gorman, "that's not much to go on. Lots of firms use envelopes like that, and I suppose there are thousands of letters every day with that postmark. Still it's possible that Steinwitz wrote a letter to some one who was on the island last September. Were there any other bits of paper on that floor?"

"There were," said Phillips, "but I didn't pick them up. I intended to next day. But they were gone. The floor had been swept."

"Oh! Who swept the floor?"

"Smith. I saw him doing it."

"Now who," said Gorman, "is Smith?"

“Smith! He was steward on the *Ida*. Mr. Steinwitz sent him on board just before we sailed. He stayed on the island as servant to the Donovans. Oh, by the way, talking of Smith, perhaps I ought to tell you——”

He told Gorman the story of Smith’s early morning visit to the cave in company with Stephanos the Elder.

“Does Smith ever write letters?” asked Gorman.

“I don’t know. Oh, yes. I remember. The day we docked at Tilbury, after our return voyage, Captain Wilson sent me up to the office with some letters of Mr. Donovan’s. Just as I was starting he called me back and said I might as well take Smith’s letters too. There were three of them, all addressed to Mr. Steinwitz.”

“I think,” said Gorman, “that when I get to the island I’ll have a look at those cisterns of yours.”

“I’ll ask the Queen if I may take you,” said Phillips.

“You and the Queen,” said Gorman, “seem to have formed yourselves into a kind of detective brotherhood for the discovery of the mystery of the island.”

“We thought it would be rather fun.”

“You don’t appear to have found out very much. Suppose you take me into partnership. We could all three work together, except when it is necessary to climb cisterns. Then I’d stay round the nearest corner. What do you think?”

“I’d like to; but I must ask the Queen first.”

“I might be some help.”

“You would,” said Phillips. “I’m not clever, you know. I wish I was. And, of course, the Queen is very young.”

“I’m quite old,” said Gorman, “and amazingly clever.”

“I can see that. I saw it directly I met you.”

“Then you’d better let me help. We’ll see if we can’t catch Smith at some little game.”

CHAPTER XV

There is no doubt that the Donovans owed their comfort on Salissa very largely to Smith, the ship's steward, who had entered their service at the last moment, and, as it seemed, accidentally.

Donovan would never have achieved the rest and quiet he desired without Smith. Advocates of the simple life may say what they like; but a man like Donovan would have lived in a condition of perpetual worry and annoyance if he had been obliged to go foraging for such things as milk and eggs; if it had been his business to chop up wood and light the kitchen fire. He would not have liked cleaning his own boots or sweeping up the cigar ends and tobacco ash with which he strewed the floors of the palace. He would not have slept well at night in a bed that he made himself. He would have gone without shaving most days—thereby becoming uncomfortable and most unsightly—if he had been dependent on his own exertions for a supply of hot water and a properly stropped razor.

His daughter would have made a poor queen if it had fallen to her lot to cook meals for herself and her father, if she had spent a morning every week at a wash-tub and another morning with an iron in her hand. There were no labour-saving devices in the palace. King Otto had a remarkable taste for fantastic architecture; but it had not occurred to him to run hot and cold water through his house or to have a lift between the kitchen and the upper storeys. There was not even in the whole palace a single sink in which a plate could conveniently be washed. It is impossible to be a queen in any real and proper sense if you have to spend hours every day doing the work of a kitchen-maid. Queens, and indeed all members of aristocracies, ought to be occupied with thoughts of great and splendid things, wide schemes of philanthropy, sage counsels for the elevating of the masses. But the human mind will not work at social and political philosophy if it is continually worried with problems of scouring pans and emptying slops. That is why there must be a class of menials, perhaps slaves, in society, if any advance is to be made towards the finer civilization.

It was Smith who saved the Queen from becoming a drudge and Donovan from unfamiliar kinds of toil which would probably have still further injured his heart, would certainly have broken his temper.

Salissa was not by any means a desert island. It was inhabited by intelligent, kindly people, who kept milk-giving cows and hens which laid eggs. It was well cultivated. Grapes and wheat grew there. There were fish in the surrounding sea, and the islanders possessed boats and nets. Nor were the Donovans castaways of the ordinary kind. They had a large house, luxuriously furnished. They had ample stores of every kind. Nevertheless they could scarcely have lived on Salissa—they would certainly not have tried to live there long—if they had not had Smith with them. Picnicking is delightful for a short time. A picnic unduly prolonged degenerates rapidly through all the stages of discomfort, and ends in actual hardship.

Smith organized the life of the palace. Every morning an island boat crossed the harbour bringing eggs, milk and fish. Every evening just at sunset it came again with more milk and if necessary more eggs. Four island girls were brought from the village by Stephanos the Elder, and—this was the impression left on the Queen's mind—solemnly dedicated to domestic service. Smith taught them the elements of housework. Two boys were taken from the fields and handed over to Smith. He taught them to polish boots, clean knives, and make all kinds of metal—silver, brass and copper—shine splendidly. Smith's work was made easier for him by Stephanos the Elder. That old man spent two hours every day in the palace. He did not bring osier rods with him, but the girls knew, and the boys knew still better, that his arm was strong and that pliant rods hurt horribly. There were no corners left unswept in the rooms of the palace, no plates unwashed, no failure in the supply of cans of hot water for Donovan's bedroom or the Queen's. At first Smith did all the cooking himself. Later, when one of the girls showed some intelligence, he attended only to the more difficult and complex dishes. He never allowed any one else to wait on Donovan. The organization was not accomplished at once. For a few days life in the palace was exciting, full of surprises and occasions for laughter. For a few days more it was a very well-arranged picnic, rather less exciting than it had been, with meals which could be confidently reckoned on and many minor comforts. At the end of a fortnight it had settled down into something like the smooth routine of a well-managed English country house.

But the Queen, even when things in the palace were well ordered, did not find the island dull. She explored it all. With Kalliope as guide she climbed rocks, descended into lonely coves, walked through fields and vineyards, wandered over the pasture land of the upper plateau. She rowed, taking turns at the oars with Kalliope, into many caves and found fascinating landing-places among the

rocks. One fine day she sailed all round her kingdom in the largest of the island boats, manned and steered by Kalliope's lover.

She did not forget that she was a queen. She learnt the names of all her subjects. She made plans for many improvements. Roads should be built, houses rebuilt, water should run about in pipes and women turn taps instead of carrying great pitchers on their heads. Motor tractors, instead of small bullocks, should drag the island ploughs. Motor engines should drive the fishing boats. Every evening, Kalliope sitting by her, the Queen drew maps, designed cottages, and made long lists of things which the *Ida* should, in due time, fetch from England.

She started a school in the great hall of the palace. Smith explained to Stephanos the Elder what was wanted and he undertook the duties of attendance officer. The Queen's idea was to encourage the children with gifts of chocolates. Stephanos, who must have had the mind of a Progressive, established a system of compulsory education. The Queen spoke very few words of the children's language, and Kalliope, who acted as assistant mistress, did not know much English. But the laws of arithmetic, so the Queen felt, must be of universal application, two and two making four, by whatever names you called them. And the Alphabet must be a useful thing to learn whatever words you spell with it afterwards. So the Queen drew Arabic numerals on large sheets of paper and tried to impress on a giggling group of children that the figures corresponded in some way to little piles of pebbles which she arranged on the floor. She succeeded in teaching them that K, written very large, and held up for inspection, was in some way connected with Kalliope. She failed to persuade them that S could have anything to do with Stephanos the Elder. S, perhaps because it is so curly, always made the children laugh uproariously. The mention of the name of Stephanos made them suddenly grave again. He was no subject for merriment, and it seemed impossible that a sign so plainly comic as S could possibly be associated with him.

The mystery of the island was the Queen's only disappointment. It remained obstinately undeveloped. No more suspicious scraps of paper were to be found anywhere. Smith hardly ever stirred outside the palace. The cisterns were, indeed, still in the cavern, but no change took place in them. They stood there, great, foolish, empty tanks of galvanized iron, entirely meaningless things. The Queen came to regard them without wonder. They were just there, that was all. Little by little the mystery ceased to interest her, ceased even to be a disappointment.

Then one day, just as she was beginning to forget it, the mystery suddenly became exciting again.

It was still Kalliope's habit to sleep, wrapped in a rug, on the floor at the foot of the Queen's bed. Smith commanded and the Queen entreated, but the girl refused to occupy a room of her own or to sleep on a bed. Every morning about seven she woke, unrolled herself from her rug, tiptoed across the room and pulled back the curtains. The flood of sunlight wakened the Queen and the two girls went together to bathe from the steps below the Queen's balcony.

One morning Kalliope gave a sudden shout of excitement when she pulled back the curtains.

"Mucky ship!" she cried.

She ran from the window. The Queen, blinking and no more than half awake, was seized by the arms and pulled out of bed. Kalliope was the least conventional of lady's-maids. She loved, even worshipped and adored, her mistress, but she had no idea whatever of propriety of behaviour. Bedclothes were scattered on the floor. The Queen, staggering to her feet, was dragged across the room to the window. Kalliope pointed to the harbour with a finger which trembled with excitement.

"Mucky ship," she said.

Kalliope's English was improving in quality. The Queen had forbidden her to say "damn" or "bloody" but about "mucky" she had received no instructions. It still seemed to her a proper epithet for any ship. In this case it was unsuitable. The ship, a small steamer, which lay at anchor in the harbour, looked more like a yacht than a cargo boat. Her paint was fresh. Her hull had fine lines. Her two masts and high yellow funnel raked sharply aft. The brasswork on her bridge glittered in the sunlight. But Kalliope stuck to her epithet.

"Mucky ship," she said, "once more."

"Once more" was a recent addition to her English. She had picked the phrase up in the Queen's school, where indeed it was in constant use. She knew what it meant; but it was not clear why she used it about the steamer.

The Queen was excited, almost as much excited as Kalliope. Even to dwellers in seaport towns there must, I think, always come a certain thrill when a ship arrives from the sea. In Salissa, where ships rarely come, where no steamer had

been seen since the *Ida* sailed, the sudden coming of a strange craft was a moving event. And the manner of her coming stirred the imagination. A ship which sails in by day is sighted far off. Her shape is seen, her flag is read, perhaps, long before she reaches the harbour. Half the interest of her coming disappears as she slips slowly in, gazed at by all eyes, speculated on, discussed by every tongue. But a ship which arrives by night is full of wonder. At sunset she is not there. In the darkness she steals in. No one sees her approach. She is there, rich in possibilities of romance, to greet eyes opening on a new day.

The Queen and Kalliope had no morning swim that day. They were eager to dress, to go out, to row across to the strange ship. They had no time to waste in bathing. As they dressed they ran to and fro about the room, never willing to take their eyes off the steamer for very long. It was interesting to watch her. Men were busy about her decks and a tall officer could be seen on her bridge. A boat was swung out and lowered from the davits. She was manned by four rowers. The anchor cable of the steamer was hove short. A warp was passed down to the boat and made fast in her stern. Then the anchor was weighed and hung dripping just clear of the water. The rowers pulled at their oars. The boat shot ahead of the steamer. The warp was paid out for awhile and then made fast on board the steamer. The work of towing began. The boat, moving slowly in short jerks, headed for the shore. The officer on the steamer's bridge directed the rowers, shouting. They made for the entrance of the great cave. Close under the cliffs the steamer's anchor was dropped again. Another anchor was run out by the attendant boat, then another, and a fourth. At last the steamer lay, moored bow and stern, broadside on to the cliff, a few yards from the mouth of the cave.

The Queen, fully dressed at last, ran to her father's room. Kalliope was at her heels. Donovan was in bed and still asleep. At that hour Smith had not even brought him his cup of coffee or his shaving water. The Queen was less ruthless than Kalliope had been. She did not pull her father out of bed; but she wakened him without pity.

"Father," she said, "a steamer has arrived. She came during the night. She looks like a yacht. Do you think she can be a yacht? I wonder who's on board of her."

Donovan sat up and yawned.

"Is she going off again right now?" he asked.

"Oh no," said the Queen, "she has gone in quite close to the shore. She has put out four anchors. She looks as if she meant to stay for weeks."

“Then there’s no darned hurry,” said Donovan, “and no need for me to strain my heart by getting out of bed at this hour. Just you run away, Daisy, and take that girl of yours with you.”

“But, father, don’t you want to see the yacht? Don’t you want to know who’s in her?”

“We’ll send Smith after breakfast,” said Donovan, “and ask the proprietor to dine.”

Mr. Donovan lay down again and put his head on the pillow.

“But I can’t possibly wait till dinner-time,” said the Queen.

“Well, luncheon,” said Donovan.

His voice was a little muffled. After lying down he had taken a pull at the bedclothes and had arranged the corner of the sheet over his mouth and ear.

The Queen gave him up; but she was not willing to wait even till luncheon-time or to trust Smith to deliver the invitation. Kalliope shared her impatience.

“Go row,” she said, “quick—quick—slick.”

“Slick” was a word which she had recently learned from Smith. He often used it in urging on his staff of housemaids. He was forced to use an English word now and then when he could not express his meaning in the Megalian language. There is no equivalent to “slick” in Megalian.

What the Queen wanted most at the moment was to be quick and slick in getting off. She and Kalliope ran down to the steps where their boat lay moored. Smith was there, looking at the strange steamer.

“Oh, Smith,” said the Queen, “is it a yacht?”

“Don’t know, your Majesty,” said Smith. “Never saw her before. She looks to me like a foreigner, your Majesty, not an English boat.”

“Well, I’ll soon find out,” said the Queen. “We’re going off to her.”

Kalliope had already cast off the boat’s mooring rope and sat ready at the oars.

“Beg pardon, your Majesty,” said Smith, “but it might be as well for me to go off first. Foreign sailors are not always as polite as they might be. Not knowing that

your Majesty is Queen of the island they might say things which were disrespectful."

The Queen would not listen to this suggestion.

"Come along with us if you like," she said, "but I'm not going to wait till you come back."

Smith stepped into the boat and took his seat in the bow. Kalliope had the oars. The Queen sat in the stern.

The men on the deck of the steamer were very busy. They were overhauling and coiling down what looked like a long rubber hose. An officer, a young man in a smart uniform, was directing the work. When the boat was near the steamer, the officer hailed and asked in German what boat it was. Kalliope was rowing vigorously. Before any answer could be made to the hail the boat ran alongside the steamer.

The Queen had learned German at school, carefully and laboriously, paying much attention to the vagaries of irregular verbs. She began to think out a sentence in which to describe her boat, herself and her servants. But Smith took it for granted that she knew no German. Before her sentence had taken shape he answered the officer. The young man leaned over the bulwark of the steamer and stared at the Queen while Smith spoke. Then he went away. Smith explained to the Queen what had happened.

"I asked him to call the captain, your Majesty. I told him that you are the Queen of the island. I was speaking to him in German, your Majesty."

The Queen knew that. She might be slow in framing a German sentence when an unexpected demand for such a thing was made on her, but thanks to the patience and diligence of a certain fat German governess, she could understand the language fairly well. She had understood every word that Smith said. He had not told the young officer that she was Queen of the island. He had described her as the daughter of the rich American who had bought Salissa from King Konrad Karl. She made no attempt at the moment to understand why Smith said one thing in German and offered her something slightly different as a translation; and she did not question him on the point. She was content to leave him to suppose that she knew no German at all.

The boat, which had run quickly alongside of the steamer near her bow, now lay

beside the accommodation ladder which hung amidships. A tall officer stood on the platform outside the bulwarks and looked down at the Queen. He was a heavily built blonde man with neatly trimmed beard and moustache. He wore a naval uniform and stood stiffly erect, his heels together, while he raised his hand to the formal salute. The Queen spoke to Smith.

“Ask him,” she said, “if he will come ashore and breakfast with us.”

Before Smith could translate, the officer replied to her.

“I speak English,” he said, “it is not necessary that he translate. I have the honour to present myself—Captain von Moll.”

“Very pleased to meet you, Captain von Moll. Won’t you come ashore and breakfast with us?”

“I regret that is impossible,” said von Moll. “I am much occupied.”

He spoke slowly, pronouncing each word carefully. He looked steadily at the Queen, not taking his eyes from her face for a moment. His words were civil. His attitude was strictly correct. But there was something in his stare which the Queen did not like, a suggestion of insolence. She felt that this man regarded her as an inferior, a member of an inferior sex perhaps, or one of an inferior race. American women, especially American girls, are not accustomed to think of themselves as men’s inferiors. American citizens find it impossible to believe that any one in the world can look down on them. The Queen was not annoyed. She was piqued and interested.

“Perhaps,” she said, “you will come for luncheon or dinner. We dine at half-past seven.”

Von Moll saluted again with formal politeness.

“I will dine with you,” he said, “at half-past seven. Meanwhile I am sorry that I cannot ask you to come on board and see my ship. My men are much occupied.”

The Queen signed to Kalliope and the boat left the steamer’s side.

CHAPTER XVI

Donovan was no more than moderately interested in what his daughter told him about the strange steamer. She mentioned the fact that the Captain spoke English with precise correctness.

“They’re an educated people, the Germans,” said Donovan. “I reckon there’s ten of them know English for one American knows German. Couldn’t do business with us if they didn’t learn to talk so as we can understand them. That’s the reason. It isn’t fancy trimmings they’re out for, but business; and they’re getting it. I wouldn’t call them a smart people. They haven’t got the punch of our business men; but they’re darned persevering.”

“It can’t be business that brings him here,” said the Queen.

“No,” said Donovan. “Salissa is not a business centre. It’s my opinion that steamer is having trouble with her engines and has come in here to tinker a bit; or maybe she’s short of water; or the captain’s taken a notion that he’d like some fresh fish and a few dozen eggs. It doesn’t seem to me that we need fret any about what brings him here.”

The Queen was not satisfied. She sat for some time on her balcony looking at the steamer. With the help of a pair of glasses she could watch what was going on. The long hose which she had seen in the morning was got on deck and coiled in three great heaps. Then the men knocked off work for breakfast. After that they became active again. One end of the hose was lowered into a boat. It seemed to the Queen to be a rubber hose like those used by firemen. The boat rowed towards the cave. Another boat lay close to the steamer’s bow and received a loop of the hose, taking some of the strain and drag off the first boat. She too rowed towards the cave. A third boat followed in the same way. The Queen saw that the hose was being carried into the depths of the cave, drooping into the water between the boats, but sufficiently supported to be dragged on. The work was very slow, but it was carried on steadily, methodically.

The Queen was much interested in what she saw. After awhile she became very curious. The proceedings of the men on the steamer were difficult to understand. There seemed no reason why they should tug a large quantity of rubber hose into the cave. It was a senseless thing to do. Then it occurred to her that the cave was

hers, part of an island of which she was Queen, which her father had bought for her from its legal owner. Any householder would feel himself entitled to investigate the doings of a party of strangers who appeared suddenly and pushed a rubber hose through his drawing-room window. They might be the servants of the gas company or officials sent by the water board, or sanitary inspectors, but the owner of the house would want to satisfy himself about them. The Queen felt that she had every right to find out what von Moll's men were doing.

She called Kalliope and they went off together in their boat, rowing across the bay towards the steamer.

Kalliope was excited. She talked rapidly in her own language, turning round now and then and pointing towards the steamer. It was plain that she had something which she very much wanted to say, something about the strange steamer. The Queen's curiosity increased. She thought for a moment of turning back to the palace. There she would find Smith and he would interpret for her. Then she remembered Smith's odd mistake in translating his own German in the morning. She determined not to ask his help. Kalliope, hopeless of explaining herself in Megalian, fell back on her small store of English words. She kept on saying "Mucky ship," which conveyed nothing at all to the Queen, except the obvious fact that the steamer was there. She also repeated the words "Once more."

At last, when the boat was getting near the steamer, Kalliope made a great effort.

"It—is—once more," she said.

The Queen jumped to a possible meaning of her words. The steamer, that steamer had been in the harbour of Salissa before, had been perhaps about some business similar to that which occupied her now. Kalliope, her eyes on the Queen's face, saw that she was making herself understood. She nodded delightedly, turned round on her seat and pointed to the steamer.

"It—is—once more."

Then she began to sing, softly at first, louder as she became sure of herself, until her voice rang clear across the water. Her song had no words, but the tune was that which she had sung to the Queen in the cave on the day when she first saw the cisterns. It was the tune of the hymn "Glorious things of thee are spoken."

Three or four men were leaning over the ship's bulwarks, looking at the Queen's boat. They heard Kalliope's voice, and they joined in the hymn. A boat lay in the

mouth of the cave, supporting part of the long hose. There were four men in her. They also joined in the hymn. They sang words, German words. The Queen listened intently, trying to hear what the words were.

Captain von Moll, standing on the bridge of the steamer, shouted an order. The men stopped singing abruptly. Kalliope finished the tune by herself and then laughed.

“It—is—once more,” she said.

The Queen understood. The ship had been in the harbour before. The crew had gone about some work, like that which she saw them doing. While they worked they had sung that hymn tune. The Queen frowned with perplexity. Then suddenly she recollected. She had been in the choir at school. She had sung hymns every morning at prayers. The fat German governess, an exile from the Fatherland and deeply sentimental, used to play the piano and teach the choir. There were always tears in her eyes when she played that particular tune. The girls understood that in some way it meant a great deal to her, was perhaps the tune of some national song, captured by an English musician and set to the words of a popular hymn. The Queen had never thought much about the matter. Now it occurred to her that the sailors were singing the song which the German governess had in mind, a song so popular that they often sang it at their work. Kalliope had learned it from them when they first visited the island. They recognized it and joined in it when they heard her singing it.

Kalliope rowed slowly round the steamer. An engine on deck began to work. The Queen could hear it snorting and clanking. The boat crossed the ship’s bows, passing under the length of hose which drooped in a long curve into the water. Suddenly the hose swelled, writhed, twisted. It seemed to be alive. It looked like some huge sea snake, wriggling from the ship into the water, swimming through the water towards the gloomy mouth of the cave. Kalliope stopped rowing and stared open-mouthed. The Queen realized almost at once what was happening. The engine on the steamer’s deck was pumping some liquid through the hose.

Kalliope held her dripping oars above the water and stared at the writhing hose. The boat lay still. The Queen remembered what her father had said at breakfast. The steamer might have come to the island for water. It was possible that the engine was sucking water in through the hose, not driving some other liquid out through it. But the Queen could not remember any spring or well of fresh water

in the cave. She signed to Kalliope. The girl dipped her oars again. The boat moved towards the entrance of the cave.

One of the ship's boats, with four men in her, lay right under the high archway of the entrance. A man stood up and signed to the Queen, shaking his head.

"*Es ist verboten,*" he said.

Then, with gestures which could not be mistaken he repeated gruffly, "*Verboten.*"

To the Queen it seemed absurd that a strange sailor should try to prevent her from rowing into a cave in her own island whenever she chose. She took no notice of the man. Kalliope rowed on. Two of the men in the ship's boat leaned over her side and caught Kalliope's oars.

Kalliope was a young woman of imperturbably good temper. She smiled amiably at the men and then turned to the Queen.

"Blighters," she said. "Bloody blighters."

She was also a young woman of spirit and ready presence of mind. With a swift jerk she dragged the slippery blade from the man's hands. She pulled it towards her beyond the man's reach. Then with a sudden vigorous thrust she drove the blade into the face of the nearest sailor. It took him full in the mouth and knocked him backwards. He picked himself up and spat out the broken fragments of some teeth. Kalliope laughed joyously.

"Bloody blighters," she said, and for once the epithet was appropriate enough.

The Queen felt that the situation was neither agreeable nor dignified. It is very well, no doubt, for wild, half-barbarous girls like Kalliope to engage in fights with German sailors; but for a civilized American, a graduate of a university, such things are impossible. And for a Queen! Can a queen brawl without hopeless loss of dignity? Her immediate impulse was to appeal to the captain of the steamer, to assert her right to enter the cave, to demand the immediate punishment of the men who had stopped her.

She looked around. The captain was not on the bridge. He had been there a few moments before. He had been there when the engine began to work. He had disappeared. The Queen rowed back to the steamer. She asked for the captain. The young officer whom she had seen in the morning came to the side of the

ship and told her that no one was allowed to enter the cave. She asked to see the captain, refusing to argue about her rights with a subordinate officer. She was told that the captain was very much occupied and could not be disturbed. The Queen, puzzled and angry, rowed back to the palace.

It was nearly luncheon-time when she landed. Smith met her with the news that Mr. Donovan had been suffering severely with his heart all the morning, that he would not join the Queen at luncheon, that, further, he felt the need of absolute quiet and rest during the afternoon, but hoped to be able to meet the German captain at dinner.

Donovan’s balcony commanded a full view of the harbour. He had seen Kalliope’s struggle with the German sailor. He felt sure that his daughter would tell him the whole story. He feared that she would want him to take some vigorous action. Donovan made a point of encouraging his heart in disordered action whenever demands of that kind were likely to be made upon him. He argued that the trouble of the morning would in all probability have died away before dinner. If it showed signs of reviving or increasing in intensity he intended to dine in his room and go to bed early.

The Queen felt it her duty to lecture Kalliope severely. No well-conducted lady's-maid ought to attack strange sailors with oars and knock out their front teeth. Kalliope must be made to understand that such conduct was not only undesirable in a maid but was actually unwomanly. The lecture was, necessarily, delivered for the most part in pantomime, by means of frowns, nods, and shakings of the head. Up to a certain point the Queen succeeded very well. Kalliope easily understood that her assault on the sailor was the subject of discussion. After that the Queen's sign language began to fail her. Kalliope continued to be greatly pleased with herself and proud of her performance. After a long struggle the Queen made her understand that she had behaved not well, but very badly. Kalliope grovelled in abject apology. The impression finally left on her mind was that she was to blame for anticipating her mistress' action. The Queen, so she thought, would have liked to fell the German sailor herself, would indeed have brained the man instead of merely breaking his front teeth.

The Queen, aware that she was failing badly, gave the business up and sent Kalliope away to make tea. It was easy enough to communicate with Kalliope about tea, clothes, and such ordinary subjects. The girl had picked up the English names for most things which her mistress commonly used.

The Queen took advantage of this. After tea she made an inspection of her evening frocks. She wished to appear to the very best advantage before Captain von Moll when he came to dinner. The man had stared insolently at her in the morning; but then she had been wearing a simple cotton frock and a boating hat crammed hastily on the back of her head. In the evening she meant to be splendid, regal. Captain von Moll should look at her with respect. She determined that her manner should correspond with her attire. She would be gracious indeed, as a good hostess should be, but very dignified, a little remote, with more than a hint of condescending patronage in her tone when she spoke.

Kalliope, greatly delighted, brought out frock after frock. She spread the garments on the backs of sofas and chairs, handling delicate lace and fine fabrics with tender affection. Sometimes, at the bidding of the Queen, she put on one of the frocks and paraded up and down the room in it, her brown face and strong, sunburnt arms making an odd contrast with pale-blue silk and fluffy chiffon. The occupation was fascinating. There were some frocks which the Queen had scarcely seen. She had, she supposed, chosen the material and the shape, had, it was likely, tried them on during the hurried days before sailing for Salissa. But she had forgotten what they were like, forgotten that she possessed them. It was

a joy to see them spread out before her eyes or actually draped on Kalliope's slender figure.

Neither girl noticed that shortly after six o'clock the *Ida* slipped round the corner of the reef and dropped anchor in the harbour. Phillips, standing with Captain Wilson and Gorman on the bridge, scanned the palace steps, the balconies, the windows, and then, with eager eyes, the shores of the bay, for a sight of the Queen. Captain Wilson and Gorman stared with surprise and curiosity at the German steamer. Gorman had no special knowledge of ships, but he recognized that the vessel before his eyes was not an ordinary tramp. He was startled and interested to see any such vessel in the harbour of Salissa. Captain Wilson, a puzzled frown on his face, wondered at the odd way the steamer was moored and her nearness to the cliffs. Phillips, who had no eyes at all for the strange steamer, seized the line attached to the *Ida's* whistle, and blew three long blasts. He hoped to announce his arrival to the Queen, wherever she might be.

Captain Wilson, perplexed by the look and position of the German steamer, was irritable. He ordered Phillips off the bridge. But the whistle had done its work. The Queen and Kalliope ran to the balcony. They waved joyful greetings to the *Ida*, Kalliope an odd figure in a pale-grey evening dress. Phillips, standing on the deck below the bridge, waved back. It was a joyful moment. A few minutes later his joy was turned to sorrow of an almost unbearable kind. Captain Wilson forbade him to go ashore. A boat was lowered and Gorman was rowed off to the palace—to the gates of paradise. Phillips bitterly regretted that he had blown his blasts of greeting on the syren. But, in fact, it was not for that he was punished. Captain Wilson was simply in a very bad temper. The sight of Salissa always annoyed him. The position of the German steamer irritated him vehemently. She lay dangerously near the cliffs in a position in which no seaman would willingly put his ship. She was absurdly moored with four anchors. She was occupied in a perfectly incomprehensible manner. No man likes to be puzzled by things which it is his business to understand. Doctors have been known to deny the existence of symptoms which do not accord with those proper to the patient's taste. Politicians are baffled and infuriated by men who, indifferent to the sacred etiquette of the profession, speak the truth in public. Engineers are angry when water persists in oozing out of the top of a hill—as it sometimes does to the confusion of all known laws—instead of trickling into the drains dug for it in the valley underneath. So Captain Wilson's temper gave way because the German steamer lay as no steamer in the charge of sane men ought to lie; and Phillips was punished. Kings fly into a rage, said an ancient poet, and the common

people suffer for it.

Perhaps Phillips would have been consoled, he would have certainly been less sulky during the evening, if he had seen what happened in the palace. The Queen stood on the balcony all eagerness, her lips parted, her eyes sparkling, a flush coming and going on her cheeks. She watched the boat lowered, saw the men take their places, saw Gorman climb cautiously down and seat himself in the stern. She waited. Phillips was on deck. She could see him. The boat pushed off. Phillips was not in her. He still stood on the steamer's lower deck leaning over the bulwarks. The Queen turned and went into her room. She flung herself down on a chair. She had much ado to hold back most unqueenly tears of disappointment. Kalliope slipped off the grey and silver dress she wore. Very silently she folded and put away the clothes which lay scattered about the room. Then she sat down at the Queen's feet and cried softly. She had a sympathetic soul. She understood the Queen's feelings.

Gorman was received by Smith. After a few minutes he was led up to the balcony where Donovan lay stretched on a deck chair with a box of cigars at his elbow.

"I am very, very pleased to see you, Gorman," he said.

"I'm afraid," said Gorman, "that I've come to bother you. There's been a lot of fuss in London about your purchase of this island. The Emperor——"

Donovan waved his hand feebly and lay back in his chair with every appearance of extreme exhaustion.

"Ill?" said Gorman.

"Two years ago," said Donovan, "after I had realized my little pile, before I came over to Europe I sent for a doctor—leading man in his own line in America—heart specialist. 'Doc,' I said to him, 'here's 200 dollars. You take a good look at my heart.' Well, he tapped me some and fooled around in the usual way. 'Sir,' he said, 'your heart is as sound as a bell.' 'Doc,' I said, 'you're mistaken, and the fee I offered was unworthy of your acceptance. I'll write out a cheque for 500 dollars, and you take another look at my heart. I've a feeling,' I said, 'that what I want is rest and quiet now that my pile's made.' Well, he tapped me again and kind of listened to the throbbing of the darned machine. 'Sir,' he said, 'you're suffering from disordered action of your heart, and I recommend rest and quiet. No excitement and no worry.' 'Doc,' I said, 'I'm a business man—or I was

before you passed that sentence on me. I'd be obliged if you'd put that on paper with your signature underneath.' Well, he did that, and I paid him another 200 dollars. But I reckon the money was well spent. That paper is a protection to me."

"I see," said Gorman, "I'll let the Emperor know——"

"The Emperor be damned," said Donovan, "and, say, Gorman, there's a kind of German naval officer wandering around this island. I gather that some trouble arose this morning between his men and my daughter's maid. Seems to me that there may be explanations, especially as that German captain is to dine here to-night. Now my idea is to stay where I am—on account of the condition of my heart. Smith will bring me up a bit of chicken and a half-bottle of Heidsieck. That's all I feel inclined for. But I don't care to leave Daisy alone with that man. I'm not scared of anything happening to the girl. She's pretty well able to look after herself. But there might be more trouble for the officer."

"There will be," said Gorman, "if he's come here with any kind of message from the Emperor."

"Daisy," said Donovan, "is liable to speak out at times. And that girl of hers is handy in the use of weapons. I don't want to have to officiate at the funeral of a German naval officer."

"It might very well come to that," said Gorman.

He was thinking at the moment of the Emperor's suggestion that Miss Donovan should be married out of hand to King Konrad Karl. It seemed to him likely that there would be very serious trouble if the German officer made that proposal, especially if he made it with the manner of a man who is conferring a favour.

"You see," he went on, "that Emperor—silly old fool he is—has got it into his head——"

Donovan lay back and closed his eyes.

"My heart isn't up to the strain," he said. "I'd rather leave the affair in your hands."

"All right," said Gorman. "I'll see it through."

"Thank you. It's asking a good deal, I know."

“Not at all,” said Gorman cheerfully. “I shall probably enjoy it.”

CHAPTER XVII

Captain von Moll thought that a certain assertion of dignity was due to his position as a naval officer. He was to dine with two Americans, no doubt vulgar representatives of a nation which did not understand class distinctions and the value of a von before a surname. He had no idea of being friendly. The dinner was an official affair. He was for the moment the representative of the Emperor. He dressed himself with great care in a uniform resplendent with gold braid. He combed and brushed his beard into a state of glossiness. He twisted the ends of his moustache into fine points. He reflected that if the American girl were really enormously wealthy and if, which he doubted, her manners were tolerable, it might be worth while to marry her. He would, no doubt, lose caste to some extent if he did so; but her money would be very useful to him and it would be unnecessary afterwards to see much of the girl herself. He rubbed on his head a strongly scented preparation guaranteed to give a shine to the dullest hair. He went ashore in a boat rowed by six men. A flag drooped from the staff at the stern, just touching the water with its lowest corner.

Gorman received him in the large hall of the palace.

“Mr. Donovan, I presume,” said Captain von Moll. “It gives me pleasure to meet you.”

Gorman explained who he was and said that Donovan was unable to be present at dinner owing to the condition of his heart. Von Moll said that he derived equal pleasure from meeting Mr. Gorman. Then the Queen swept into the hall, followed by Kalliope. She was dressed in a pale-blue gown which glittered with sequins. She wore a diamond star in her hair. She walked slowly and held herself very erect. Kalliope, walking behind her, added to the dignity of her entrance.

Von Moll stepped forward, stood in the middle of the floor, clicked his heels together and bowed low. The Queen, ignoring him for the moment, shook hands warmly with Gorman and welcomed him to Salissa. Then she held out her hand to von Moll. He bent over it and touched it with his lips.

“I have to tender an apology,” he said. “This morning, much to my regret, some of my men stopped your boat. They have been placed under arrest.”

Gorman is of opinion that von Moll was genuinely anxious to make himself agreeable to the Queen. He probably could not help looking her over from head to foot as a man might look over a horse he thought of buying. That was simply his nature. He regarded women as useful and desirable cattle. It would not have occurred to him that any woman would think of herself as his equal.

The Queen flushed a little under his gaze; but she accepted the apology at its face value.

“Oh, it’s all right,” she said. “But I hope you have not punished the men. I wouldn’t like to think of their getting into trouble through me.”

“You are kind,” said von Moll, “but it is necessary to maintain discipline. The men exceeded their orders.”

Then Smith announced that dinner was served. The Queen led the way into the dining-room. She took her place at the head of the table. Gorman and von Moll sat one on each side of her. Von Moll’s eyes wandered over the appointments of the meal, the tall silver candlesticks, the exquisite linen, the fine glass. They rested with particular pleasure on the menu card which stood in front of him. It promised a luxurious dinner. He tucked his napkin under his chin with an air of satisfaction.

Kalliope stood behind the Queen’s chair and waited on her. Smith served the two men. At the vacant end of the table stood the three island girls whom Smith had in training. They were no particular use, but they were pretty girls and they added something to the dignity of the scene. They were elaborately dressed in a glorified form of the bright costume of the island women. Gorman noticed that von Moll eyed them with appreciation.

“I do wish you’d tell me,” said the Queen, “why you didn’t want me to go to the cave this morning.”

“My orders,” said von Moll, “were not meant to apply to you. I merely wished to prevent the islanders from interfering with my men at their work. That is all.”

“It sounds very interesting,” said Gorman, “but I don’t know what happened. Do tell me.”

“It was rather exciting,” said the Queen. “Two of Captain von Moll’s men stopped our boat and Kalliope hit one of them with an oar. Did he lose many teeth?”

Von Moll drew himself up stiffly. He would have been better pleased if the Queen had tendered some apology to him and promised that the over-daring Kalliope should be punished. It is a serious thing to strike a seaman of the Imperial navy, a man wearing the Emperor's uniform. In von Moll's opinion such conduct could not, without grave impropriety, be described as "rather fun." He was not at all sure that the German navy would not suffer in prestige among the islanders.

"The man," he said stiffly, "had three teeth broken."

"Oh," said the Queen, "I'm so sorry, and I'm afraid there's no dentist on the island. Still it was his own fault, wasn't it?"

"I am sure," said von Moll, "that you will punish the girl suitably."

The Queen looked at him with astonishment. She had not the slightest intention of punishing Kalliope. It seemed to her extraordinary that von Moll should suggest such a thing. She was a little inclined to be angry. Then she thought that von Moll must be making a joke. He looked rather grim and solemn; but perhaps that was the way all Germans looked when they made jokes. She laughed in polite appreciation of von Moll's attempt at humour.

Gorman, watching with twinkling eyes, was greatly pleased. Von Moll was evidently another Steinwitz in seriousness and pompous dignity. It was a delightfully amusing trait in the German character.

"I'm still rather in the dark," he said. "Who's Kalliope?"

"My maid," said the Queen. "There she is."

Gorman glanced at Kalliope who was at the moment placing a plate before her mistress. The girl grinned at him in a friendly way. She was quite aware that she was the subject of conversation.

"It strikes me, von Moll," said Gorman, "that your navy hasn't come very well out of its first regular sea battle."

Von Moll's face hardened disagreeably. It was an outrageous thing that an Irishman, a mere civilian, who apparently had no right to wear a uniform of any kind, should poke fun at the Imperial navy. He wished very much to make some reply which would crush Gorman and leave him writhing like a worm. Unfortunately it is very difficult to make that kind of reply to a man who insists

on laughing when serious subjects are under discussion. Gorman, still watching von Moll closely, felt pleased.

“I hope the Press won’t get hold of the story,” he said. “Just imagine the headlines. ‘Grave International Crisis.’ ‘Naval Encounter in the Cyrenian Sea.’ ‘Imperial Gunboat’—they’d be sure to say gunboat, you know—‘attacked by a girl.’ If it had been a man! But a girl! However, I won’t mention the matter. If you fix that fellow up with a set of false teeth I daresay nobody will ever hear about the business.”

Von Moll was angry; but he was no more ready than he had been at first with a suitable answer for Gorman. He was dimly aware that if he gave way to his feelings, if he even allowed his anger to appear, this grey-haired, bantering Irishman would be gratified. He had just sense enough to realize that he must make some pretence at laughing. It was, of course, impossible for him to regard disrespectful remarks about the German navy as a joke, but he succeeded in giving a kind of hoarse cackle.

Smith was conscious of a want of harmony in the party. He became most vigilantly attentive to the two men on whom he waited. Von Moll drank sherry with his soup and two glasses of hock while he ate his fish. Smith poured him out a glass of champagne. For Gorman he opened a bottle of Irish whisky. Then he handed round an entrée, a fine example of his powers as a cook.

The Queen, too, was aware that von Moll’s temper had been ruffled. She turned to him with a smile and made a banal, but quite harmless remark.

“I think Salissa is a perfectly sweet island,” she said, “don’t you?”

Von Moll thought it an exceedingly dull hole and wished to say so plainly. Perhaps it was the sight of the champagne foaming pleasantly in his glass which made him restrain himself.

“No doubt it is pleasant as a holiday resort,” he said. “For a few weeks one might find life agreeable enough; but after that——”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“Oh,” said the Queen, “I’ve been here for more than two months already and I like it better every day.”

“Really?” said von Moll. “What a pity that you are leaving so soon.”

“But I’m not leaving. What makes you think I am?”

“I understand,” said von Moll, “that Mr. Donovan has resold the island to King Konrad Karl.”

“Whatever put that into your head?” said the Queen.

“I am perhaps mistaken,” said von Moll, “in saying that the island has already been resold; but very soon it will be.”

“Oh no, it won’t,” said the Queen. “It’s my island, you know, my very own, and I wouldn’t part with it for anything you could offer me.”

“I understand,” said von Moll, “that it is the Emperor’s wish that the island should revert to the Crown of Megalia.”

He spoke with a certain ponderous assurance. There was evidently no doubt whatever in his mind that the Emperor’s wish settled the matter. The Queen’s next remark must have startled him.

“What on earth has the Emperor got to do with it?” she said. “Who is the Emperor, anyway?”

“Now that,” said Gorman, “is what I’m always asking. Where does the Emperor come in? I asked Steinwitz. I asked King Konrad Karl. I asked that footling ass Bland-Potterton. They don’t any of them seem to be able to do more than just gasp and say ‘The Emperor’ over and over again.”

“The Emperor’s wish——” said von Moll.

“There you go,” said Gorman. “That’s exactly what I’m complaining about. I ask what the Emperor has got to do with it and all the answer I get is ‘The Emperor.’”

“Anyway,” said the Queen decisively, “the Emperor has nothing to do with me and I’m not going to sell Salissa to him or any one else.”

Von Moll was master of himself this time. No doubt it appeared to him that this defiance of the Emperor’s wish was childish, unworthy of the attention of a serious man. The silly girl who sat at the end of the table playing at being a queen would pack up her boxes and leave the island on the day fixed by the Emperor. Meanwhile she looked quite pretty, prettier than he thought she could look, with her heightened colour, sparkling eyes, and slightly parted lips. He

began to think that it might be worth his while to marry her in spite of her bourgeoise blood. He looked at her with cool, appraising eyes. The slight smile on his lips was the only evidence of the contempt he felt for a girl who thought she could resist the Emperor.

After that, conversation at the dinner table became rather difficult. Smith did the best he could with the champagne bottle, but the wine seemed only to increase von Moll's conviction of his own superior wisdom. The Queen drank nothing but water, so her temper preserved its raw edge. It fell to Gorman to keep things going. He told a series of stories about Ireland, all of them good stories, some of them partly true. No one laughed, except Kalliope, who did not understand the stories but liked the twinkle in Gorman's eyes. At the end of each story he asked von Moll how he thought the Emperor would deal with a country like Ireland. Von Moll twisted his moustaches fiercely and told Gorman that if Ireland had been a German dependency she would have ceased to trouble the world early in the eighteenth century. Gorman listened with every appearance of deference and docility, while von Moll explained the Prussian way of dealing with people like the Irish.

The Queen could not cut the dinner short. Smith had provided many courses and it was impossible to skip any of them. But at the earliest possible moment she got up and left the room. Gorman closed the door behind her and then drew his chair close to that on which von Moll was sitting. Smith brought in coffee and liqueurs. Gorman took the brandy bottle off the tray and set it on the table at von Moll's elbow. Smith made an effort to recover the bottle and carry it away. He seemed to think that von Moll had had enough to drink. Gorman was of the same opinion, but he did not allow Smith to carry off the brandy bottle. He thought that von Moll might be very interesting if he took rather more than enough to drink. When Smith, after hovering about for some time, left the room, Gorman refilled von Moll's glass.

"Silly little thing, Miss Donovan," he said, in a confidential tone.

"That is so," said von Moll.

"In Germany," said Gorman, "you put that sort of young person into her place at once, I suppose."

"In Germany," said von Moll, "she would not exist."

He spoke with ponderous gravity. Gorman was pleased to see that he was

becoming more ponderous as he drank glass after glass of brandy.

“That cave incident, for instance,” said Gorman. “I call it cheek her trying to get into the cave when you had sentries posted outside to stop her. By the way, what had you in the cave that you didn’t want her to see? A girl?”

Von Moll leered in a most disgusting manner. Gorman poured him out another glass of brandy.

“You naval men,” he said, “you’re always the same. No girl can resist you. But, I say, you’d really better keep it dark about that man of yours getting his teeth knocked out. If there were any kind of inquiry and it came out about your being in the cave with one of the island girls——”

“There was no girl in the cave,” said von Moll.

“Come now! I won’t give you away. Between ourselves. We are both men of the world.”

“I have said. There was no girl.”

“Oh well,” said Gorman, “I suppose you were writing poetry and didn’t want to be disturbed. What was it? An ode to the Fatherland, ‘Oh, Deutschland, Deutschland!’—that kind of thing.”

Von Moll strongly suspected that Gorman was laughing at him again. It seemed almost incredible that any one would dare to do such a thing, but Gorman was plainly an irresponsible person.

“I was,” said von Moll, “carrying out the orders of the Emperor.”

“The Emperor again,” said Gorman. “But this time it won’t do. It really won’t. You can’t expect me to believe that the Emperor sent you all the way to Salissa to write poetry in a cave.”

“There was no poetry. The Emperor’s orders were not about poetry. They were about——”

Von Moll stopped abruptly and winked at Gorman with drunken solemnity.

“I don’t give your Emperor credit for much intelligence,” said Gorman, “but he must surely have more sense than to give orders of any kind about a cave in an out-of-the-way potty little island like this. Why can’t you tell the truth, von

Moll?”

Von Moll straightened himself in his chair and glared at Gorman. His eyes were wide open, so wide that a rim of white showed all round the pupils. His forehead was deeply wrinkled. His nostrils were distended.

“*Gott in Himmel!*” he said, “you doubt my word.”

Gorman chuckled. Von Moll was decidedly amusing when partially drunk. His glare—he continued to glare in the most ferocious manner—was a most exciting thing to see.

“There is no use looking at me like that,” said Gorman. “I shan’t fight. I never do. I’m not that kind of man. The fact is I don’t like fighting.”

“I believe it,” said von Moll.

He spoke with a sneer, a heavily accentuated sneer. It was more like the sneer of the villain of old-fashioned melodrama than anything Gorman had ever seen.

“If you want a scrap,” said Gorman, “really want it, you know, you ought to knock up Phillips on your way back to your boat. He’s the first officer of the *Ida*. He’ll take you on. He’s six foot one and weighs about fourteen stone. He’ll simply wipe the floor with you; so unless you’re really keen on fighting some one you’d perhaps better leave him alone.”

“I stay here no longer,” said von Moll.

He rose and crossed the room quite steadily, but putting his feet down with extreme care. He reached the door and bowed to Gorman.

Gorman leaned back in his chair and lit a cigar. He had enjoyed the evening. He had also found out something that he wanted to know. The Emperor really did intend to make use of the island of Salissa in some way. He wondered whether the cave which the Queen had been forbidden to enter was the same cave which contained the iron cisterns.

The Queen, sitting at her window, heard von Moll leave the house and go down the steps towards the landing place. Smith was with him, seeing him safely to the boat which waited for him.

“So,” said von Moll, “I telegraph to Berlin and I forward your letters.”

He spoke in German, but he spoke very deliberately, pronouncing each word carefully. The Queen had no difficulty in understanding what he said. Smith replied in a much lower tone. She could not hear him.

"*Ach*," said von Moll, "the old man is a fool, good. And the girl—do you know, Fritz, I think I shall marry the girl!"

The Queen shut her window. She had no wish to hear more of von Moll's plans. She was insulted and very angry. It was not until she thought the matter over coolly next day that it occurred to her as strange that von Moll should have addressed Smith as Fritz. The man's Christian name was Edward.

CHAPTER XVIII

I am uncomfortably aware that this history of recent events in Salissa is sadly deficient in the matter of dates. I am not to blame. If I could I should date each chapter accurately. Unfortunately, not one of the people chiefly concerned kept a diary. They all remember events very well and are most willing to describe them for me, but they cannot remember exactly when things happened. I am therefore particularly pleased to be able at this point to give two definite dates. The *Ida* arrived at Salissa with Gorman on board on July 8. She left again on July 11. I dragged this information out of Captain Wilson. He no longer has access to the *Ida's* log-books. They passed into Steinwitz' hands and disappeared when his office was closed at the outbreak of war. But Captain Wilson kept a private notebook. He referred to it, with considerable reluctance, when I pressed him.

Taking these two dates as fixed, we are able to say for certain that von Moll reached the island during the night of July 7 and 8, ten days after the Serajevo assassinations. He was occupied with his business in the cave all day of July 8. He left Salissa early on July 9. He might easily have made any one of three or four ports on the mainland before evening that day. A telegram sent to Berlin might have been in the hands of some responsible person that night. Smith's letters would follow at once by a special messenger. We may take it that the Emperor's secret service agents, perhaps the Emperor himself, knew on July 10 that the island would not be resold to King Konrad Karl.

The sailing of the *Ida* so soon as three days after her arrival puzzled me at first. Captain Wilson would say nothing except that he obeyed orders. As a matter of fact he seems to have worried everybody until he got the order he wanted. The *Ida* carried very little cargo to the island on her second voyage and was unloaded in a few hours. Captain Wilson received from the Queen the lists she had prepared of tools, engines and material for carrying out her schemes of improvement. He was given a few letters by Donovan and by Smith. Then there was no reason why he should not start.

Nor was there any reason why Gorman should not have gone with him. It was, indeed, plainly Gorman's duty to get back to England as quickly as possible. His mission had completely failed. The Queen would not sell the island. She would certainly not marry Konrad Karl. Ireland was at the moment passing through a

crisis, and Gorman, as one of her statesmen, ought to have been at hand with advice. But Gorman—he owes a good deal of his attractiveness to this—never allows himself to be hampered by words like “ought” and “duty.”

An Irish crisis is an interesting thing; but it is by no means uncommon, and the details are always more or less the same. The affairs of Salissa had certain novel features which were exceedingly attractive and Gorman had never before had an opportunity of mixing himself up in foreign politics. English statesmen, especially Liberals, who regard Ireland with serious intensity of feeling, offer great opportunities to men of Gorman’s temperament. But he thought that still more amusement might be obtained by playing politics with people like Steinwitz, von Moll, and the immensely pompous Emperor.

Donovan was anxious that Gorman should stay on the island. He listened, reluctantly, to all the Queen had to tell him. He heard about the cisterns in the cave. He was told of von Moll’s mysterious activities, of Smith’s suspicious conduct, of the Emperor’s fixed determination to get the island back for Konrad Karl. He professed to regard the whole business as a bore.

“Buried treasure, pirate hoards and other mysteries,” he said, “have no kind of attraction for me. I feel sort of discouraged when they bubble up round me. You’re young, Daisy, and naturally inclined to romantic joys. Just you butt in and worry round according to your own fancy. There’s only one thing I’d rather you didn’t do. Don’t get interfering in any serious way with Smith. Smith’s a valuable man.”

Later on he spoke to Gorman.

“As a public man,” he said, “your time has got value. You’re wanted, Gorman, and that’s a fact. The cause of Ireland is a sacred trust and I’m not speaking against it; but if a subscription to the party funds would set you free for a month ——Now can another patriot be hired at a reasonable salary to take your place? If he can, you name the figure and I’ll write the cheque. The fact is, it’ll be a mighty convenient thing to me if you’ll take hold of things here. Daisy’s dead set on unearthing mysteries. I don’t say there aren’t any mysteries. There may be. But it doesn’t suit me to be wrapped up in them. Then I understand that one of your European monarchs is fidgeting round, wanting to take this island off my hands. Daisy says he’s an Emperor. Now I won’t have emperors worrying me. I’ve never gone in for emperors to any extent, and I’m not inclined to begin now. I’m a plain American citizen with democratic principles and a disordered heart.

I'd be obliged to you, Gorman, if you'd stay here and kind of elbow off that Emperor when he intrudes. There's only one point about which I'd like you to be careful. I mentioned it to Daisy. She tells me that Smith answers to the name of Fritz and she regards that as a suspicious circumstance. Now, it doesn't matter a cent to me whether Smith calls himself Fritz or Leonardo da Vinci or Ivanovitch Ivanokoff. So long as he isn't signing cheques one name is as good as another. And if Smith writes letters to the Emperor—that's what Daisy says—I don't see that it hurts me any. Every man has his own little pleasures, and in a free country he oughtn't to be hindered in the pursuit. I've known men who collected stamps. It seemed foolish to me, but it didn't interfere with me. Same thing with Smith. I don't happen to care about writing letters to emperors, but Smith does. See?"

Gorman did not want to worry or annoy Smith in any way. He recognized the man's value. His mind was more actively curious than Donovan's. He wanted to know what was going on, what von Moll had been doing, what the Emperor aimed at, what Smith's real business was, but he also appreciated, no less than Donovan, good food, comfort and smooth service. He liked to be sure that his wants would be supplied, his wishes anticipated, his habits intelligently studied. Without Smith life on Salissa would be robbed of a great deal which made it attractive.

When Gorman made up his mind to stay on Salissa he wrote three letters. One of them was to King Konrad Karl and was addressed to an hotel in Paris. He said briefly that the Donovans would not sell the island and that it was not the least use trying to arrange a marriage with the Queen. He advised the King to enjoy himself as much as he could in Paris and to spend his money before it was taken from him. He added a postscript.

"If the Emperor sends a man called von Moll to negotiate with you—a sort of naval officer who likes giving orders—ask him whether he had many casualties in his last sea battle."

His next letter was to Steinwitz. In it, too, he announced the complete failure of his mission.

"The fact is," he added, by way of explanation, "that these Americans don't know enough about your Emperor to be properly impressed. Could you send along a good-sized photo of him, in uniform if possible? I am sure it would have a great effect."

Then he wrote to Sir Bartholomew Bland-Potterton. Knowing how all members

of our governing classes delight in official fussiness he threw his letter into a telegraphic form.

> "Things more complicated than anticipated," he wrote. "Will Government recognize Salissa as independent state? Query attitude President U. S. A. Urgent.—GORMAN."

He read over what he had written with extreme satisfaction. It pleased him to think that Steinwitz would immediately go out and buy an enormous photograph of the Emperor; that he would send it out to Salissa with perfect confidence in the effect it would produce. It was also pleasant to think of Konrad Karl and Madame Ypsilante making efforts to get rid of the remains of Donovan's money by scattering it about the streets of Paris. But his despatch to Bland-Potterton pleased him most of all. He imagined that gentleman, swollen with the consciousness of important news, dashing off to the Foreign Office in a taxi-cab, posing Ministers of State with unanswerable conundrums, very probably ruffling the calm waters of Washington with cablegrams of inordinate length and fierce urgency.

He rang the bell for Smith.

"I've just written some letters," he said; "will you send them off to the *Ida* and ask Captain Wilson to have them posted when he arrives in London or earlier if he calls at any intermediate port."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. Beg pardon, sir, but will you be staying on in the palace?"

"For a week or two, Smith."

"Thank you, sir. I'll make all arrangements. Your luggage will be fetched from the steamer. If you leave your keys with me I'll see to the unpacking."

Gorman had no keys.

"By the way, Smith, what's your Christian name?"

"Edward, sir."

"I asked," said Gorman, "because I'd a sort of idea that Captain von Moll called you Fritz last night."

"Very likely, sir. I didn't notice. It struck me, sir—I don't know whether you

noticed it—that the German gentleman wasn't quite himself after dinner. He might have called me Fritz, mistaking me for some one else. I understand, sir, that Fritz is a common name in Germany."

"Very likely," said Gorman.

Smith left the room. In ten minutes he was back again.

"Luncheon is served, sir. In the small verandah at the south end of the palace. Shall I show you the way?"

He guided Gorman to the small verandah, a pleasant, shady place, opening off the room in which they had dined the night before.

"Is the Queen coming?" asked Gorman.

"I've sent a maid to inform her Majesty the luncheon is served, sir."

Smith stood ready for his duties at the end of the table. Gorman noticed that three places had been laid.

"Mr. Donovan coming?" he asked.

"No, sir. Mr. Donovan scarcely feels well enough. I'm expecting Mr. Phillips, sir. He's with her Majesty."

"Ah," said Gorman. "They may be late."

They were late. A quarter of an hour late. Gorman guessed the reason at once. No formal announcement was made, but he felt certain that in the course of the morning they had arrived at a satisfactory understanding and were engaged to be married. Gorman felt satisfied that the Emperor's plan for the Queen's future was not quite hopeless.

Luncheon was a difficult meal for him. He did his best to keep up a conversation, but neither the Queen nor Phillips seemed capable of understanding what he said. If they answered him at all they said things which were totally irrelevant. For the most part they did not answer. They gazed at each other a good deal and Gorman detected Phillips trying to hold the Queen's hand under the table. Philips dropped his fork three times. The Queen looked very pretty, much prettier than she had the night before when she was angry with von Moll.

Gorman, in spite of his cynicism, is a kind-hearted man. It gave him a great deal of pleasure to see a girl and a boy in a condition of almost delirious happiness. But he felt that they ought not to be entirely selfish. They intended, apparently, to go off after luncheon, to a distant part of the island, accompanied by Kalliope, whom they could not well shake off. Gorman did not want to be left alone all the afternoon.

“What about going to that cave?” he said. “I’d rather like to find out what von Moll was doing there yesterday.”

The Queen and Phillips looked at each other. They had done little less except look at each other since they came in to luncheon. But this time they looked with a new expression. Instead of fatuous felicity, their faces suggested disappointment.

“I think we ought to do it,” Gorman went on. “That fellow may have been up to any kind of mischief. By the way, is his cave the one the cisterns are in?”

“Yes,” said the Queen.

“That seems to me to settle it,” said Gorman. “We certainly ought to take the matter up vigorously and at once.”

“I suppose so,” said Phillips.

Gorman was really anxious to find out what had been going on in the cave. The fact that von Moll had been acting under the Emperor’s orders stimulated curiosity. It had been puzzling enough to discover, in England, that the Emperor was very anxious to remove the Donovans from the island, and was prepared to adopt all sorts of tortuous ways to get rid of them. It was much more puzzling to find a German naval officer engaged in storing large quantities of rubber tubing in a cave. Gorman confesses that he was utterly unable to make any sort of guess at the meaning of the affair. He was all the more anxious to begin his investigation.

The Queen and Phillips cheered up a little when the party started for the cave. Kalliope rowed, as usual. Gorman—all successful politicians are men of tact—settled himself in the bow of the boat. The Queen and Phillips were together in the stern and held each other’s hands. Gorman pretended to look at the scenery. Kalliope made no pretence at all. She watched the lovers with a sympathetic smile. She was in no way embarrassed by them.

No one—I judge by Gorman's description—was ever more helplessly in love than Phillips. But even he was roused to other feelings when the boat grounded on the stony beach in the cave. He slipped his hand from the Queen's and sprang ashore. Even from the boat, before crossing the steep stretch of stones, there were some interesting things to be seen. Von Moll had left his rubber tubing in three great coils in front of the cisterns. Gorman and the Queen followed Phillips. The three stood together and stared at the hose. Phillips estimated that there must have been three or four hundred yards of it. The ends of each coil were fitted with brass caps intended to screw together. Any one of them might have been screwed to the cocks of the cisterns.

There were also many large packing-cases, stacked at the end of the row of cisterns. These were strong, well-made cases and carefully nailed up. The only tool possessed by the party was Phillips' clasp knife, a serviceable instrument for many purposes, but no use for opening well-secured packing-cases. Gorman fetched one of the iron rowlocks from the boat, but nothing could be done with it. The cases were very heavy. Gorman and Phillips together could not lift one. It seemed likely that they contained metal of some sort.

The cisterns stood exactly where the Queen and Phillips had seen them before. But now they were full instead of being empty. Phillips and then Gorman tapped them one after another. They were all full, up to the very tops. Phillips wasted no time in speculating about what they contained. The rubber hose was unintelligible. The packing-cases could not be opened. It was at all events possible to find out what the cisterns contained. Phillips turned on one of the taps. A thin, strongly smelling liquid streamed out.

"I know that smell," said the Queen. "It's—it's——"

It is extraordinarily difficult to recognize a smell in such a way as to say definitely what it belongs to. Phillips and Gorman sniffed. Like the Queen they knew the smell but could not name it. It was Gorman who fixed it first.

"Petrol," he said.

"Of course," said the Queen. "I knew I recognized it."

"That's it," said Phillips. "I was thinking of Elliman's Embrocation; but it's petrol, of course."

"There must be gallons of it here," said Gorman. "Thousands of gallons."

Phillips, stretching his arms wide, began to make rough measurements of the cisterns.

“Now why on earth,” said Gorman, “should the Emperor want to store up huge quantities of petrol in this cave?”

It seems odd now that any one could possibly have failed to guess what the petrol was for and why it was there. But early in 1914 very few people were thinking about a war with Germany. Gorman, as a politician, must have heard some talk of such a possibility; but no doubt he regarded all he heard as part of the game that politicians play. Gorman is a man with the instincts of a sportsman. He thought, without any bitterness, of the war threat as a move, not a very astute move, on the part of an imperialist party anxious for office. It was comparable to those which his own party played. The Queen and Phillips had never thought about European politics at all.

And nobody, at that time, had guessed at the part which submarines were to play in war. Civilians, even well-informed men like Gorman, regarded submarines as toys, chiefly dangerous to the crews who manned them. Phillips probably knew how they were propelled. Gorman did not. He had never given a thought to the subject. Like most of the rest of us he associated petrol only with motor-cars or possibly with flying machines. It did not connect itself in his mind with submarines.

“That Emperor!” said Gorman. “I’m hanged if I understand.”

“The Emperor?” said the Queen. “Why should the Emperor be mixed up with it?”

“Why should the Emperor be mixed up with the island?” said Gorman. “Why should the Emperor be mixed up with you? Why should the Emperor be mixed up with anything? I don’t know. I can’t guess. But it was the Emperor who sent the stuff here.”

Phillips was a young man of practical mind, very little given to inquiring into causes and reasons. But he had a thoroughly British respect for the rights of property and the privileges of ownership.

“Anyhow,” he said, “he’s no earthly right to dump his stuff here without asking leave. Salissa isn’t his island.”

From the tap which he had already turned on the petrol was flowing freely. It

trickled down among the stones, and some of it had already reached the sea. It was spreading, a smooth, thin film across the water of the cave.

“I vote we run it all off,” he said.

He looked at the Queen and then at Gorman.

“If a man puts his cow on my lawn,” said Gorman, “I suppose I’ve a right to turn it out again.”

That was approval enough for Phillips. He walked deliberately along the line of cisterns, turning on the taps as he went.

“Hold on a minute,” said Gorman. “We don’t want the stuff flowing over the Queen’s shoes. She must get into the boat.”

A few minutes later the water of the cave was entirely covered with petrol. The air was acrid with the smell of it. The Queen held her handkerchief to her nose.

“Let’s get out of this as quick as we can,” she said.

CHAPTER XIX

The next fortnight was something of a disappointment to Gorman. He admits that. He had made his choice between Ireland and Salissa. It certainly seemed as if he had chosen wrongly. I remember—everybody remembers—how exciting Irish affairs were during the latter half of July, 1914. The country was like a pot, full of water on the verge of boiling. Every day an event of some sort formed like a bubble far down in the depths of Irish life, rose rapidly, and burst on the surface with a little splash. The bubbles were large or small, sometimes no more than pinheads in size, but they were evidences that the boiling point was very near. The surface of the water, that region where governing persons and leaders of public opinion air themselves, was already agitated with odd-looking swirls, sudden swayings, unaccountable swellings, all very ominous of imminent turmoil.

There were landings of arms here and there, furiously denounced by the people who had run their own cargoes the week before or intended to run them the next week. There were hurried gatherings of committees which sat in private conclaves and then issued manifestos which nobody read. Minor officials were goaded into orgies of fussiness. Major officials, statesmen, escaped when they could, to the comparative calm of suffragette-haunted public meetings in England. A Buckingham Palace Conference set all sorts of people arguing about constitutional precedents. It was recognized on all sides that a settlement of the Irish question must somehow be reached. Gorman, if he had stayed at home, would have been in the thick of it all. It is perhaps wrong to say that he would have enjoyed himself thoroughly; but life would have been an interesting and exciting thing. Salissa remained provokingly dull and uneventful.

Gorman went to the cave again, on the day after he had first seen the tanks and run von Moll’s petrol to waste. He went by himself. The Queen and Phillips took no further interest in the mystery for the moment. They went off together early in the day and did not return until evening. Even Gorman could not blame them. It was their last day together. It was gloriously fine. The island, with its white cliffs, its golden-sanded coves, its vineyards, its pleasant, shaded groves, was a paradise for lovers. And the *Ida*—Captain Wilson insisted on that—sailed the next day, carrying Phillips away with her.

Gorman achieved very little by his second visit to the cave. He took with him several tools, a short axe, a screw-driver and a hammer. He forced open some of the packing-cases which were piled near the cistern. They were filled with steel bars of various sizes, steel wrought into various shapes and odd-looking coils of copper wire. Gorman knew little of engineering or mechanics. He was merely puzzled by what he saw. It seemed to him that von Moll had used the cave as a storehouse for uncompleted machines of a complicated kind. What the machines were he did not know. Why von Moll, acting no doubt by the Emperor's orders, should have dumped them there was beyond guessing.

Though Gorman was disappointed he found life on Salissa pleasant enough. He was exceedingly comfortable, thanks to Smith's devotion to duty. He had many long talks with Donovan, which he enjoyed, for Donovan was always amusing and stimulating. He saw a great deal of the Queen, helped her to make plans for the future of the island, listened when she talked about Phillips. There was a mixture of shyness with frank simplicity in the way she spoke about her lover which Gorman found very attractive. Sometimes he went out with Kalliope's lover in the largest island boat and watched the casting of nets. Once or twice he tried to get into intimate conversation with Smith, hoping that the man, caught off his guard, might drop a hint that would give some clue to the meaning of the cisterns, the petrol, the machinery and the Emperor's curious interest in the island. But Smith took shelter behind the manner of a good servant, the most impenetrable of all defences. Gorman never got anything out of him except a deferential "Yes, sir," or, in reply to some leading question, "Don't know, sir, I'm sure." Or perhaps, "Indeed, sir!" in a tone of respectful surprise.

Gorman was at that time inclined to think that he had made a mistake in not going home on the *Ida*. Apart from the exciting movements of Irish affairs about which he could only speculate, he felt sure that it was in London, not on the island, that the most important developments of the Salissa mystery would take place. He wanted to know what Steinwitz was doing, and whether Konrad Karl was still enjoying his spendthrift holiday in Paris. He would have liked to be in a position to watch the fussy activities of Sir Bartholomew Bland-Potterton. Later on I was able to tell him something, not of Steinwitz or Konrad Karl, but about Sir Bartholomew. It was impossible to live in London during the latter part of July without perpetually bumping against Bland-Potterton. He was like the ball on a rapidly spun roulette board. He seemed to be flung about from place to place with extreme rapidity in an utterly irregular manner. It was impossible to guess where he would be or in what direction he would move. I came across him

one day in Cockspur Street. He was signalling wildly for a taxi-cab. He grasped my arm with his left hand and shook it with frenzied vehemence.

“Just off to the Foreign Office,” he said. “Can’t wait to talk now. Haven’t a minute. See you later.”

There was no reason why he should have stopped to talk to me even if he had not been going to the Foreign Office. I should certainly not have tried to detain him. Bland-Potterton bores me. I did indeed see him later, though I certainly did not want to. It was at a reception, a gorgeous but uncomfortable affair in Ellesmere House. Bland-Potterton was in a corner with a highly decorated foreigner who looked like a stage brigand. I found out afterwards that he was the Megalian ambassador. Bland-Potterton was talking to him with intense earnestness.

Another day he dashed at me in the smoking-room of the club. I was half asleep at the moment and desired nothing in the world so much as to be let alone. But Bland-Potterton woke me by whispering in my ear. He might just as well have spoken in the ordinary way. There was only one other man in the room and he was quite asleep. Besides, Bland-Potterton’s whisper carries further than most men’s conversational voices.

“Have you,” he hissed, “any news from Gorman? A letter? A message? Anything?”

“No,” I said, “I haven’t. Why the deuce should I? Is he gun-running, or threatening to vote against the Government, or likely to be arrested?”

“No, no, no. Nothing of that sort. Nothing to do with Ireland. It’s this unfortunate business with the Emperor. But I mustn’t say any more. The Embassies are nervous, you know.”

“I don’t know,” I said. “Which Embassies?”

“The—the—the—well, practically all except the Chinese.”

“Wonderful people the Chinese,” I said. “So calm. We ought to imitate them more than we do.”

Bland-Potterton did not think so. He went on fussing. He rushed about London, creating small whirlpools behind him as if he had been a motor-boat. I had the greatest difficulty at times in not being sucked into his wake.

All this Gorman would have enjoyed hugely. I felt sorry that he was missing it. However, in the end he had his compensation.

One day during the last week in July—Gorman is no more to be relied on for an exact date than Donovan or the Queen—a steamer arrived in Salissa. She was a remarkable looking steamer and flew a flag which neither Gorman nor Donovan had ever seen before. She had two small guns, mounted one on the fore-deck and one right aft. She had a smart, well-cared-for look, as if she were a yacht, or belonged to some navy. But she was very old. Gorman says that she reminded him of the pictures of the royal yacht in which Queen Victoria came to Ireland to open Kingstown harbour at the very beginning of her reign. She was a paddle steamer. She had an exaggerated form of fiddle bow, a long bowsprit and two tall masts on which sails might easily have been set.

Gorman is nothing of a sailor and is almost totally uninterested in ships. This steamer must have been very old-fashioned indeed to have struck him as being odd. She arrived in the harbour at midday and splashed about a good deal with her paddles as if she were rather pleased with herself and thought she had a right to the admiration of the islanders. There was only one modern thing about her. The splayed-out wires of a Marconi installation stretched between her masts.

Gorman was sitting with Donovan when the steamer arrived. They had spent a pleasant hour discussing, in a desultory manner, whether a nation gains or loses by having a titled aristocracy. Donovan preferred the British to the American system. Statesmen, he pointed out, must make some return to the rich for the money which they provide to keep politics going. It is on the whole better to give titles than to alter tariffs in return for subscriptions to party funds. The subject was not a very interesting one and both men were pleased when the arrival of the steamer gave them a new topic.

“Seems to me,” said Donovan, “that Daisy might gather in some revenue by charging harbour dues. This is the second ship, not reckoning the *Ida*, which has put in here since I arrived.”

“I don’t know that flag,” said Gorman. “Not that that means anything. I don’t suppose there are half a dozen flags that I do know.”

“There was some mention made of an Emperor,” said Donovan. “Daisy seemed to think that one might come nosing round, thinking to buy the island. Perhaps that’s him.”

“Hardly in that steamer,” said Gorman. “She looks as if she’d been built a hundred years ago. One of the first ever launched, I should think.”

“Well,” said Donovan, “I’m not an expert in the habits of European Emperors; but I’ve always been told that the state coach in which the King of England goes to open Parliament dates back quite a bit in the matter of shape. An Emperor might feel that he owed it to his historic past to sail the ocean in the nearest thing he could get to the ark of the patriarch Noah.”

The argument was sound; but Gorman was not inclined to think that the Emperor was paying a visit to Salissa in person. He was just going to say so when Smith came on to the balcony. He carried a pair of field glasses in his hand, which he laid on the table beside Donovan’s chair.

“Beg pardon, sir,” he said. “I brought up the glasses thinking you might want to look at the strange steamer.”

“Do you know the flag, Smith?” asked Gorman.

“No, sir, can’t say I do. But she looks like a foreigner. Not English. Shall you want anything more, sir?”

Gorman did not at the moment want anything which Smith would supply. He wanted information, but it was useless to ask for that. Smith, who seemed uninterested in the steamer, left the balcony.

Donovan gazed at the steamer through the glasses.

“Well,” he said, “if it’s not an Emperor, it’s the next thing. That’s our little friend Konrad Karl standing on the deck.”

He handed the glasses to Gorman.

King Konrad Karl stood beside the gun on the after-deck of the steamer. He looked neat and cool. He was dressed with care in well-fitting light grey clothes, a soft grey hat and white shoes. The glasses were powerful. Gorman could even see that he wore a pale mauve tie.

“I’m pleased to see that monarch,” said Donovan. “He seemed to me less starched than most members of your aristocracies when I met him in London. Where’s Daisy? She’ll be sorry if she misses the opportunity of welcoming a fellow monarch to her shores.”

“I’m afraid,” said Gorman, “that she’s off at the far side of the island. She told me this morning that she was going over there to plan out an electric power station. There’s a waterfall somewhere. I haven’t seen it myself. The Queen’s idea is to make use of it to light the island.”

Donovan took up the glasses when Gorman laid them down. He watched the steamer.

“The King is wasting no time,” he said. “He’s coming ashore right now. They’re lowering a boat. I wonder what brings him here.”

“He’s probably come to persuade you to give the island back to him, re-sell it.”

“That deal,” said Donovan, “is closed. I’ll be obliged to you, Gorman, if you’ll make that plain to him.”

“I expect the Emperor has sent him.”

“I’d expect some pretty lively bidding,” said Donovan, “with the Emperor and a king in the ring, if the island was up for auction. But it’s not. I’m not going back on my bargain. I’m very well satisfied with Salissa as a place of residence. I feel I might live a long time on Salissa. Come to think of it, there’s no reason why any one should ever die here. It’s worry and annoyance preying on the human heart, which kill men.”

A boat put off from the steamer’s side as Donovan spoke. It rowed towards the palace steps. King Konrad Karl sat in the stern.

“Gorman,” said Donovan, “it will prolong my days if you go down and meet that king. Make it plain to him that it’s no kind of use his trying to talk me round, because I’m not going to listen to him. He’s welcome to stay in the palace as long as he likes. But he’s not to worry me. If he seems any way determined on talking business, you quote the certificate of that doc.”

CHAPTER XX

King Konrad Karl took Gorman's hand and wrung it heartily.

"My friend Gorman," he said. "How are you? But I need not ask. I see. You are top-tipping."

"Thanks," said Gorman. "Salissa agrees with me. And Paris does not seem to have done you any harm."

"Paris! Ah, in Paris one lives, and I am in the pink. But, alas and damn, I leave Paris. I take trains. I travel fast. I embark." He waved his hand towards the steamer. "Finally, I arrive."

"How did you come to embark in that curious-looking ship? I never saw a steamer like her before."

"That," said the King, "is the navy of Megalia. I come as a King, in a state."

"I rather wonder that you trusted yourself to that navy," said Gorman. "After what you told me about the fate of the late king. It was that same steamer, I suppose, which brought the Prime Minister and the rest of them out here to cut your predecessor's throat."

"Otto? Yes. It was the navy. You are right. They killed poor Otto. No doubt they would jump up to the chance to kill me too. But just now they cannot, and I am safe as a bank in England. The Emperor——"

"Ah," said Gorman, "I thought we'd get to the Emperor soon."

"The Emperor said, 'Carry the King to Salissa in the navy of Megalia.' That is all, but that is enough. No, my friend, they will not kill me now. Afterwards perhaps. But afterwards I shall not be here. I shall return to Paris."

"I wonder you ever left Paris," said Gorman, "but I suppose that was the Emperor too."

"You are right. You hit it the first time you shoot. The Emperor sends to me Steinwitz—a cursed pig—a cur dog with mange on him—an outsider from the ranks, that is, I think you say a rank outsider—a bounder, my friend Gorman—a

sweeper of chimneys—a swine——”

“I’m sure he’s all that. I don’t care for the man myself, but tell me what he said to you.”

“Steinwitz came into my hotel. He said, ‘The American will not sell Salissa. It is necessary that you marry the girl.’ I said ‘Good. Where is she? To-morrow I will do it.’ But he said, ‘The girl is not here. It is for you to go to Salissa at once. She is there.’ Conceive it, my friend. I did not want to leave Paris. We were happy there, Corinne and I. But at once, in a jiffy, I am off to this place and without Corinne. It is a hard line, for me the hardest line.”

“But why the deuce did you do it? Oh, I needn’t ask that. The Emperor, of course. Well, I don’t know whether you’ll be pleased to hear it or not, but you can’t marry the girl.”

“But—you do not quite understand. For me there is no choice. It is: Damn it, I must. The Emperor——”

“Even the Emperor can’t make the same girl marry two men. I happen to know that Miss Donovan is engaged to a young fellow called Phillips, and fifty Emperors yelling at her at once wouldn’t make her give him up.”

The King seized Gorman’s hand and shook it heartily. His face expressed great delight.

“Where,” he said, “is the young fellow called Phillips? I wish to see him at once, to embrace him. I shall bestow on him the Order of the Pink Vulture of Megalia, First Class. I shall make him a Count. Do you think, my friend, that he would wish to be a Count? His action is most noble. He is a good sporter. I will now go back to Paris. The Emperor can say no more to me. The young fellow Phillips has married the girl.”

“Not quite married her,” said Gorman, “but it’s nearly the same thing.”

The King waved his hand airily.

“It is quite the same thing. No man of honour—the young fellow Phillips is above all a man of honour—would go backwards from his word. Besides there is your English court of broken promises of marriage. He would not face that. I write at once to the Emperor. I tell him that I regret, that I am desolate, but I can do no more. The young fellow Phillips has cut me up—no, has cut out—that is,

he has cut me in. Then I return to Paris. To-day I shall start. The navy of Megalia will get up steam and——”

The King stopped abruptly. The smile died on his face. He had all the appearance of extreme dejection.

“My friend,” he said, “it will not work. I forgot one thing. I am up in a tree. What am I to do?”

“What’s the matter?” said Gorman. “You were just saying you’d go back to Paris. That strikes me as an excellent plan. What’s the matter with it?”

“I had forgotten one thing,” said the King. “If I cannot marry the girl, I am no longer any use. The Emperor will not care a damn what happens to me. The Admiral of Megalia is there, Gorman, on the navy. The Emperor’s command no longer protects. The admiral will say, ‘Hell and Hurrah! Now is my chance.’”

“Do you mean to say you think the admiral will assassinate you?”

“It is as certain as two and two and four. If I return to my navy I follow poor Otto at once. The admiral will know that if I cannot marry the girl the Emperor will not care about me. Perhaps it is better after all that I marry her.”

“I’ve told you already that you can’t.”

“Pooh! You are thinking of the young fellow Phillips. A word to the admiral and Phillips will no longer blockade the way.”

“Look here,” said Gorman, “there’s no use talking that kind of nonsense. Your admiral appears to be a man with a taste for murder, but he can’t be allowed to run amok in that way. And Miss Donovan would not marry you even if Phillips was out of the way. Get that into your head once for all.”

“Great Scott and damn!” said the King. “Do you think I want to marry her. No, my friend, there is nothing I desire less except to follow poor Otto. I do not want to marry the girl. To be married to her would make me bored, but it would make me much more bored to die.”

“The thing for you to do,” said Gorman, “is to stay where you are. Don’t go on board your navy. Donovan has asked you to stay at the palace. You’ll be safe here. We won’t even ask the admiral to dinner if you’d rather we didn’t.”

“It will be dull, dull as the water of a ditch,” said the King mournfully.

“You needn’t stay here for ever,” said Gorman. “There’ll be an English ship back in a short time and you can go home in her. Madame will be waiting for you all right.”

“Poor Corinne!” said the King. “I left her in Paris. Steinwitz said so, and he spoke for the Emperor. ‘You go to marry,’ he said, ‘therefore Madame must stay.’”

“From his point of view he was right there,” said Gorman, “and it’s just as well that Madame did not come with you. Donovan is a broad-minded man; but you couldn’t expect him to put up you and Madame in the palace. It would be trying him rather high.”

“Ah,” said the King. “Poor Corinne! She will be desolate.”

“Well,” said Gorman, “you’d better come along now and see Donovan. He ought to be down here to receive you, of course. But these Americans—I’m sure you’ll understand—they’re not accustomed to kings.”

“Say no more,” said the King, “not a word. I go to pay my respects. I bow. I abase myself. I am a king. It is true. But I have no money, only a little, a very little left. He is not a king, but he has money. Gorman, I am not a Bourbon. I am able to learn and forget. He who can write a cheque is a greater man than he who can confer the Order of the Pink Vulture of Megalia. I have learned that. Also I can forget, forget that I am a king.”

We must do Konrad Karl justice. No king was ever more willing to forget his rank than he was. The real trouble with him was that he seldom remembered it.

“Come along then,” said Gorman, “but don’t get talking business to Donovan.”

“Business! Why do you so often misunderstand me, you who ought to know me well? First you think that I desire to marry that girl—as if it were possible that I should. Then you fear that I will talk business. Am I one that talks business ever, to any one, if I can help it?”

“I mean,” said Gorman, “don’t say anything about buying the island or marrying the girl. Donovan’s heart is dicky, or he thinks it is, which comes to the same thing—and any sort of worry upsets him.”

“I see it,” said the King. “I understand. Trust me. Mumm will be the word. Mumm extra sec. Mumm at 190 shillings a dozen. You can trust me.”

King Konrad Karl made himself most agreeable to Donovan. He did not once mention the sale of the island or hint at a marriage with the Queen. He talked about the scenery. He discussed the character, manners and customs of the inhabitants. He inquired whether Donovan were satisfied with the palace, admitted frankly that the accommodation was not all that could be desired. In just such a way an English gentleman might converse with a satisfactory tenant to whom he had let his country house for the hunting season. Donovan repeated the invitation which Gorman had given in his name, and pressed the King to treat the palace as his own during his stay in Salissa. The King accepted the invitation with profuse thanks. Donovan rang a bell which lay on the table beside him.

“I’ll tell Smith,” he said, “to get your luggage ashore right now and fix up a room for you.”

I have always admired Smith. He is not only competent in practical affairs. He has nerve and coolness of a very high order. He found himself in a difficult position when Donovan’s bell sounded. He knew that the King had landed, knew that he was with Donovan and Gorman on the balcony. In Smith’s position I think I should have sent some one else to take Donovan’s orders, one of the island girls, or one of the boys who were by that time presentable footmen. I should, I feel sure, have concealed myself, feigned sickness, made any excuse, rather than face the King in the presence of Donovan and Gorman. But Smith is greatly my superior. He appeared at once in answer to the summons of the bell. He stood half-way between Donovan’s chair and the door which opened on the balcony. He did not even glance at the King. But the King recognized him at once.

“Ah,” he said. “It is, yes. Hell’s delight! It is the excellent Fritz. It is so long since I have seen you, Fritz, I began to think you were dead.”

“No, your Majesty, not yet,” said Smith. “I hope your Majesty is quite well, and Mr. Steinwitz, if you’ll excuse my asking. I hope Mr. Steinwitz is quite well.”

“That swine,” said the King, “is, as always, swallowing in the mire.”

“You’ll excuse my asking, your Majesty,” said Smith, “but I like to hear about Mr. Steinwitz. It was Mr. Steinwitz who got me my present situation—a very good situation, your Majesty.”

“Smith,” said Donovan, “get the King’s luggage ashore. He’s going to stay here

for a bit. You must make him as comfortable as you can."

"Yes, sir," said Smith. "I'll see to that, sir, at once. Anything else, sir?"

"Not now," said Donovan.

"Thank you, sir," said Smith.

Then he left the balcony. Many men, perhaps most men, would not have gone far away, would have lingered near one of the open windows which gave on the balcony, nervously anxious to hear what was said about them. Smith was not in the least nervous. He went straight to the landing steps and was to be seen a few moments later rowing out to the steamer. He probably guessed pretty accurately what questions Donovan and Gorman would ask. He must have known what King Konrad Karl would tell them. He would discover in due time what they decided to do. There was no real need for eavesdropping. Yet I think most men would have tried to listen.

"Seems to me," said Donovan to the King, "that you're acquainted with Smith. I'm not asking questions. It's no affair of mine, anyway. Don't say a word unless you like. I'm not curious."

"I am," said Gorman, "infernally curious. Who is Smith?"

"For five years," said the King, "perhaps for more—who knows—he has walked on my shadow. He has been a beagle hound, nose down, on my smell, pursuing it. Never until last April has he run off the tracks."

"Blackmail?" said Donovan.

The King looked puzzled, though "blackmail" is a word he might have been expected to know. Gorman explained.

"Getting money out of you," he said, "for hushing up any inconvenient little episodes, undertaking not to tell stories he happened to have heard. You know the sort of thing I mean."

"No man," said the King sadly, "can get money out of me. It is like—how do you say?—the riding breeches of the Scottish soldiers, not there. Nor do I say hush about my little episodes. Pooh! my friend Gorman. These episodes, what are they? The English middling classes like to pretend that there are no episodes. But there are, always, and we others—we do not say hush."

“If it wasn’t blackmail,” said Donovan, “what kept him tracking you?”

“Ask my friend Gorman,” said the King. “He knows.”

“I do not,” said Gorman, “unless——”

King Konrad Karl smiled pleasantly.

“Unless——” said Gorman. “Oh, damn it all. I suppose it was the Emperor.”

“You have it,” said the King. “He is of the Emperor’s secret service. He and Steinwitz. Steinwitz I do not like. He is an arrogant. He assumes always the attitude of the dog on top. But of Fritz I make no complaint. He is always civilian.”

“I’d gather that,” said Gorman, “from the little I’ve seen of him. If we must have a spy here—and of course there’s no help for that since the Emperor says so—it’s better to have an agreeable one. His job at present, I suppose, is to keep an eye on Donovan and the island generally.”

“That Emperor,” said Donovan, “seems to me to butt in unnecessarily. But I’m obliged to him. Smith is the best servant I’ve struck since I first took to employing a hired help.”

“It will be sad,” said the King, “when you kill him. A great loss.”

“I don’t know,” said Donovan, “that I mean to kill him. He’s a valuable man.”

“The proper thing to do,” said Gorman, “is to put him on board the Megalian navy and leave him to the admiral.”

“Seems a pity,” said Donovan. “I don’t see how I could make my way along the rugged path of life without Smith. He hasn’t done me any kind of harm so far. I think I’ll wait a bit. It would worry me to have to step down and take hold now. My heart——”

“What I can’t get at even yet,” said Gorman, “is the idea in the Emperor’s mind. He piles up scrap iron and ridiculous-looking cisterns in a cave. He deluges the place with petrol. He sets a spy on Donovan. Now what the devil does he do it for?”

The King shrugged his shoulders.

“*Real Politik*, perhaps,” he said. “But how do I know? I am a king, certainly. But

I am not a whale on the sea of *Real Politik*. Your whale is a fish that bores, always. Perhaps if you ask Fritz he will know."

"By the way," said Donovan, "what's the man's real name?"

"Once," said the King, "he was Calmet, M. de Calmet. At that time he was French. Later he was Heyduk, a Captain in the army of Megalia. Also he was Freidwig, and he came from Stockholm. He was for some time the Count Pozzaro. I have also heard——"

"That's enough for me," said Donovan. "I'll stick to Smith as long as he'll answer to it. Seems simpler."

Gorman rose from his chair and crossed the balcony. He stood for a minute or two looking out at the bay. Smith's boat, rowed steadily, reached the side of the steamer. Smith climbed on board.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gorman, "if we've seen the last of our friend Smith."

"I hope not," said Donovan. "Why do you think so?"

"Well," said Gorman, "if I were in his shoes I think I should stay in the Megalian navy. It'll be rather awkward for him now we've found him out."

"He will return," said the King.

"I shouldn't," said Gorman. "Of course that admiral, being the kind of man he is, it's risky to stay with him; but then Smith has got to take risks whatever he does. And he may have some sort of safe conduct from the Emperor which will make the admiral nervous about cutting his throat."

"He will return," said the King. "It is plain that the Emperor has said to him: 'Follow the smell of the American.' He will not leave it."

"Oh, of course," said Gorman. "I'm always forgetting the Emperor. If he has given definite orders of that kind they'll be obeyed. I daresay Smith is telegraphing for definite instructions at this moment. They have a wireless installation, so I suppose he can."

"Behold," said the King. "My luggage descends to the boat. Smith will follow. Did I not tell you?"

Two sailors were lowering various suit-cases and bags into the boat. A few

minutes later Smith dropped from the steamer’s side and took the oars.

“Donovan,” said Gorman, “the Emperor is evidently really anxious about your smell.”

CHAPTER XXI

I do not think that the Emperor's plan for restoring Salissa to the Crown of Megalia by means of a marriage would have worked, even if there had been no such person as Maurice Phillips. The Queen did not like Konrad Karl. She was not, of course, openly disagreeable or uncivil to him. She was too sweet-tempered and good-hearted to be disagreeable to any one, and she had a strong sense of what was due to a guest in her house. But it was plain enough not only to Gorman, but to the King himself, that she did not like him. This does not appear to have been the King's fault. Konrad Karl had many of the instincts of a gentleman. It is an odd fact, but I think undeniable, that a man may be a blackguard and remain a gentleman. There was, for instance, no fault to be found with Konrad Karl's behaviour towards the Queen, though he had come to the island intending to insult her by marrying her. He did his best to talk pleasantly to her, and he could be very pleasant when he chose. He never attempted to flirt with her. His manner was always respectful and he tried to help her in various ways, even going to her school in the mornings and giving the children drawing lessons. She could not herself have told why she disliked him. She certainly had no idea that there was any question of his marrying her. But she slipped into the habit of spending most of her time in the boat with Kalliope. Konrad Karl used to go down to the palace steps and see her off. He never ventured into a boat himself. He had an uneasy feeling that the Megalian admiral was watching him and would kidnap him at once if he left the security of the land.

The Queen's unfriendliness did not trouble him much.

"The American girl," he said to Gorman, "would not have done for me, or do I say she would have done for me? Which is it?"

"Well," said Gorman, "either expresses your meaning and I quite agree with you. She would not have done for you, and in the long run if you didn't do for her she would certainly have done for you."

"The English language is wonderful," said the King. "She would not, and she would. It is the same in English. But my meaning is true. It is well I did not marry her. I must give many thanks to Phillips. If Phillips had not done for her I should have been done for."

“As it is,” said Gorman, “it’s the Emperor who’s done.”

“Ah,” said the King. “I give in. I give up. I give out. That word ‘done’—it is too much for me.”

It was not like the King to give in to an English idiom. As a rule he rushed at one the minute he heard it with reckless confidence. But he was depressed and lonely on Salissa. He chatted cheerily enough to Donovan. He was always bright and talkative at meals. But he confessed to Gorman several times that he missed Madame Ypsilante very much.

It was Gorman’s curious fortune at this time to receive the love confidences of three different people. Phillips had poured raptures into his ear during the voyage to the island. The Queen, having no one else to treat as a confidant, often talked to him about Phillips. The King was expansive about Madame Ypsilante. One evening he became very sentimental, almost lachrymose. He and Gorman were sitting together near the flagstaff, smoking and looking out towards the harbour where the Megalian navy still lay at anchor.

“Ah,” said the King, “my poor Corinne! She will languish. I think of Corinne and I see that her eyes are full of mourning, like the eyes of a wood dove. Gorman, I cannot bear the weight. It will be better that I take the risk, that I go on the navy. The admiral will make me walk a plank. That is certain. But it might be that I should survive. And then I should rejoin Corinne, poor Corinne who mourns.”

“I don’t expect she’s mourning as much as all that,” said Gorman. “She’s got those pearls, you know.”

“I,” said the King, “I alone am her pearl. But, alas, I cannot even write to her. She will think that I am dead and her heart will fall to pieces.”

“She’s much more likely to think that you’ve married Miss Donovan,” said Gorman.

“Of course she will think that. It was what I came to do. That she will not mind. But if she thinks that I am dead, that the admiral has cooked a goose for me; then she will indeed be sad. Gorman, my friend, what shall I do to reassure her?”

“I can’t possibly advise you,” said Gorman. “I don’t understand women. I should have thought she’d much rather you were dead than married to Miss Donovan.”

“Ah no,” said the King. “Believe me, my friend, you know much; but you do not know the heart of Corinne.”

The King’s faith was very touching. But Gorman still maintains that he was not far wrong about Madame Ypsilante’s feelings. She might not actually have preferred the King’s death; but she certainly did not want to see him married to Miss Donovan.

The King drew a last mouthful of smoke from his cigar and then flung the end of it into the sea.

“Gorman,” he said, “what is it that your great English poet had so beautifully said? ‘If you were the only girl in the world and I were the only boy.’ That is Corinne and me. ‘A garden of Eden just made for two.’ That is Paris. I have always admired the English poets. It is so true, what they say.”

He gazed out across the bay as he spoke. The sun was setting. The water was exquisitely calm. It was a moment for the most luscious sentiment. Even Gorman, to whom sentiment is an abhorrent kind of indecency, felt uncomfortable.

A small boat slipped round the southern headland of the bay. She was rowing fast. The King jumped to his feet suddenly. He pointed to the boat. He waved his arms wildly.

“Buck up,” he shouted, “it is—I will eat my hat—it is Corinne! She comes to me!”

“Nonsense,” said Gorman. “That’s Miss Donovan’s boat. She’s coming home for dinner. Sit down and don’t get excited.”

“I am sorry,” said the King, “but I cannot. It is impossible for me to keep on my hair when Corinne is coming.”

“Corinne isn’t coming,” said Gorman. “How could she?”

“I see her. I see her. The dickens, and Great Jupiter, my eyes see her.”

“You can’t tell one woman from another at that distance. What you see is either Miss Donovan or Kalliope.”

The boat drew rapidly nearer. Gorman stared at her.

“There *are* three women,” he said. “I wonder who the other is.”

“Corinne. Corinne,” said the King.

To Gorman’s amazement the King was right. The boat reached the landing steps. In her were the Queen, Kalliope and a very dishevelled Madame Ypsilante. That lady was never, at any time of her life, an outdoor woman. When she travelled it was in the wagons-lits of trains-de-luxes, and in specially reserved cabins of steamers. Her journey to Salissa had been performed in far less luxurious ways and her appearance had suffered. Her complexion was streaky. Her hair straggled about a good deal, and several damp-looking locks hung like thick bootlaces around her face. Her dress was crumpled and had two large patches of dirt on it. But all this made no difference to the King. He folded her in his arms and kissed her directly she got out of the boat.

“Corinne,” he said, “now I shall be no longer sad.”

Madame returned his kisses with vigour.

“My Konrad,” she said, “and you are not married after all.”

It was that remark, her greeting to the King, which made Gorman feel sure that he had been right about her feeling, that she really did not like the idea of the marriage.

Konrad Karl took her by the hand and led her into the palace.

The Queen was still sitting in the stern of the boat. Since Madame Ypsilante fell into Konrad Karl’s arms the Queen had turned her back on the landing slip and gazed steadily out to sea. Only when the sound of their footsteps made her sure that her guests were going into the palace did she venture to look round cautiously.

“It’s all right,” said Gorman. “You can come on shore.”

He held out his hand to her.

“And do tell me,” he said, “where you found her. She looked to me rather as if she had been washed up some time yesterday and had spent last night in a cave.”

“Who is she?” said the Queen.

“Her name,” said Gorman, “is Ypsilante, Madame Corinne Ypsilante.”

“She told me that much. But I want to know what is she?”

The question was an awkward one to answer. Gorman did the best he could.

“A friend of the King’s,” he said.

“Well,” said the Queen. “He’ll be able to marry her now. The poor thing was in dreadful distress. She thought he was going to marry me. And she’s engaged to him. She told me so herself.”

I am sure that Gorman did not smile; but there must have been a twinkle in his eyes which betrayed him. The Queen is extremely quick at reading such signs. She turned on him sharply.

“Aren’t they engaged to be married?” she asked.

“Kings,” said Gorman, “are in a peculiar position with regard to these matters. Their matrimonial arrangements are not made in what we regard as the normal way. To speak of a king as being ‘engaged’ is——”

“I’m a queen.”

“Of course. Of course.”

“And I’m engaged to be married; so why can’t he be? Anyhow he is, for she told me so. I asked her and she said yes!”

Gorman did not feel equal to arguing about the precise nature of Madame Ypsilante’s claims on the King.

“You haven’t told me yet where you found her,” he said.

“Kalliope and I,” said the Queen, “were picnicking in a little bay a long way from this, quite the other side of the island. There was a fishing boat standing in towards the shore. It came to our beach and she got out. That’s all.”

“Quite simple after all,” said Gorman. “I suppose you were scarcely even surprised.”

“Well, I was rather,” said the Queen, “just at first until she told me.”

“Told you what?” said Gorman. “You’re skipping all the interesting part.”

“Don’t be stupid,” said the Queen. “She told me about being engaged to the

King and thinking that he was going to marry me. Of course, when she thought that she came here as quick as ever she could to see him. Any one would. Not that I'd ever think such a thing about Maurice. But then he wouldn't. Still, I quite understand her coming here in a boat. But I do wonder what made her think he was going to marry me. He never even tried. Who could have told her such a thing?"

"Probably the Emperor," said Gorman.

The Queen burst out laughing.

"I believe," she said, "that if the house fell down and Kalliope eloped with Smith and father took to rowing races with old Stephanos you'd put it all down to the Emperor."

"I would," said Gorman.

"Anyhow, I'm going to dress now. Come along, Kalliope."

Madame Ypsilante, very much to Gorman's relief, did not appear at dinner. She went straight to bed, intending, so the King said, to stay there for twenty-four hours at least.

Later in the evening, after the Queen had left them, Konrad Karl, Donovan and Gorman sat together smoking. For a while no one spoke. At last Konrad Karl, who had no gift of silence, began:

"My poor Corinne! She was desolate. I told you, Gorman, that she would be desolate, but you would not believe. Yet it was so. Steinwitz said, 'No. You cannot go with the King.' But she was more than too much, she was the equal of Steinwitz. She told him all she thought of him. It was much."

"I don't like Steinwitz," said Gorman, "but what I know of Madame's conduct in moments of strong emotion I'm inclined to pity the man."

"Then," said the King, "she was like a bee, making lines for Salissa."

"She did pretty well," said Gorman, "considering that she could only get a fishing boat for the last part of the journey. I wonder she got here so soon. But look here, you know—it seems a beastly thing to say, but——"

Here Donovan roused himself.

“I’m not a narrow-minded man,” he said, “and I hope I’m not the victim of prejudice; but I’m afraid——”

King Konrad Karl waved his hand. Then he stood up, swallowed half a glass of brandy and laid down his cigar.

“I am Konrad Karl of Megalia,” he said. “I am a black sheep, very black. I am a blackguard. You say it, Donovan. You say it, Gorman, my friend.”

“I didn’t,” said Gorman.

“Cut that part,” said Donovan. “Nobody wants to start in abusing you.”

“I am,” said the King with an air of simple pride, “I am a blackguard, the blackest guard of all. Good. But I am a King and I am a gentleman. Good. I know that poor Corinne must go. She cannot stay here. That is what you would say, and you are right. I know it. There are *les convenances*. There is the charming Miss Donovan.”

“That’s it,” said Donovan. “If it were simply a matter of Gorman and me——I don’t like saying these things—but——”

“But you are right,” said the King. “Right as nails. Corinne must go. But I go with her. To-morrow we depart, she and I. We take a boat. I row with oars. We fly. The navy of Megalia pursues. It overtakes. Good. We die. Perhaps the navy mistakes. It pursues by another route, a way we have not gone. Good. We live. Either way you shut us. No. We shut you. No. I have it. We are shut of us.”

“That’s rather a hopeless programme,” said Gorman. “I don’t suppose you can row much.”

“I cannot row at all,” said the King.

“The navy is a pretty rotten-looking tub,” said Gorman. “But it can hardly help catching you. You won’t even be out of sight before it has steam up.”

The King sat down, looking very miserable. He made no pretence of liking the prospect before him.

“And Corinne,” he murmured, “will be sick, as a dog is sick. She is sick always at sea.”

Gorman and Donovan felt sorry for him. Donovan was particularly irritated at

the situation in which he found himself.

“If it wasn’t for my daughter——” he said. “But, damn it all, what can I do?”

“I wonder,” said Gorman, “if it would be possible to—well, shall we say regularize the situation?”

He looked inquiringly at Donovan and then at the King. Donovan grasped the idea first.

“That’s it,” he said. “Look here,” he turned to the King. “Why the hell don’t you marry her at once? Then everything would be all right.”

“Marry her!” said the King. “But that——Oh, damn! Oh Great Scott! That is impossible. You do not understand.”

“It’s the right thing to do,” said Donovan, “besides being the only possible way out of the hole we are in. And I don’t see the impossibility. If you’re holding back on account of any mediæval European notions about monarchs being a different kind of flesh and blood from other people——”

“It is not that,” said the King.

“If it is,” said Donovan, “you may just go off in a boat and be drowned. I shan’t pity you.”

“But it is not that.” The King jumped about with excitement. “I am a king, it is true. But I am a man of liberated soul. I say ‘Kings, what are kings?’ Democracy is the card to play, the trump. I play it now and always. I have no prejudices. But when you say to me: ‘There is no impossibility, marry Corinne,’ I reply: ‘You do not understand. There is one thing more to reckon with.’ Donovan, you have forgotten——”

“I haven’t forgotten,” said Gorman. “I never get a chance of forgetting. It’s the Emperor, as usual.”

“You have shot the bull in his eye,” said the King. “Donovan, it is that. Gorman knows. There is the Emperor. Therefore I cannot marry Corinne.”

“I’d see that Emperor a long way,” said Donovan, “before I’d allow him to dictate to me.”

“Ah,” said the King, “but you do not understand the Emperor.”

“I don’t believe any one does,” said Gorman.

“Well,” said Donovan, “I do *not* understand your Emperor. I own up to that. But you think over my suggestion, and you’ll find, Emperor or no Emperor, there isn’t any genuine obstacle.”

CHAPTER XXII

King Konrad Karl slept badly that night. Donovan's plan seemed to him quite hopeless. He went to bed fully persuaded that he and his beloved Corinne would have to embark next day and make a considerable voyage in an open boat. I do not blame him for being disturbed at the prospect. I am fond of boats myself and can enjoy a ten-tonner very well; but nothing would induce me to go to sea with Madame Ypsilante in anything less comfortable than a well-equipped steam yacht of 1,000 tons. Besides there was the pursuit of the Megalian navy to be considered.

The King was not the only person who missed his proper sleep. Gorman lay awake for two hours. He was tormented by the feeling that it was barbarous to turn Konrad Karl and Madame Ypsilante adrift in a boat. Donovan was more fortunate. He slept untroubled by any worry about his guests. It seemed to him the simplest thing in the world that the King should marry Madame next day. Stephanos should perform the ceremony. Stephanos officiated at all the islanders' marriages.

There was, as it turned out, neither a flight nor a wedding next day. Madame Ypsilante developed a feverish chill. She was plainly quite unfit for a boat voyage and in no condition to be married. The Queen and Kalliope took up the work of nursing her with enthusiasm. The Queen would not listen to a word Gorman said to her. Her view was that Madame Ypsilante was the heroine of a splendid romance, that she had fled to her fiancé across land and sea, braving awful dangers, enduring incredible hardships for dear love's sake. She felt that she would have done the same thing herself if Phillips, by any trick of fate, had been marooned on a South Pacific island. There was plainly no use trying to hint at delicate proprieties to a girl in such a mood. Gorman, after one or two attempts, gave it up.

He had, indeed, quite early in the day, other things to attend to. At about ten o'clock there were signs of great activity on board the Megalian navy. The crew —there appeared to be about fifteen men altogether—was paraded on deck and addressed from the bridge by the admiral. The speech must have been an exciting and important one, for the admiral gesticulated violently. When he stopped, the crew cheered. Gorman watched the proceedings. He was interested

—as an expert—in the effects of oratory.

When the cheering was over, the admiral gave two or three orders. The crew immediately began to run about the deck in a confused and tumultuous manner. After a while they settled down to the work of getting the covers off the steamer's two guns. Some shells—Gorman supposed they must be shells—were carried on deck. The guns were swung round and pointed at the palace. Then they were loaded. A solemn business, very carefully carried out under the immediate eye of the admiral.

King Konrad Karl came running to Gorman. He was in a state of considerable excitement.

"That admiral," he said, "has it in mind to stone the palace. He has stones for those guns. I know it."

"If it was a matter of stones," said Gorman, "but they look to me more like shells."

"Shells, stones, it is the same. He will batter, destroy, slay. Gorman, my friend, it must not be."

"Why the devil does he want to do it?" said Gorman. "Now don't say *Real Politik* or the Emperor. I simply can't believe that either one or the other would set that pirate shooting at us."

"It is *Real Politik*, without doubt," said the King. "And it is the Emperor. But it is also me, me, Konrad Karl of Megalia. I am—what is it you say in English?—I am wanted. And I go. I offer myself. I become a ewe lamb of sacrifice. I say good-bye. I leave Corinne. I go. Then the admiral will not stone the palace."

"Don't start for a minute or two yet," said Gorman. "The pirate is sending a boat ashore. We may as well hear what he has to say."

It was the admiral himself who landed. He was in full dress. His uniform was almost entirely covered with gold braid. Gold cords with tassels at their ends hung in festoons across his chest and down his back. He carried a large sword in a highly gilt sheath. On his head was a cocked hat with a tall pink feather in it, perhaps a plume from the tail of the Megalian vulture.

Gorman received him with great respect and led him up to Donovan's room.

The admiral saluted Donovan gravely, and held out a large paper carefully folded and sealed. Donovan offered him a cigar and a drink, in a perfectly friendly way. The admiral replied by pushing his paper forward towards Donovan. He knew no English. That was the only possible way of explaining the fact that he ignored the offer of a drink. Donovan nodded towards Gorman, who took the document from the admiral and opened it.

“Seems to me to be a kind of state paper,” he said. “Rather like an Act of Parliament to look at; but it’s written in a language I don’t know. Suppose we send for the King and get him to translate.”

“If it’s an Act of Parliament,” said Donovan, “we’d better have Daisy up too. She’s responsible for the government of this island.”

The admiral guessed that his document was under discussion. He did not know English, but he knew one word which was, at that time, common in all languages.

“Ultimatum,” he said solemnly.

“That so?” said Donovan. “Then we must have Daisy.”

I am inclined to think that Miss Donovan will never be a first-rate queen. She is constitutionally incapable of that particular kind of stupidity which is called dignity. In that hour of her country’s destiny, her chief feeling was amusement at the appearance of the admiral. She did not know, perhaps, that the guns of the Megalian navy were trained on her palace. But she ought to have understood that dignified conduct is desirable in dealing with admirals. She sat on the corner of the table beside her father’s chair and swung her legs. She smiled at the admiral. Now and then she choked down little fits of laughter.

King Konrad Karl took the matter much more seriously.

He unfolded the paper which Gorman handed to him. He frowned fiercely and then became suddenly explosive.

“Deuce and Jove and damn!” he said. “This is the limitation of all. Listen, my friends, to the cursed jaw—no, the infernal cheek, of this: ‘The Megalian Government requires——’”

He stopped, gasped, struck at the paper with his hand.

“Go on,” said Gorman. “There’s nothing very bad so far. There is a Megalian Government, I suppose?”

“But I—I am the Megalian Government,” said the King.

“It will be time enough to take up those points of constitutional law afterwards. Let’s hear what’s in the paper first.”

The King read on. His anger gave way by degrees to anxiety and perplexity.

“I cannot translate,” he said. “The English language does not contain words in which to express the damned cheek of these flounders. They say that you,” he pointed to the Queen, “and you, Donovan, and you, my friend Gorman, must go at once on the Megalian navy. It will carry you to Sicily. It will put you there in a dump, and you must embark before noon. Great Scott!”

“Oh, but that’s just silly,” said the Queen. “We shan’t take any notice of it.”

“In that case the admiral shoots,” said the King. “At noon, sharp up to time, precise.”

“Well,” said Donovan, “I guess I don’t mean to move.”

“But,” said the King, “he can shoot. The navy of Megalia has shells for its guns. It has six. I know it, for I bought them myself when I sat on that cursed throne. Six, my friends.”

“That’s a comfort, anyway,” said Donovan. “According to my notion of the efficiency of that navy it will miss the island altogether with the first five and be darned lucky if it knocks a chip off a cliff with the sixth.”

The Queen stopped swinging her feet and laughing at the admiral. She was much more serious now. There was a gleam in her eyes which caught Gorman’s attention.

“Father,” she said, “I’m going to hoist the American flag. I have one in my room.”

“Seems a pity,” said Donovan. “Your blue banner is nice enough.”

“No one,” said the Queen, “would dare to fire on the Stars and Stripes.”

Miss Donovan, though an independent queen, was a patriotic American citizen. In those days there were a good many patriotic American citizens who believed

that no one would dare to fire on the Stars and Stripes. King Konrad Karl knew better.

“Alas,” he said, “your Stars! your Stripes! if it were the Megalian Government it would not dare. But this is not the ultimatum outrage of the Megalian Government. Behind it, in the rear of its elbow, stands——”

“Of course he does,” said Gorman.

“That darned Emperor?” said Donovan.

Gorman nodded.

“Daisy,” said Donovan, “I just hate to shatter your ideals, but I reckon that Emperor would as soon fire on one flag as another; and what’s more, I’m not inclined to think that Old Glory is liable to do much in the way of putting up a battle afterwards. It’s painful to you, Daisy, as a patriotic citizen; but what I say is the fact. In the Middle West where I was raised we don’t think guns and shooting constitute the proper way of settling international differences. We’ve advanced some from those ideas. We’re a civilized people, specially in the dry States where university education is rife and the influence of women permeates elections. We’ve attained a nobler outlook upon life.”

The Queen was on her feet. Her eyes were flashing. Her lips trembled with indignation.

“Father,” she said, “are you going to let yourself be bullied by—by that thing?” She pointed to the admiral with a gesture of contempt. “Are you going to sneak on to his ship? Oh, if I were a man I’d hoist the Stars and Stripes and fight. If they killed us America would avenge us.”

“You take me up wrong, Daisy,” said Donovan. “I don’t say I wouldn’t fight if I had a gun. I might, and that’s a fact. But the way I’m fixed at present, not having a gun, I intend to experiment with the methods of peaceful settlement. I’m not above admitting that I share the lofty notions of the cultivated disciples of peace. I’m a humanitarian, and opposed on principle to the sacrifice of human life. I just hate butting in and taking hold. The disordered nature of my heart makes it dangerous for me to exert myself. But it seems to me that this is a case in which I just have to. But if I do, I want to handle things my own way. So you run away now, Daisy. Get that blue banner of yours fluttering in the breeze, defying death and destiny.” He turned to Konrad Karl. “I’d be obliged to you,” he said, “if

you’d tell that highly coloured ocean warrior that I count on him not to start shooting till the time mentioned in his ultimatum. That leaves me an hour and a quarter to work with the nobler weapons of civilized pacifist conviction. Tell him to go back to his ship and see that his men don’t get monkeying with those six shells. Gorman,” he went on, “you get hold of Smith and send him up here to me.”

I think it was then that Gorman first realized the strength of Donovan’s personality. The Queen, though she was in a high passion of patriotism and defiance, left the room without a word. Konrad Karl spluttered a little, uttering a series of ill-assorted oaths, but he walked off the Megalian admiral and put him into a boat. Gorman himself did what he was told without asking for a word of explanation.

CHAPTER XXIII

Gorman led Smith to Donovan's room. The man must have known all about the Megalian admiral's threat. He probably understood, better than any one else on the island, the meaning and purpose of the ultimatum presented to Donovan. But he showed no signs of embarrassment or excitement. When Gorman summoned him—he was brushing a pair of Konrad Karl's trousers at the moment—he apologized for having put Gorman to the trouble of looking for him. When he entered the room where Donovan waited he stood quietly near the door in his usual attitude of respectful attention.

Donovan greeted him as if he had been a friend and not a servant.

"Take a chair, Smith, and sit down. I want to talk to you."

Smith refused to accept this new position.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, "but if it's all the same to you, I'd rather stand. Seems more natural, sir."

Gorman, who had followed Smith into the room, hovered uncertainly near the door. He very much wanted to hear what Donovan had to say; but he was not quite sure whether he was meant to be present.

"Any objection to my staying?" he asked. "I'm interested in international peace movements and Hague Conferences. I'd like to hear how you mean to work this affair."

"Sit down," said Donovan, "but don't get interrupting. Now that I've taken hold I mean to handle this damned business my own way."

Gorman sat down and lit his pipe. Donovan turned to Smith.

"You're a valuable man, Smith," he said, "and I'd like to retain your services."

"Thank you, sir," said Smith. "I've done my best to give satisfaction."

"But if you're to stay on with me," said Donovan, "we've got to have some straight talk. I'd like it to be clearly understood that your engagement with me is to be a whole-time job for the future."

“More satisfactory, sir, certainly.”

“At present,” said Donovan, “you’re also engaged by Mr. Steinwitz.”

“Not by Mr. Steinwitz, sir, if you’ll excuse my correcting you. By the Emperor.”

Gorman groaned deeply. Smith turned to him, solicitous, anxious to be of use.

“Beg pardon, sir, can I do anything for you, sir? Anything wrong, sir?”

“No,” said Gorman, “no. The mention of the Emperor upsets me a little. That’s all. Don’t do it again, if you can help it, Smith. I’m sorry, Donovan. I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

Smith turned to Donovan again.

“Perhaps I should say, sir, the Imperial Secret Service.”

“Salary?” said Donovan.

He showed no surprise, anger or disgust. Smith was equally cool. He answered the question snapped at him as if it had been the most natural in the world.

“Well, sir, that depends. The salary varies according to circumstances. And there are allowances, travelling, sir, and subsistence, sometimes.”

“Average?” said Donovan, “average net profit?”

Smith thought for a minute before answering. He was apparently anxious to be accurate and honest.

“I think, sir, I may say £200 a year, taking one thing with another.”

“Well,” said Donovan, “I’ll double that, in addition to what I’m paying you at present; on condition that you’re in my service only. As I said before, Smith, you’re a valuable man.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Smith. “Very generous of you. I appreciate the offer, but ____”

He paused. He had some objection to make, but he hesitated to put it into words.

“I treble the Emperor’s two hundred pounds,” said Donovan.

“I beg pardon, sir. I wasn’t meaning to stand out for a larger salary. That’s not

my point, sir. What I was going to say, sir, was——”

Again he hesitated.

“Patriotic scruples?” said Donovan. “Loyal to the Emperor? Feel kind of mean deserting the service of your country?”

“Oh no, sir, not at all. Scruples aren’t in my line, sir, and I am Swiss by birth. No particular feeling of loyalty to anybody. The fact is, sir, a man must keep his self-respect. I daresay you’ll understand. I had no objection to taking on a valet’s job, sir, in the way of business, as an agent of the Intelligence Department. But it’s rather a different thing, sir—if you catch my point—to enter domestic service as a profession. A man doesn’t like to lose caste, sir.”

“That’s a real difficulty,” said Donovan. “As an American citizen I understand your feeling and respect it. See any way out?”

“It occurs to me, sir—it’s for you to decide, of course. But it occurs to me that if I might enter the Intelligence Department of Salissa, there’d be no interference with my work in the palace. Anything I could do to make you comfortable. But as agent of the Queen’s Secret Service I should be——I hope you catch my point, sir. You see I held a commission at one time in the Megalian Army.”

“You may consider yourself engaged, Smith,” said Donovan, “or perhaps I ought to say nominated, as head of the Intelligence Department of the Kingdom of Salissa.”

“Thank you, sir. When would you like me to take over my new duties?”

“You can begin right now,” said Donovan.

“Very good, sir. I beg to report that England declared war on Germany this morning. The news came by wireless to the admiral.”

Gorman dropped his pipe and sat upright suddenly.

“Good Lord!” he said. “England. Germany. I say, Donovan, if this is true——”

Donovan motioned him to silence with a wave of his hand.

“Salissa,” he said, “is a neutral State.”

“But,” said Gorman, “if there’s a European war——”

Donovan ignored him.

“Smith,” he said, “that admiral informs me that he has orders to deport us from this island and dump us down somewhere in Sicily. That so?”

“Yes, sir,” said Smith. “Those are the Emperor’s orders. Very urgent orders. In the case of your refusal to obey, the admiral is to fire on the palace.”

“So I understand,” said Donovan. “Now what I want you to do is to go off to the steamer and negotiate with the admiral.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Shall we say £500? or ought I to go higher?”

“I don’t think,” said Smith, “that it will be necessary to give so much. If you will allow me to suggest, I’d say an offer of £10.”

For the first time since the interview began Donovan was startled.

“Ten pounds!” he said. “Do you mean ten?”

“Giving me permission to rise to twenty pounds if necessary,” said Smith.

“But an admiral!” said Donovan. “Remember he’s an admiral.”

“Yes, sir. But admirals aren’t quite the same thing here as in England. Don’t belong to the same class. Don’t draw the same salary.”

“Make it twenty-five pounds,” said Donovan. “I’d be ashamed to offer less to a Tammany boss.”

“Very good, sir, just as you please, sir.”

“Right,” said Donovan. “And now we’ve got that settled, and we’ve three-quarters of an hour to spare, before the bombardment is timed to begin. There are one or two points I’d like to have cleared up. But I wish you’d sit down, Smith, and take a cigar. As head of the Intelligence Department of this kingdom ____”

“If you’re quite sure, sir, that there isn’t anything you want me to fetch. A drink, sir?”

“Not for me,” said Donovan. “I want to talk.”

Smith sat down, stretched himself comfortably in a deep chair and lit a cigar.

“What’s the Emperor’s game?” said Donovan. “What’s he after? What the hell does he mean by monkeying round this island ever since I bought it?”

“Well,” said Smith, “I haven’t got what you could call official knowledge of the Emperor’s plans. My orders came to me through Steinwitz, and Steinwitz doesn’t talk unnecessarily.”

The servant manner and the cockney accent disappeared when Smith sat down. He talked to Donovan as one man of the world to another.

“Still,” said Donovan, “you’ve got some sort of idea.”

“Last December,” said Smith, “I was in London keeping an eye on King Konrad Karl. The Emperor liked to know what he was doing. One day I got orders to take delivery of some large cisterns from a firm in Germany, paying for them by cheque drawn on my own account. They were consigned to me as water cisterns. My business was to ship them to Hamburg and hand them over to Captain von Moll. That’s all I was told. But I happened to find out what von Moll’s orders were. He was to land those cisterns in Salissa. I satisfied myself that they were here as soon as I arrived with you on the *Ida*. Von Moll concealed them very well; but he was a bit careless in other ways. He seems to have lived in the palace while he was here and he left some papers lying about, torn up but not burnt. One of them was a letter from Steinwitz. Phillips, the officer of the *Ida*, had his eye on those papers. I swept them up and destroyed them.”

“And the cisterns?” said Donovan. “What are they for?”

“If you consider the geographical position of Salissa, you’ll see in a moment. The island lies a bit off the main steamer route between Marseilles and the Suez Canal; but not too far off. Now I happen to know that the Emperor places great reliance on submarines. In the event of a war with England he depends on submarines to cut the trade routes and sink transports. But submarines operating in the Mediterranean require bases of supply.”

“Petrol?” said Gorman.

“And spare parts,” said Smith. “That was the idea, I think. So long as the island was under the Crown of Megalia there was no difficulty. Megalia wasn’t in a position to interfere with the Emperor’s plans.”

“The Megalian navy certainly isn’t first-rate,” said Donovan.

“But when you purchased the island,” Smith went on, “things were different. You might object to the use the Emperor proposed to make of it. Your Government might have backed you up. How far do you think your Government will back you?”

“Darned little,” said Donovan.

“So Steinwitz seemed to think. But the Emperor wasn’t taking any unnecessary risks. He preferred that the island should return to the Crown of Megalia. I think that’s the whole story so far as I know it. Perhaps now I ought to be getting off to see that admiral.”

“You can make sure of managing him, I suppose,” said Donovan.

“Oh, yes. But it may take a little time. He’ll want to talk and I must consider his self-respect.”

“Quite so,” said Donovan. “We all like to keep our self-respect, even admirals.”

Smith stood up.

“Very well, sir,” he said, “and if there’s nothing you want, sir——”

“Nothing,” said Donovan.

“I shall be back in time to serve luncheon, sir.”

The Smith who left the room was Donovan’s valet, not the head of the Intelligence Department of Salissa.

“Now that,” said Donovan, “is an example of the pacifist method of settling disputes, without appealing to force or sacrificing human life.”

“I admire it,” said Gorman. “I have a higher opinion of pacifism this minute than I ever had before.”

“It’s civilized,” said Donovan, “and it’s cheap. I don’t say it can always be worked as cheap as this; but it’s cheaper than war every time.”

“I wonder,” said Gorman, “if it would work out on a large scale. Take the case of the Emperor now.”

“There are difficulties,” said Donovan. “I don’t deny that there are difficulties. It isn’t always easy to get hold of the right man to pay, and it’s no use paying the wrong one. You must find the real boss, and he has a trick of hiding behind. I remember a case of an elevated street car franchise in a town in the Middle West. We paid three times and didn’t get it in the end owing to not striking the man who mattered. Still, the thing can be done, and according to my notion it’s the best way out, better than fighting. You mentioned this darned Emperor. Well, I don’t know. He’d have to be paid, of course; but the big grafter, the man who’d take the six-figure cheque, is likely not the Emperor. I don’t know. You’d have to find that out. But the principle’s sound. That’s why I call myself a pacifist. There’s tosh talked about pacifism, of course. There always must be tosh talked —and texts. I don’t undervalue texts as a means of influencing public opinion. But the principle is the thing. It’s business. Pay a big price to the man who can deliver the goods. If you pay a big enough price he’ll hand over.”

“That’s all right,” said Gorman, “when you’re dealing with business men. But there are other men, men who aren’t out for money, who want——”

Donovan yawned.

“There are lunatics,” he said, “but lunatics don’t run the world. They get shut up. Most men aren’t lunatics, and you’ll find that the pacifist idea works out. It’s the everlasting principle of all commerce.”

It is impossible to say whether Donovan’s pacifist principles would have been of any use in Europe in 1914. They were not tried, and he admitted that they would not work with lunatics. But the everlasting principle of all commerce proved its value in the case of the Megalian admiral. He did not even bargain at any length. Smith returned in rather less than half an hour, with the news that the admiral had accepted £26 10s. He made only one stipulation. It may have been a desire to preserve his self-respect or a determination to observe his orders in the letter which made him insist on firing one shot before he left Salissa.

“He won’t aim at the palace, sir,” said Smith.

“There’d be a better chance of his missing it, if he did,” said Donovan. “It makes me nervous to see men like those sailors playing about with guns.”

“Yes, sir. That’s so, sir. But in this case I don’t think you need have any anxiety. The shot will go right over the palace. I laid the gun myself before I left the ship. I don’t know if I mentioned it to you, sir, but I was in the artillery when I held a

commission in the Megalian Army.”

The admiral fired his shot at noon precisely. The shell soared high above the palace, passed over the cliff behind and dropped harmlessly somewhere in the sea.

The Queen and Kalliope stood behind the flagstaff from which the blue banner of Salissa flew. At the sound of the shot, while the shell’s shriek was still in her ears, the Queen gave her order. Kalliope, hauling hand over hand on the halyard, ran up the Stars and Stripes. It flew out on the breeze. The Queen, flushed with pride and patriotism, defied the might of the Megalian navy.

“Fire on that if you dare,” she said.

The admiral weighed his anchor, fussily, with much shouting and swearing, and steamed slowly out of the harbour. As he went he dipped his ensign, saluting the Queen’s flags.

Konrad Karl, standing at the window of Madame Ypsilante’s room, saved that lady from hysterics by announcing that the bombardment was over.

CHAPTER XXIV

Theologians are fond of speculative subjects; but I do not remember that any of them have discussed the feelings of Noah and his family when shut up in the ark. What did they talk about when they came together in the evening after feeding the various animals? No doubt they congratulated each other on their escape. No doubt they grumbled occasionally at the limited accommodation of the ark. But were they interested in what was going on outside? Did they guess at the depth of the flood, calculate whether this or that town were submerged, discuss the fate of neighbours and friends, wonder what steps the Government was taking to meet the crisis? They had very little chance of getting accurate information. The ark had only one window, and, if we can trust the artists who illustrate our Bibles, it was a kind of skylight.

The refugees on Salissa—if refugees is the proper word—were in one respect worse off than Noah's family. They had no skylight. The wireless message sent to the Megalian admiral told them that the Great Powers were at war. After that they got no news at all for more than two months. The windows, not this time of heaven, but of hell, were opened. The fountains of the great deep of human ambition, greed and passion were broken up. Lands where men, unguessing, had bought and sold, married and been given in marriage, were submerged, swamped, desolated. Salissa was a good ark, roomier than Noah's, and with this advantage, that it stayed still instead of tossing about. But not even Noah was so utterly cut off from all news of the catastrophe outside.

During August and September almost anything might have happened. Germans might have ridden through the streets of Paris and London. Russians might have placed their Czar on the throne of the Hapsburgs in Vienna. The English Fleet might have laid Hamburg in ruins and anchored in the Kiel Canal. Men might have died in millions. Civilization itself might have been swept away. But the face of the sun, rising on Salissa day by day, was in no way darkened by horror, or crimsoned with shame. The sea whispered round the island shores, but brought no news of the rushings to and fro of hostile fleets. The winds blew over battle-fields, but they reached Salissa fresh and salt-laden, untainted by the odour of carnage or the choking fumes of cannon firing.

Donovan was probably the only one of the party in the palace who was entirely

satisfied with this position. With the help of Smith he had demonstrated the efficacy of pacifist methods, and saved the island from bombardment. In less than a week he removed, to his own satisfaction, the scandal of Konrad Karl's relations with Madame Ypsilante. Then he handed the reins of government to the Queen again and settled down to the business of avoiding exertion and soothing the disorder of his heart.

To Donovan it always seemed a perfectly natural and simple thing that Konrad Karl should marry Madame Ypsilante. But it turned out to be rather difficult to arrange the matter. Madame herself had no particular objection to being married. She was lukewarm and indifferent until she found out that the Queen was looking forward to the wedding as a beautiful finish to a great romance. Madame had a grateful soul and was willing to do much to please the Queen who nursed her and was kind to her while she lay in bed exhausted by her journey. Her contempt for the American miss vanished, as soon as she understood that neither her pearls nor Konrad Karl were to be taken from her. Besides, there is always pleasure to be got out of preparing for a wedding. It was impossible, indeed, to buy clothes on Salissa. But it was not impossible to accept presents from the Queen's ample wardrobe. A great deal of interesting fitting and altering was done, and in the end Madame had an ample trousseau. The Queen, with the help of Smith, made an immense and splendid wedding cake.

It was Konrad Karl who created difficulties. He said—and Donovan believed him—that he was personally quite willing to marry Madame Ypsilante. He desired to marry her. She was the only woman in the world whom he would marry of his own free will. But he remained incurably terrified of the Emperor. Donovan talked to him about the rights of free citizens. He said that the humblest man had power to choose his wife. Nothing he said had the slightest influence on Konrad Karl.

"But," the King used to reply, "you do not understand. I am a king."

"Well," said Donovan, "according to my notions that's the same thing, only more so."

"Ah, no," said the King. "Ah, damn it, no. A king is not bourgeois, what you call citizen. That is the point. It is because I am a king that the Emperor interferes. If I were a citizen, but——"

He shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

Gorman tried him along a different line.

“Look here,” he said, “the Emperor has got himself into a nasty mess. He’s in for a big war. He can’t possibly have any time to spare to worry over who you marry.”

“To-day, no,” said the King, “but to-morrow the Emperor wins the war, and then ____”

“I wouldn’t be too cocksure of his winning,” said Gorman.

“It is surer than any cock,” said the King. “It was settled long ago. I do not understand *Real Politik*, but I know that much. The Emperor wins the war. Then he says to me: ‘Konrad, you married her. Good. You are in a fortress for life.’ And I am. You do not understand the Emperor, my friend.”

“I’m beginning to,” said Gorman.

It was Smith who talked over Konrad Karl in the end. I am sure that Donovan would not have approved of his argument. I doubt whether Gorman would have cared to use it. Smith said frankly that a marriage performed by Stephanos the Elder would be no marriage at all outside the Island of Salissa and could be repudiated at any time without the slightest inconvenience.

“You think,” said the King, “that I wish to desert Corinne. But never.”

“Beg pardon, your Majesty,” said Smith. “That wasn’t the idea in my mind. What I was thinking of, your Majesty, was the way the matter might be represented to the Emperor.”

The King saw the point. On the whole he seems to have been pleased when his last difficulty was removed and he was actually able to marry his beloved Corinne.

I do not think they were very happy afterwards. They were, no doubt, well enough suited to each other. But neither of them was suited to a life on Salissa. Monotony preyed on them. They both suffered from a kind of homesickness, an aching hunger for streets, theatres, shops, the rattle of traffic, the glitter of city life at night. They would have been good friends if they had been able to live their proper lives. Even on Salissa King Konrad Karl remained a lover. But they bickered a great deal and sometimes openly quarrelled. Then Madame would retire to her room and sulk for hours or whole days, while the King wandered

about the palace and bewailed the cruelty of Corinne.

Gorman too, in his own way, suffered from homesickness and had fits of irritation. He had lived his life in the centre of events, not great events, but such things as intrigues at Westminster, changes of Governments, and amendments, in committees, of Acts of Parliament. He had always known what was going on in the world. He found himself hopelessly shut off from all news of the greatest happenings of his time. He wanted desperately to know what England was doing, whether the French had risen to the occasion. He wanted, above all, to know about Ireland. Was Ireland in the throes of a civil war, or were her children taking their places in the ranks of the Allied Armies? Gorman was unreasonably annoyed by King Konrad Karl's certainty that the Emperor would win the war and by Donovan's passive neutrality of sentiment. For Gorman neutrality in any quarrel was no doubt inconceivable. As a younger man he might have been a rebel and given his life in some wild struggle against the power of England; or he might have held the King's commission and led other Irishmen against a foreign foe. He could never, if a great fight were going on, have been content to stand aside as Donovan did; neither praising nor blaming, neither hoping for victory nor fearing defeat.

Even more difficult to bear was Konrad Karl's conviction that the Emperor was invincible. It does not appear that the King had any particular wish for a German victory. He would perhaps have preferred to see the Emperor beaten and humiliated. But that seemed to him outside all possibility. The Emperor's triumph was as inevitable as the changing of the seasons. A man may not wish for winter or the east winds of spring; but he does not soothe himself with hopes that the long days of summer will continue. It seemed to Konrad Karl merely foolish that Gorman should speak as if the issue of the war were in any doubt.

Gorman has often spoken to me about his feelings at this time.

"I could have broken Konrad Karl's head with pleasure," he said once. "I had to hold myself tight if I did not mean to fall on him. He was so infernally certain that the Emperor would wipe the floor with us. Us! Isn't it a queer thing now? Here I am, a man who has been abusing the English all my life, and hating them —I give you my word that I've always hated the self-sufficiency and nauseating hypocrisy of the English. There's nothing I've wanted more than to see them damned well thrashed by somebody. And yet the minute anybody comes along to thrash them I'm up on my hind legs, furious, talking about 'Us' and 'We' and 'Our' army just as if I were an Englishman myself."

Gorman made every effort in his power to get news of some sort. He tried to bribe the island fishermen to sail over to the mainland in their largest boat. He offered to go with them. It was a voyage which they sometimes made. In fine weather there was no great difficulty about it. But Gorman's bribes were offered in vain. A curious fear possessed the islanders; the same fear which laid hold of the souls of simple people all over Europe at that time. They were afraid of some vast evil, undefined, unrealized, and their terror kept them close to the shadows of their homes. The most that Gorman could persuade them to do was to take him a few miles out to sea in one of their boats. There he used to stay for an hour or so, for so long as the men with him would consent to remain, going out as often as they would go with him. His hope was that he might see some ship, hail her, and get news from her crew. But no steamer, no fishing boat even, came in sight.

Of all the people on the island, Gorman was the most to be pitied except perhaps the Queen.

For awhile she was happy enough. The wedding interested and excited her. The presence of guests in the palace gave her much to think about and do. She was busy with her school. She still found pleasure in roaming over the island with Kalliope, but there came a time when she began to expect the arrival of the *Ida*. She knew how long the voyage to England took. She made calculations of the time required for loading the steamer with her new cargo. She fixed a day, the earliest possible, on which the *Ida* might reach Salissa again. That day passed, and many after it. The *Ida* was overdue, long overdue.

The Queen used to ask questions of every one, seeking comfort and assurance. She got little. Konrad Karl's conviction that the Emperor must be victorious was not cheering. Gorman supposed that the *Ida* might have been taken over by the Admiralty, or might have been forbidden to sail, or that Captain Wilson might be unwilling to take risks if enemy cruisers were at large on the high seas. Smith coolly discussed the possibility of a blockade of the English coasts by German submarines. Kalliope was the Queen's only comforter. She had no theories about war or politics, but she had a profound conviction of the certainty of lovers meeting.

"He will come once more," she said, "sure thing."

That was the Queen's conviction too. But it was weary work waiting.

There is a nook, a little hollow, high up on one of the western cliffs of the island

where it is possible to sit, sheltered among tall ferns, and gaze out across the sea. There came a time towards the end of September, when the Queen used to climb up there every morning and sit for hours watching for the *Ida*. Kalliope went with her. They erected a little flagstaff. They carried up the blue banner of Salissa. It was the Queen's plan to signal a welcome to her lover when she saw his ship. Above the nook in which they sat the two girls laid a beacon fire, a great pile of dry wood, dragged up the cliff with immense toil. The Queen thought of leaping flames and a tall column of smoke which should catch her lover's eyes and tell him that she was waiting for him. But day after day the calm sea lay shining, vacant. Evening after evening the Queen came sadly home again, a cold fear in her heart, bitter disappointment choking her. Then Kalliope would do her best for her mistress, repeating over and over her comforting phrases.

"He will come once more. Sure thing. Damned sure."

CHAPTER XXV

The strain on the nerves of the party in the palace became more and more severe. During the second week in October it almost reached the breaking point. For four days the sirocco blew across the island. The sky was grey and seemed to press down on sea and land, heavy, unbroken, intolerably near. The wind blew strongly, but with none of the fresh boisterous fierceness of a northern gale. There was a sullen malignity about its force. Out at sea grey-topped waves wrangled and strove together confusedly. They broke in a welter of soiled foam across the reef which lay opposite the mouth of the bay. Within the harbour little waves, like jagged steel blades, rose, hissed at each other spitefully, and perpetually stabbed at the rocky shore.

The close, suffocating heat oppressed men and beasts. The islanders retreated into their cottages and lay, patiently enduring, till the vile wind should pass away. Cattle cowered for shelter under the lee of walls or among the bent, swaying trees. Donovan sat alone in his room in the palace. He sweated continuously though he wore little clothing. He was the victim of many kinds of physical uneasiness, pains which would not quite declare themselves, restless fidgetings of his limbs, vague depression of spirit. Konrad Karl and Madame quarrelled openly and bitterly. His revilings stung her. Her own ill-temper left her raw. She fled to her room and locked herself into it. The King, perversely persistent, went after her. He could be heard scolding her through the closed door at one moment, begging pathetically for admittance at another. Gorman wandered restlessly from room to room. He opened windows, panting for air, and closed them with a curse when the hot blast of the sirocco smote him in the face. Smith, alone of all the party, preserved his self-control. The sweat trickled down his face; but he was alert, attentive, busy, as if the sun shone and the breeze blew fresh across sparkling water.

The Queen found the palace intolerable, worse than the wind outside. Very soon after breakfast she went out. Kalliope, faithful even amid the torment of the sirocco, followed her. They struggled together towards their watch place on the cliff. The wind buffeted them, set their hair floating wildly, struck their eyelids painfully. Their legs were caught and held by tangling petticoats. Sometimes as the path twisted they headed right against the storm. Then bent almost double, they bored their way through dense resisting air. Sometimes, moving slantwise,

they were caught by a side blast, and then they walked leaning at a sharp angle against the wind. Or, for a little while, they scudded before it, driven against their wills to swift motion which was unbearably exhausting. More than once Kalliope flung herself down and lay flat, panting on the shelterless grass. If she had taken her own way she would have given the struggle up. But the Queen, though she too gasped for breath, would not turn back or rest for more than a few minutes. She was determined to reach the look-out post on the cliff. In the end she got there.

Kalliope lay at full length, face downwards, in the little hollow. The Queen sat beside her and looked out to sea. Her hair was blown backwards. Her blouse, its fastenings torn, was blown open at her neck. Her face was flecked with tiny crystals of salt. She breathed in quick short pants. She kept her eyelids open with an effort against the blast.

The welter of grey water, broken everywhere with splashes of lighter grey foam, merged into the misty grey of the low enveloping clouds. The half circle of the horizon seemed very near. She watched the waves rise, rush forward, curl their crests over and break in foam. In one place the foam was whiter, thicker than elsewhere. The waves broke more frequently there. It was as if a patch of very fiercely breaking water moved towards the island. Behind it, before it, and on either side of it the waves tossed and broke. On this one patch they broke more constantly and more wildly. In a little while the Queen got glimpses of a dark mass which rose from the middle of this breaking water. Then she saw, clear above the foam, a short thick mast. She guessed that in the middle of the breaking water, half submerged, washed constantly from stem to stern, there was a boat which made for the shore.

The Queen watched, fascinated. The boat held her course for the island. She reached the corner of the reef outside the bay. She swung round it and was to be seen plainly at last in the sheltered water of the harbour. She was a long low boat, narrow, sharply pointed bow and stern. A turret rose amidships. The smooth rounded slope of her deck was broken only by a hand rail which stretched fore and aft from the turret. The Queen had seen no craft like her, but she knew what she was, a submarine.

The Queen seized Kalliope by the arm and pointed to the boat. It was impossible to talk up there on the cliff in the storm. The two girls struggled to their feet. They started on their way back to the palace. Hand in hand, running, tripping, buffeted, breathless, they reached the bottom of the cliff.

The Queen and Kalliope were the first to see the submarine; but when she rounded the corner of the reef and entered the harbour every one on the island was aware of her arrival. From the houses of the village men came out and stood on the beach staring at the strange craft which moved across their bay. In the palace King Konrad Karl saw her and knew at once what she was. The effect her arrival produced on him was curious. Better than any one else on the island except perhaps Smith, he understood the German war spirit and guessed what the coming of the submarine might mean. Yet he seemed actually pleased to see her. He hurried to find Gorman. All the nervous agitation which had set him quarrelling with his Corinne disappeared. The effects of the horrible dullness and intolerable boredom of the past three months dropped away in an instant. The sirocco no longer afflicted him. He greeted Gorman with smiles. He was once more the irrepressible, cheery, street arab among kings, who had swindled the British public with his Vino Regalis, who defied all conventional decencies in his relations with Madame Ypsilante, who had failed to pay his bills in London and tried to outwit the Emperor over the sale of Salissa.

“Gorman,” he said, “my friend Gorman. Once more we are alive. Many things happen. It is a hand of no trumps doubled and redoubled. Gorman, I palpitate, I thrill. We arrive at the moment of destiny. Behold destiny!”

Gorman, who was looking out of the window, saw the submarine, but did not for the moment recognize destiny. He agreed with the King that her arrival made a desirable break in the monotony that oppressed them. But the situation did not strike him as equal in emotional value to a redoubled hand at bridge. The best he hoped for was some fresh company, a little news from the outside world and possibly a bundle of newspapers.

“Submarine?” he said. “English or German, do you think? and what do you suppose she wants here?”

“English, pooh! By this time no English ships are left on the sea. It is an under-water boat of the Emperor, and she comes to seek the petrol stored in the cave.”

“Liable to disappointment then,” said Gorman. “That petrol’s gone.”

“I know it,” said the King, “therefore I say ‘Behold destiny.’ But I, Gorman, I laugh at destiny. I mock. I snap the finger and thumb of my hand. So.” He snapped the fingers of both hands with airy defiance. “I am a king. I play a game until the end. I die game-playing. And Corinne will not grieve too much. On Salissa I think Corinne loves less than in Paris. Hurrah, Gorman. Hip, and hip,

and hurrah, three times."

Gorman was not impressed by this rhapsody. He was not yet sufficiently roused from the bad temper and depression induced by the sirocco to appreciate the King's exalted mood.

"I suppose," he said, "that Donovan will ask the captain to dinner. I hope to goodness he can talk English. There's a lot of news I want to hear."

Donovan, sitting alone in his room, did not see the arrival of the submarine. It was Smith who reported the matter to him.

"Warship of a belligerent nation?" said Donovan.

"Yes, sir; German, sir."

"German or English," said Donovan, "it's the same thing. This is a neutral State and we haven't got any quarrel with either party."

"Yes, sir," said Smith. "Quite so, sir. But, I beg your pardon. She's German."

Donovan thought this over for a minute.

"I appreciate your feelings, Smith," he said, "and I don't deny that your situation might be an awkward one if this wasn't a neutral State. But you're in the service of the Crown of Salissa now, and I reckon that any attempt to inflict punishment on you would be contrary to international law."

"I'm sure you know best, sir."

"That's as good as to say that your interpretation of international law is superior to mine. It may be. But the matter will have to come before the superior courts before anything's settled."

"It's not that, sir," said Smith. "I'm not afraid of the law."

"Oh," said Donovan, "you're inclined to think that the German captain may trample on the law?"

"Seeing as how you've no guns, sir, he might."

"Smith," said Donovan, "just look out of that window and tell me what banner the Queen has flying from the flagpost. Old Glory, isn't it?"

“The American flag, sir. Yes, sir.”

“Well,” said Donovan, “I guess that’s good.”

Smith appears to have been remarkably cool. Both Donovan and Gorman agree that he showed no sign of fear or excitement. Yet he must have known that he was in serious danger. He had been a member of the German Secret Service. He had deserted it, revealed its secrets and acted against his employers. He had very good reason to expect to be hanged or shot within the next couple of hours. He cannot, I imagine, have placed much confidence in the protection afforded by the American flag. But he seems to have had a profound belief in Donovan.

When the Queen and Kalliope, wind torn and dishevelled, reached the palace, it was Smith who met them and in answer to her eager questions told the Queen that the submarine was German. He added that the captain would probably come ashore. He asked where the Queen would like to receive him.

“I’m afraid, your Majesty,” he said, “that there may be some trouble. I mean to say that it won’t be quite a friendly visit to your Majesty. He’ll be expecting a supply of petrol, and——”

The Queen gave a little gasp of surprise. Then she burst into a peal of laughter.

“There’s not a drop left,” she said. “He’ll be just mad. I wonder what he’ll say. Do you think he’ll be rude?”

“Quite possibly, your Majesty,” said Smith. “The Germans haven’t got very good manners.”

“We’ll have him in the big hall, Smith. And we’ll all be there. If he’s nice about the petrol and takes it as a joke we’ll ask him to dinner. If he’s rude he can just go back to his old submarine and sulk by himself.”

Smith was quick in making preparations for the reception in the great hall. But the captain of the submarine reached the landing steps before the party in the palace was ready for him. The Queen hurried into the hall and took her seat on a chair which Smith placed for her. Konrad Karl ran to warn his Corinne to stay in her room and keep the door locked. Smith went to summon Donovan. Gorman, eager now and full of curiosity, stood at the door of the hall to watch the landing of the German officer. As the Queen took her seat he turned to her.

“Hullo,” he said, “it’s our old friend von Moll.”

“*That* man!” said the Queen.

“Funny to think of his turning up here again,” said Gorman. “Hope he’ll keep sober this time.”

Von Moll was sober enough at the moment. He stood very erect, very stern, most awe-inspiring while his men landed, six of them, all armed. Then he tramped up the steps. He halted for a minute on the terrace where the flagstaff was. He gave an order. One of his men drew a knife from a sheath and cut the flag halyard. The Stars and Stripes crumpled up and fluttered down the wind.

Gorman turned to the Queen again.

“Your flag’s gone,” he said. “Von Moll appears to be in a bit of a temper.”

Then he stepped out of the hall and went forward down the path. He held out his hand to von Moll.

“How are you?” he said. “Perfectly beastly day, isn’t it? Any news?”

Von Moll marched on, taking no notice whatever of his friendly greeting. Gorman, smiling pleasantly, followed him towards the hall.

“Been in any more naval battles since we last met?” said Gorman. “By the way, was there any fuss when you got home about that man’s teeth?”

Von Moll stalked into the hall. Gorman followed him.

“It’s no use your pretending not to understand English,” he said. “You talked it splendidly last time you were here.”

Von Moll made no pretence at politeness. He did not even salute the Queen. He looked round him with an insolent glare. Konrad Karl hurried through the door at the far end of the hall and took his place at the Queen’s side. He had a lighted cigarette in his hand. It could not be said of him that he was frightened; but he was certainly excited. He fidgeted nervously with his moustache and his eyes were unusually bright. Von Moll watched him for a minute and then spoke.

“King Konrad Karl,” he said, “you will consider yourself under arrest and be prepared to follow me on board.”

The King gave a little twist to his moustache.

“By whose authority do you give these orders?” he said.

“The Emperor’s.”

Von Moll clicked his heels together and saluted as he spoke. King Konrad Karl shrugged his shoulders. Gorman, determined not to be ignored this time, took von Moll by the arm.

“I say, von Moll,” he said. “After the frightfully impressive way you said that, we ought to have some sort of demonstration. Let’s drink the old boy’s health and say ‘Hoch!’ or whatever the proper thing is. I’m sure you must want a drink, and those swashbucklers of yours”—he looked round at von Moll’s six men—“could hold hands and sing ‘*Deutschland über Alles*.’ It would cheer us all up.”

The Queen looked at von Moll in amazement. Then she glanced at Konrad Karl. While Gorman was speaking she made up her mind to assert herself.

“You forget,” she said, “that King Konrad Karl is my guest, and so are you while you are in my house.”

Donovan, still in his shirt sleeves, looking very tired and hot, slouched into the hall while the Queen spoke. Smith followed him. The Queen, nervous and half frightened in spite of her brave words, turned to him.

“Oh, father,” she said, “I am glad you’ve come.”

Donovan nodded to von Moll.

“Sit right down,” he said, “there’s a chair behind you. You’ll stay for luncheon, won’t you?”

He sat down himself as he spoke and took a cigar out of his case.

“Smith,” he said, “cocktails.”

“Yes, sir,” said Smith.

Von Moll turned to the men behind him and pointed to Smith.

“Arrest that man,” he said.

Two of the sailors stepped forward and crossed the hall towards Smith.

“Say,” said Donovan, “is this a rehearsal for a cinema? and when do you reckon

to have the camera operating?”

“That man,” said von Moll, pointing to Smith, “is a deserter from the service of the Emperor and a spy. He pays the penalty.”

Donovan deliberately cut the end off his cigar and struck a match. Then he looked up at von Moll.

“Seems to me,” he said, “that there’s some kind of misunderstanding. I’m not blaming you, Captain, not at all. But this is a neutral State, and according to international law you can’t butt in and arrest citizens without applying for an extradition order in the regular way.”

“You talk like a fool,” said von Moll. “This is war.”

He gave a fresh order to his men.

“Take him,” he said. “Shoot him on the steps outside.”

Donovan struck a fresh match and lit his cigar. He puffed at it slowly.

“It pains me some,” he said, “to go contrary to my life-long principles. I’m a humanitarian by conviction and I’m opposed to capital punishment. It seems to me that the taking of human life is not justified, and that the advance of civilization, especially in the great republic of which I am a citizen——”

“He is a spy,” said von Moll, “and he dies.”

“You’re hasty, Captain,” said Donovan. “I don’t blame you, but you’re hasty and you haven’t quite tumbled to my meaning. When I spoke of my humanitarian principles I wasn’t thinking of what would happen to Smith. You may shoot him, Captain, and I shall deplore it. But that won’t outrage my convictions any. For I shan’t be responsible, that execution being your affair and not mine. What I was thinking of was how I’d feel when I saw you and every damned one of your pirates hanging at the end of ropes over the edges of the various fancy balconies and other trimmings which adorn this palace. It will be going clean against my principles to arrange that kind of obituary dangle for you, Captain. I may have some trouble soothing my conscience afterwards. But I expect that can be managed. You may call me inconsistent and you may be right. But I’m not a hide-bound doctrinnaire. There are circumstances under which the loftier emanations of humanitarian principle kind of flicker out. The shooting of Smith is a circumstance of that sort. Your treatment of the American flag is another.”

Gorman tells me that he suspected Donovan of attempting a gigantic bluff. He admired the way he did it, but he did not think he could possibly succeed. Donovan did not, so far as Gorman could see, hold in his hand a single card worth putting down on the table. Smith stood, cool and apparently uninterested, between the two sailors who had arrested him. Konrad Karl was lighting and throwing away cigarette after cigarette. The Queen had grown pale at the mention of the shooting of Smith; but she kept her eyes fixed on her father. She did not understand what he was doing, but she had great confidence in him. Von Moll stared at Donovan with an insolent sneer.

"You threaten," he said, "you think that your American Republic——Pah! what is America? You have no army. Your navy is no good. What can you do?"

"You're taking me up wrong again," said Donovan. "I'm not reckoning on America just now. The hanging will be done by the crew of the English ship that I'm expecting to see in this harbour. Not to-day, maybe, or to-morrow, but some time before the end of this darned war."

King Konrad Karl threw away another cigarette.

"Alas and damn!" he said, "by this time there are no longer any English ships."

Gorman was watching von Moll closely. At the mention of an English ship the man's eyes flickered suddenly. For an instant his face changed. A shadow of uneasiness appeared on it. But this passed at once, and the look of insolence took its place. Donovan was also watching.

"There may be one or two left," he said. "I don't say the one that turns up here will be a first-class battle cruiser; but I guess the men on her will be up to the little job of hanging you, Captain. And they'll come. Sure. And you'll be here, just waiting for them."

"I shall be gone," said von Moll. "Not that I fear your English ship. But to-morrow I go, and before I go, to-day—I shoot the spy."

"You misapprehend the situation," said Donovan. "As a warship of a belligerent Power entering a neutral harbour you are liable——"

Von Moll laughed aloud.

"You intern me," he said.

“Well,” drawled Donovan, “I do. Say, Captain, you didn’t drop in here just for the pleasure of shooting Smith and carrying off the King. Those weren’t your main purposes. I’m not an observant man, but I did happen to notice as I left my room that your ship was shifting her anchorage a bit. Now I wouldn’t say that it’s particularly healthy, with a wind like this blowing, for a ship to lie right under those cliffs, slap up against the mouth of a cave. I give you credit, Captain, for knowing your trade as a sailor, and I don’t think that you’d put your ship there unless you wanted something out of that cave, and wanted it pretty bad. What’s more, Captain, you want it in a hurry. Now I may be wrong, but it’s my opinion that what you expect to find there is petrol. That so?”

It was plain—so plain that even King Konrad Karl saw it—that von Moll was disturbed. His confidence was not what it had been earlier in the interview. Donovan went on, speaking with irritating deliberation.

“Now when I said that you were interned in the harbour of this neutral State, Captain, I wasn’t counting on your respect for international law. I wouldn’t risk a dollar on that. What I meant was this. The petrol’s not there. Your darned tanks are empty. I’m not defending the action on economic grounds. It was waste. But that petrol is gone. We ran it off.”

“You have not dared,” said von Moll. “You could not dare——No one but a madman would touch the Emperor’s war stores.”

“I hope,” said Gorman, “that the poor old Emperor won’t have a fit when he hears about it.”

“You may be able to run that ship a mile or two,” said Donovan. “But I reckon you’ll not go far. You were dependent on that petrol? Come now, Captain, own up.”

What von Moll intended to do next I do not know. Gorman is of opinion that he might very well have shot the whole party. He was white with passion.

Donovan rose from his chair, stuck his cigar in a corner of his mouth, and crossed the hall towards the door.

“While you’re sizing up the situation,” he said to von Moll, “I’ll just see if I can’t find that flag that you cut down. It would gratify me to have it flying again. You’d better come with me, Smith. I’m not inclined for climbing poles in this storm. I have to consider my heart.”

Smith stepped forward and followed him. It is interesting to notice that the sailors who guarded him made no attempt to stop him. It is unlikely that they understood English well enough to know what Donovan said to von Moll. But they were somehow aware that their captain's authority was failing.

At the door of the hall Donovan stopped and turned to von Moll.

"Things seem to be happening," he said, "right up to expectation, only more so. I own I didn't look for that British ship quite so soon."

He stood in the doorway and pointed out to sea. Gorman hurried across the hall, passed Donovan and went out. The Queen left her chair and ran to her father's side. Konrad Karl followed her. Von Moll looked round him, astonished, slightly dazed. Then he, too, went out, pushing his way past Donovan.

Outside the reef, plunging and rolling heavily, was a small steamer. She was stumpy, high bowed, low waisted, with a short black funnel. Her bridge and single deck-house were disproportionately high. She was shabby and rusty. She looked insignificant. She was swept frequently with showers of white spray. On her bow and on her funnel could be seen the white letters and numbers which proclaimed her proper business. She was a trawler. In peace times she cast nets for fish in the North Sea. Now she flew the white ensign and on her fore-deck, above the high blunt bows, she carried a gun.

There were men handling the gun amid a smother of spray and the swirl of water round their legs. The deck on which they stood was the worst of all possible gun platforms. In the course of each few minutes it was set at a dozen angles as the little steamer plunged and rolled. But the men fired. Their shot went wide of the submarine which lay in the harbour, and spluttered against the side of the cliff. The trawler staggered on towards the end of the reef. Out of the welter of grey water to windward came another trawler, then a third appeared and a fourth.

Gorman edged up close to von Moll and caught him by the elbow.

"I say, von Moll," he said, "it's jolly lucky for you that you didn't have time to shoot Smith. That ship of yours is a goner, you know. It'll be a jolly sight pleasanter for you to be a prisoner of war than to be dangling about on the end of a rope in this beastly wind. And Donovan would have seen to it that you did swing if you'd shot Smith. There's nobody so vindictive as your humanitarian pacifist, once you get him roused."

The first of the little fleet of trawlers swung round the end of the reef into the sheltered water of the bay. She fired again. Her deck was steady. The target was an easy one. One shell and then another hit the submarine, ripped her thin hull, burst in her vitals.

Half an hour later Maurice Phillips landed on the palace steps.

CHAPTER XXVI

Von Moll, though courteously invited, refused to dine with the Queen that night. Gorman, I think, was sorry for this. He was curious to see how a German naval officer behaves as a prisoner of war. The rest of the party felt that, for once, von Moll had shown good taste. His presence would have interfered with the general cheerfulness.

Donovan tried hard to induce Smith to sit at table, taking his proper position as Head of the Intelligence Department of the State. But the party was a large one. Besides Phillips, who sat next the Queen, the commanders of the three other trawlers dined in the palace. King Konrad Karl appeared decorated with all the stars, badges and ribbons which had fallen to him while he sat on the throne of Megalia. Madame Corinne wore the finest of the dresses she had acquired from the Queen, and was in high good humour, though a little vexed that her pearls were in the keeping of a banker in Paris. Smith felt that on such an occasion the dinner should be properly served, and he dared not leave it to the native servants. After dinner he consented to sit at the foot of the table with a glass of wine in front of him.

Konrad Karl, bubbling with excitement, proposed the Queen's health in a speech full of mangled English idioms. Then he presented the Star of the Megalian Order of the Pink Vulture to Phillips. He took it from his own breast and pinned it on to Phillips' coat with a perfect shower of complimentary phrases. It was not quite clear whether the decoration was meant as a reward for sinking the submarine or for winning the affection of the Queen. Donovan made a speech, a long speech, in which he explained exactly why it was impossible to remain a consistent pacifist in a world which contained Germans. Phillips was dragged to his feet by Gorman. Goaded by the derisive shouts of his three fellow officers he gave a short account of himself.

"There's nothing much to tell," he said. "The whole thing was rather a fluke. I was called up at the beginning of the war. R.N.R., you know. They gave me command of a trawler, a perfectly beastly kind of boat. Been hunting the submarines ever since. Infernal dull job. Heard this fellow was mouching around but couldn't find him. Guessed he'd want supplies sooner or later. Remembered that cave and made a bee line for Salissa. Never so pleased in my life as when I

caught sight of him. But there was such a sea running that we couldn't shoot for nuts. Had to wait till we got inside. Sunk him then. That's all there is to tell."

That, of course, is not all. There is a lot more to tell. What flag flies over Salissa now? Who governs the island? The Emperor knows. Bland-Potterton knows and often tells his friends in confidence. I know. Donovan knows. So does Smith. But we cannot make our knowledge public. Gorman tried, by means of a carefully worded question, to induce the Prime Minister to make a statement in the House of Commons about Salissa. He was told that it was contrary to the public interest that any information should be given. In the face of that it is, of course, impossible for me to write anything. What happened to King Konrad Karl and Madame? Again, I must not give an answer. The censors have decided, quite rightly, that the movements of royal personages are not to be published. Does Smith still act as Donovan's valet, and if so where? It is plain that nothing should be said on this subject. Smith was and may still be the head of the Intelligence Department of Salissa. Information about his doings would be particularly valuable to the enemy.

But I may say that a marriage took place between Lieutenant-Commander Maurice Phillips, R.N.R., and a lady described as "Daisy, daughter of William Peter Donovan, Esq." A bishop officiated. No mention was made in the announcement of the rank and title she held, and perhaps still holds.

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1. Minor changes have been made to correct typesetters' errors; otherwise, every effort has been made to remain true to the author's words and intent.

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