

Roy Lillian Elizabeth

Polly's Southern Cruise



Lillian Roy

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Содержание

CHAPTER I – THE PERFECTED PLANS	5
CHAPTER II – “THEY’RE OFF!”	14
CHAPTER III – THE FIRST NIGHT OUT	20
CHAPTER IV – THE SECOND DAY OUT	25
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	26

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CHAPTER I – THE PERFECTED PLANS

“Well, now, that’s settled!” declared Polly Brewster, as she leaned back in a comfortable arm-chair and scanned her friend who sat hunched over the papers scattered upon the table.

“Settled – but only between us. It remains to be seen how our suggestions will be received by Dalky and Mrs. Courtney,” returned Eleanor Maynard, the young lady just addressed.

“To tell the truth, Nolla,” began Polly in a lowered tone, “I’d much rather sail the seas with Dalky, in his yacht, than venture in a rented craft supervised by Mrs. Courtney – even though she is the dearest thing I ever had for a chaperone!”

Nolla was the nickname given Eleanor, and Dalky was the pet name bestowed upon Mr. Dalken by these two girls – his staunch admirers. As yet they had not discovered an appropriate title to use for their first customer and intimate friend Mrs. Courtney.

“Well, Nolla, seeing we’ve used up carloads of good paper in outlining this itinerary, and worn out the patience of all the clerks in the various Tour Offices, let us act upon our last decision: Propose the plans for our ocean picnic at the general meeting of our friends to-night.”

“It is such a radical change from the trip suggested by Mrs. Courtney, and the outlined voyage desired by Dalky, that I fear we’ll be vetoed in the final ballot,” ventured Eleanor.

“They can only say no to us!” exclaimed Polly, getting up from her chair and gathering in all the now useless sheets of paper which showed where arduous ideas had been expressed upon their white surfaces. But one sheet was left safely at the end of the table. This single sheet was picked up by Eleanor and carefully placed within her script case. The discarded sheets were torn up and thrown into the waste basket.

“We may as well go home and try out the plans on the Fabians,” said Polly, after rearranging the desk-table.

“And see that we look our best for the conquest to-night,” laughed Eleanor, looking about for her hat and coat.

Are you acquainted with Polly and Eleanor? If not, you should be. They are the two friends who were introduced to us several years ago at Pebbly Pit Ranch. Remember? At our first meeting with them these two girls were barely past fourteen; but we founded a firm friendship with them and their immediate companions, at the great Colorado ranch, and this friendship has lasted all through the interesting, and many times thrilling, adventures these girls experienced. To you, who have been denied this friendship, we will introduce our girls.

Polly Brewster, born and reared on her home ranch in the Rockies of Colorado, first met and established a friendship with Eleanor Maynard of Chicago, when Eleanor, attended by her elder sister Barbara and Anne Stewart, spent the summer with the Brewsters at Pebbly Pit Ranch. During that visit the girls, while on a mountain ride, discovered the vein of gold which later developed such amazing phases of interest and trouble for all concerned in its products.

The summer ending, the two young girls, now firm friends, won the consent of their parents to allow them to accompany Anne Stewart to New York City, where Anne was engaged to teach a very high-grade, young ladies’ school. Polly and Eleanor planned to enter this school, and take up interior decorating as an extra study.

Having been admitted to a course at Cooper Union Night Classes, the two girl friends found Mr. Fabian, the lecturer, a most valuable friend. Through Mr. Fabian the girls were enabled to attend many private exhibitions of art goods and antiques, also to go to lectures, visit gatherings

where interior decorating was the subject of discussion, and in other ways reap the benefit of the many years' experience of this gentleman.

During their school years in New York Polly and Eleanor became acquainted with a staunch friend, a Mr. Dalken; and met and became intimate friends with the Ashbys – the Ashby of the famous Ashby Shops on Fifth Avenue, where one may find any rare or antique object known to home-makers or decorators.

Through the acquaintances thus formed the two girls were invited to join the touring party about to start for Europe the year that Polly and Eleanor finished their schooling. After a summer abroad visiting interesting places and seeing all that was worth viewing, the group of Americans returned home.

That fall the two girls decided to enter business in an humble way. They secured desk-room in Mr. Ashby's business house and ventured forth to find and purchase antiques, in order to sell them again at a reasonable profit. The amusing incidents experienced while in search of odd and old objects constitute several chapters of the book called "Polly's Business Venture." At the ending of that book the reader is introduced to Mrs. Courtney, who interested herself in the two young business girls and eventually invited them to accompany her on a cruise to the Southern Seas. Before any plan could be perfected, however, Mr. Dalken hinted at his plan to go on an extended yachting cruise to the Orient. Naturally, he wished a party of his old friends to accompany him; and Polly and Eleanor considered themselves part of that group.

Thus it happened that about the time the present story opens Polly and Eleanor had been planning various itineraries to place before their friends – Mr. Dalken and Mrs. Courtney. It mattered not so much to the girls whether they sailed to the Orient as the guests of Mr. Dalken, or went on a long cruise to the South Sea Islands with Mrs. Courtney, as long as they *went* somewhere! From this state of mind the reader can gather that the Wanderlust had implanted its germ in the consciousness of each of these girls.

Having gathered their papers together the girls left the pretty private office where they were supposed to attend to their business affairs, and started homeward to the Fabian's domicile where they lived. It was too late, upon their arrival at the house, to discuss the tour with either Mr. or Mrs. Fabian, hence they went directly to their rooms and dressed as becomingly as possible, knowing, as they well did, that appearances play an important part in any business, be it pleasure, financial, political or just simple family matters.

Just as Polly had added a huge velvet rose to the girdle of the Parisian dress she had chosen to wear, Nancy Fabian called from the hallway:

"Girls! Are you almost ready? Daddy has been cooling his impatience in the library for the last ten minutes; and mother and I are ready to go down."

"Coming, Nan!" called Polly in answer. "Find out if Nolla is ready, please."

"I'm here – no need to call me," laughed Eleanor, coming from her room as she spoke.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Nancy Fabian. "Why all the fine feathers on our bird, Nolla?"

Mrs. Fabian and Nancy looked at Eleanor's handsome dinner dress with admiration, and Eleanor laughed as she replied to Nancy's query:

"As long as this bird has no wish to be plucked at the argument that is certain to be started on the subject of the sea-trip, she donned her finest feathers to help her win out with Dalky."

At this moment Polly appeared at her room door. She, too, caused Nancy to catch her breath. "Goodness me! I didn't stop to floss up as if we were going to a Court Reception! Why didn't you girls tell me you were going to put on your best?"

"Nancy, dear, don't worry," was Polly's consoling reply. "You haven't the diplomatic work cut out for yourself that Nolla and I have. We have to win Dalky over to a very important agreement to-night, hence these fine togs!"

Mrs. Fabian had been descending the stairs, but she heard what had just been said and she laughed lightly. Soon all four had reached the front hall where Mr. Fabian paced the floor.

"My dear girls! You know how I dislike being late to a host's dinner party! Here it is ten minutes past the time we were to present ourselves at Dalky's apartment." As he spoke Mr. Fabian took his watch from his pocket and displayed its face to the tardy young ladies. But they never stopped to glance at it.

"Daddy, dear, stop scolding, and hurry out to the car," said Nancy, giving her father a loving push towards the front door.

"There's one consolation in knowing we won't be the last guests at Dalky's dinner to-night," remarked Eleanor, as they settled themselves in the limousine which Mr. Dalken had sent for their use that evening.

"Why – what do you mean?" asked Mrs. Fabian, wonderingly.

"Mrs. Courtney! She'll be ten minutes later than this unit," replied Eleanor.

"How do you know that?" asked Nancy.

"Just before we left the office she called us on the telephone to ask if we had decided upon a plan for our cruise, and we replied that we had it all outlined. Then she told us she might be detained downtown where she was then, and that we were to tell Mr. Dalken not to wait dinner for her. She would come in as soon as she could, but even at that she might be half an hour after the time he mentioned in his note to her."

As Mr. Dalken's bachelor apartment was but a short drive from the Fabian's residence, the chauffeur soon stopped before the door and the girls prepared to get out. A few minutes later they were being welcomed by their smiling host. Then he scolded.

"Late as usual! Not that I would include Mr. Fabian in that rebuke, because a man is *never* late – especially when it is a dinner. But the ladies! Ah me! So many valuable hours wasted before a mirror, and who for – tell me that! For a number of old fogies like Ashby, Fabian and myself."

But the ladies laughed his scolding to silence. They knew their host! He was the pink of neatness himself, and he always noticed the gowns and general appearances of his lady guests.

"Who's coming to-night, Dalky?" asked Polly, not waiting to answer his rebuke about being late.

"Oh, the Ashbys are already here; then there will be Mrs. Courtney, who will be late, of course, and my daughter Elizabeth. She ought to have been here before this."

As he spoke he threw open the door of the guestroom and ushered his friends in; but taking Mr. Fabian by the arm to show him into his own suite of rooms.

As soon as the door of the guestroom was closed Polly glanced at her three companions who were silently exchanging looks with each other. Then Eleanor whispered her opinion:

"Elizabeth! Of all the world she is the last I should have expected here to-night. I just know her mother sent her to pry into Dalky's plans for this cruise. Naturally, such a woman would have heard about her ex-husband's plans for the next few months."

Polly frowned at this declaration, but Mrs. Fabian, always anxious to give a person the benefit of a doubt, remarked kindly: "We must remember that Elizabeth is her father's only child. Perhaps she is dining here this evening by accident – not by planning."

But Eleanor flared up in defence of her friend Dalky. "If you knew that girl as well as Polly and I understand her from school days, you'd not take this generous view of her and her mother's schemes. I only hope Dalky hasn't any idea of inviting her to go with us on his yachting cruise. She'd just spoil all the fun for me!"

"With Elizabeth present at the table I'd feel embarrassed in speaking of our plan, Nolla; or of saying a word about any cruise," added Polly, seriously.

"Yes, that's just it: Elizabeth is a kill-joy for every one wherever she goes," was Eleanor's angry retort.

“Well, girls, let us not excite ourselves before we know why Elizabeth is present to-night. Plenty of time to talk over her lack of amiability when we discover she will be a member of Dalky’s party,” advised Mrs. Fabian, moving towards the door of the dressing room.

As she opened it the four friends who were ready to leave fell back because the object of their criticism stood upon the threshold.

“Oh, dear!” cried the girl with a pretty pretence of feeling surprise, as she quickly placed her hands over her heart. “I was told to leave my wraps in Daddy’s guestroom, but I was not aware that it was occupied. I’m sorry if I startled you as I have been.”

Elizabeth Dalken was the fashionable product of New York’s ultra society – at least she and her mother liked to believe they were embraced upon that clannish upper-plane. But it is doubtful if one of the Four Hundred even dreamed of there being such aspirants to recognition.

The girl was very pretty, in an appealing ingenue way, her type being of the clinging order. Her features were regular enough, but lacked all signs of confidence or character. Her hair was beautiful, being of the wavy, fluffy, gold shade of blonde. Were it not for her stylish apparel, and the lines produced by the highest-priced tailor and mantua-maker in the country, Elizabeth’s figure might have been termed awkward, and her natural carriage ungainly. But style hides a multitude of short-comings!

The Fabians, as well as Polly and Eleanor, were acquainted with Elizabeth Dalken, so, after a few words of greeting, they left the room to the new guest. Needless to add that Elizabeth found it necessary to remain in the room for four times the length of time the other four guests had occupied it. But they had not felt the need of touching up their lips, or relining their brows with a pencil, nor, indeed, to add a rosy hue to their healthy complexions. Elizabeth was about to send a last glance at the long mirror to see that her gown was faultless, when the bell summoned Mr. Dalken to his entrance door. This time the new comer called forth a chorus of merry welcomes from the group of guests in the living room, the archway of which offered a good view of the front door and the reception hall.

“Welcome, Mrs. Courtney! Glad you found it possible to get here before dinner is announced,” said Mr. Dalken, smiling upon his guest.

“Oh! I am glad, too! I thought you would be through the first course, as it is really half an hour past the time you said,” remarked Mrs. Courtney, releasing her small gloved hand from the unconscious hold of her host’s warm clasp. He had been appraising her beauty and appearance and forgot he held her hand.

“Come to the guestroom, Mrs. Courtney. My little girl Elizabeth is still there, and she will be delighted to meet you and render any little service you may need. You see, a confirmed bachelor as I am, fails to provide a maid or other necessities for ladies when they deign to dine at his rooms.” As he spoke, Mr. Dalken ushered Mrs. Courtney to the guestroom door. Then he paused and knocked upon the panel.

Elizabeth threw the door open, appearing as a radiant vision to her father, who said: “Ah, Tots! Here is a friend of mine. In the absence of a maid, I know you will be happy to assist in any way. Mrs. Courtney, my daughter Elizabeth; Totty, Mrs. Courtney.”

Without waiting to see if this meeting proved to be harmonious, Mr. Dalken closed the door upon Mrs. Courtney, and hurried to his valet-cook to say that the last guest expected had just arrived. Karl nodded his head silently, and proceeded to instruct the Japanese servant to turn up the lights in the diningroom.

At the closing of the guestroom door Elizabeth turned and purred sweetly upon the lady to whom she had just been introduced. She seemed over-eager to assist in removing the handsome evening wrap, and she stood hovering near while Mrs. Courtney stood before the dressing mirror to arrange her crushed hair. The girl babbled of many things, but with all her babbling she never lost sight of one detail of the lady’s costume and make-up, and of the possible valuation of the

magnificent diamonds and pearls which adorned her person. The jewelry caused pangs of envy in Elizabeth's soul, for she was mad over jewels.

Out in the living-room, the waiting guests amused themselves.

"Before we prepare any further arguments to win our case before the tribunal of the higher authorities, we'd better sit back and watch whether this will be a proper evening to throw the bomb," remarked Polly, dryly, to her chum Eleanor.

"But this is the reason we are all assembled at dinner to-night!" exclaimed Eleanor, impatiently. "Dalky wants to get away from New York without further delay, you know."

"Well, I don't know! Only do be circumspect, Nolla, in the presence of Elizabeth. We know her, and we do not know what she might say or do to make trouble for our dear Dalky, if she once finds that he plans to take us all on a long cruise."

"She can't say or make any trouble for him, that I can see!" retorted Eleanor. "That woman got her divorce, all right, and is married hard and fast to that awful suitor, so what other trouble can be started after that?"

Polly did not reply, but she shook her head sympathetically. The sympathy, Eleanor understood, was all for "Poor Dalky!"

Mrs. Courtney and Elizabeth now came from the guest-room, Elizabeth smiling sweetly, and Mrs. Courtney with her well-set head held a trifle higher than was her wont, and with two bright spots of crimson touching her cheeks with the hue of restrained blood which must be dancing in her veins. Her eyes, when she looked at Polly, were shooting sparks, but these soon disappeared after she shook hands with her friends who were glad to see her.

"See that!" whispered Eleanor quickly to Polly. "That sweet little wasp has stung Mrs. Courtney with something she has said, or hinted at!"

"So it seems. I wish I knew what to do," mused Polly.

"Just wait and keep your eyes and ears wide open. We'll catch Elizabeth in any little plot she or her mother may have planned," declared Eleanor.

At this moment the Japanese attendant came to the door and announced dinner. The friendly party, being so informal, grouped itself about Mr. Dalken and all moved slowly towards the dining-room – all but Elizabeth Dalken. While all her companions walked from the living-room to the diningroom, listening to her father's account of a wonderful catch of fish in the Maine streams, she had managed to get away unseen and enter the guestroom. Behind the closed door of the room she found what she had planned to secure. Information.

Mr. Dalken designated their seats to his friends, and turning to Mrs. Courtney said, politely: "As you are a guest in my home for the first time I have assigned the seat of honor to you – at my right. Of course, I had to beg permission of Polly and Nolla before daring to trespass upon their rights, – they generally fight for this place."

Polly smiled and tossed her head, but Eleanor vehemently denied any such weakness, while the adults in the party laughed at their host's teasing ways. Mr. Dalken, meantime, had been searching for his daughter Elizabeth. She was not to be seen.

"Why! This is strange; did not Elizabeth come to the diningroom just now?" asked he in amazement of his guests.

The guests looked from one to another in surprise. They all believed the girl to have been present with them. Before Mr. Dalken had time to send the servant to find the missing daughter, however, she ran from the dressingroom and hurried to the diningroom.

"Pardon my absence, Daddy," was her call before he had time to ask what was wrong. "I just *had* to dab my nose a bit, you know." She laughed lightly as though it would be understood how important a deed was the powdering of a nose.

Mr. Dalken patted the fluffy yellow head as Elizabeth slid into her chair. Then the servant was signalled to serve. Polly prodded Eleanor, who sat next her at the table, with her foot under cover of the long damask cloth. And Eleanor glanced at her friend to see what she meant to convey to her.

In a very low voice Polly said: "Don't you say a word, hear me, Nolla? Wait till we know what Elizabeth wants to know."

Eleanor winked knowingly. At the same time Mr. Dalken tossed the conversational ball into the arena for all to catch.

"Friends and fellow-countrymen," began he, clearing his throat impressively, "we are assembled together this evening in order that the important event of taking a trip around the world may be duly discussed. After the arguments for and against the cruise in my yacht are heard, the chairman – that is myself – will allow two minutes to the argument for or against the acceptance of Mrs. Courtney's offer to sail to the South Seas in her craft. The meeting is now open for all members of this party."

Mr. Dalken then rubbed his hands vigorously as if to say he was washing them of all trouble henceforth. If the members in the party came to blows over their debate it would be nothing to him! His guests, understanding his action, laughed at him and bade him sit down.

"At least, Mr. Chairman, you might tell us the names of the speakers we are supposed to hear from this evening," laughed Mr. Fabian.

"The first speaker to be heard from this evening, is our capable globe-trotter Mr. Fabian," retorted Mr. Dalken without hesitation. A laugh greeted this introduction, but the servant was placing the first course before the hungry guests and it was silently agreed to give the first attention to the most important matter of food.

During the next three courses there were many suggestions, and merry arguments from the friends about that board, but Elizabeth Dalken, never missing a word or look of those who were concerned in the cruise planned, kept silence. She felt that she could work better and safer by getting the viewpoints of others and not showing her cards.

With the fourth course, however, Mr. Dalken seemed to feel certain of his own cruise being the accepted one. He turned to gloat politely over Mrs. Courtney's defeat, when Mr. Ashby spoke.

"The only reason I feel inclined to vote for the Orient in Dalken's yacht, is a selfish one: I would like immensely to be one of the party on this merry voyage, but I would not dare go on board a yacht that is destined for the South Seas. I would have no jumping-off place, in order to get me back to New York for the busy season. Now, should you all choose Dalky's plan to go to Japan, I can remain with you until we reach Hawaii, there I can catch a fast steamship back to San Francisco, thence speed home to New York. Them's my sentiments, fren's!" concluded Mr. Ashby.

By the time the salad was served every one but Polly, Eleanor and Elizabeth had been drawn into the discussion. It took great self-control for the two girl-partners to keep silence in this vital and interesting debate.

Finally, Mr. Dalken turned to Eleanor and said: "In all my experience, this is the first time I have not heard Nolla have a say after every other orator. Either she has nothing *to* say, or she is waiting to drop a bomb upon our heads when we have said all we know."

Eleanor laughed. "That's just it! When you all are through I'll say my little piece, and I'm sure it will take away your breath."

The friends laughed, for they understood Eleanor and liked to urge her to discuss her egotistical opinions – often they were well worth hearing, too. Polly could not help sending Elizabeth a glance. The girl kept her eyes fixed upon her plate, defying Polly's scrutiny.

Mr. Dalken held up a hand as he commanded: "Silence in this Court. Our wise Judge will now render an opinion!"

Eleanor instantly took up his line of chaff, and, midst the laughter, bowing politely, said in a dignified manner: "I thank you, Mr. Sheriff. As the Honorable Judge of this trial at Court I wish to

give my opinion, and possibly a verdict. Has the prisoner at the bar anything more to say in behalf of her plan to sail the South Seas?"

A condescending bow to Mrs. Courtney told those at the table that she must be the prisoner who committed the crime of planning an impossible voyage. Mrs. Courtney smiled and shook her head to signify she had had her say.

"Ahem!" began Eleanor; then remembering that Polly had the papers upon which they had outlined the cruise as they wished to have it, she turned and bowed in her direction. "Will the Counsel for the State kindly read the evidence in the case under argument?"

Polly laughed, but Mr. Dalken said: "What a pity I missed having such a wise judge at court in the days when I tried my cases. I am sure I might have won every case I argued."

This brought forth a general laugh at Eleanor's expense but little cared she, because she had an axe to grind and such an insignificant matter as a laugh cost her nothing.

Polly now opened the typewritten page she had taken from the girdle of her gown and glanced at the opening words. Then she explained: "This is a plan worked out by Nolla and myself. Before I mention the very good reasons for choosing this plan, I wish to outline the plan itself. Then Nolla will say why we selected this cruise, and tell you the points in favor of choosing it."

Polly now read: "We decide upon Dalky's yacht, because it is cheaper than leasing a craft; it is more luxurious than any hired boat could ever be; it is claimed to be absolutely safe to sail the most dangerous seas; and, best of all, Dalky is our sworn ally and gives Nolla and me our own way in almost everything. That's that!"

The reasons for taking Mr. Dalken's yacht caused a hearty laugh at his expense; but Polly continued reading without a pause, and the laugh was hushed soon in order that the audience might not lose one word of her plans.

"We agree with Dalky in choosing a voyage which will take us to the West Indies where we can visit many interesting points generally visited by other tourists; we also agree with him that a trip through the Panama Canal will be not only most instructive to us all but it will also prove to be a short cut for my plan of the continued cruise. Thus far, – that is until we reach the Pacific Ocean – we have agreed to follow Dalky's outline of the trip.

"But once having reached the Pacific, we begin to see a fascination in sailing south – not to the Cannibal Islands, but southward as far as Peru. To those who have never visited Peru it might be told, that here is a sight worth seeing: the famous land that gave birth to the tubers known to us as potatoes; also the land of the Incas."

Polly interrupted herself at this point to say: "Friends, you may *think* I copied all this from the travelogue issued by the South American Steamship Line, but I assure you I did *not*! The circular given the public by that steamship company never mentions the fact that Peru was the motherland that first produced the potato to the world at the time when Pizarro found himself ship-wrecked upon its shores. Hence this is original information discovered by Nolla and myself at the time of the War Famine of potatoes in this country." Then Polly turned her attention to the reading of the paper.

"Well, having visited all the novel places to be seen in Peru, and having eaten our fill of Peruvian Bark, we resume our cruise and next stop at Valparaiso. At this point Dalky orders his Captain to take the yacht around Cape Horn, then northwards to Buenos Aires, where he might dock and wait for us to join him. We will take the Trans-Andean trip across the continental divide and thus reach Argentina. As an inducement to Dalky to agree with us to take this trip, we can offer him many fine investments at Buenos Aires – investments which promise the financier a return of a thousand per cent in six months' time. It's so, because I read it in a column of a South American newspaper!"

Mr. Dalken was well known to be a daring gambler in the stock market, hence this thrust caused his guests to laugh heartily at his weakness. But Elizabeth frowned at what she termed insolence on the part of Polly.

Mr. Dalken now interpolated: "From Buenos Aires we will sail to Rio de Janeiro, and remain there to visit the great Fair. Having spent five years' allowance in seeing the buildings and going to all the bazaars at the Fair, we return to the yacht too bankrupt to tip the natives who crowd about us for pennies."

"No, no, Dalky! There you are wrong. With Nolla and me to act as bankers there will be no danger of bankruptcy," laughed Polly.

"All right then! As long as you agree to keep us out of bankruptcy in order that we may safely return to New York," retorted Mr. Dalken.

"What was your next point of interest on the route?"

"Well, after doing the Fair we decided to coast along the shores of Brazil and eventually touch at Guiana, then continue to the Barbados. Thence back to little old New York!"

The guests, and Mr. Dalken as well, listened with intense interest to such a cruise, and finally, having discussed the plan from every point of view, it was unanimously agreed that such a voyage would offer the most interesting sights, and prove to be admirable in every other way. Those who wished to remain on the yacht for a short time only, could leave the tourists at Havana, Panama, or any other port where steamships are constantly sailing to New York. Those who found it impossible to leave New York as soon as the party wished to sail, could reach Havana or Panama by rail and board the yacht at the time it touched at those ports. Thus it was decided that Polly and Eleanor's plan had been the best yet offered.

The evening had been well spent, thought Polly and Eleanor, when it was all but agreed upon that the South American cruise should be the one chosen for the Dalken party. But Elizabeth Dalken had kept absolutely silent during the discussion of the trip. Finally, her father turned and smiled upon her, and said: "Well, little girl! Do you thrill at such a wonderful voyage?"

Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders in the French way she had acquired from her mother, and remarked in a colorless tone: "It will prove to be such a bore at the Fair in Rio – this mixing with common people from all over the world! I hear the railroads and the majority of southern steamship lines are offering cheap excursions there and back to induce trades-people to take the trip. I would rather take a trip to Japan and leave South America to such a time as the common folk need not be met."

Mr. Dalken flushed painfully. He was a genuine democrat in everything but politics, hence this attitude of his daughter's, an attitude fostered by her society mother, hurt his feelings. However, the friends gathered with him that evening, understood perfectly why Elizabeth rendered such poor judgment, and they quickly consoled their host for the humiliation he had endured.

"Dalky, it is your privilege to decide as you please for this cruise. As invited guests we accept, without a word of condemnation or dissatisfaction, whatever you do. We firmly believe that your society and the wonderful offer of taking us with you on the cruise, no matter where it be, will reward us for any personal or selfish desire to sail elsewhere." Thus said Mr. Ashby, the best and closest friend of Mr. Dalken.

Mr. Fabian added instantly: "And the association with such a man as we know you to be, Dalken, will soon wear away any sense of being thrown with common folk, even though we meet a few samples of ordinary tradesmen while in Rio de Janeiro. We have to suffer them in New York, more than at any other place in the world, you know. I doubt if they will cause us to regret this cruise." As Mr. Fabian included Elizabeth in this speech to her father, it was manifest to all present that it was meant for a mild rebuke to her arrogance.

"Well, we will mull over the plan and render our verdict at an early day," remarked Mr. Dalken, hoping to placate his daughter and win her approval for the cruise, but Elizabeth refused to be pleased, and announced with impatience: "I must be going home, now, Daddy. I promised Mother that I'd leave here before ten."

Without another word, she crossed the living room and hurried to the guest-room for her wraps. Her father followed with an uncertain mien. Polly instantly jumped up and followed after Elizabeth. As she passed the host she remarked: "I'll attend to Elizabeth, Dalky."

But the girl refused to accept any attention from Polly, and soon after she had donned her hat and wrap she came forth and said good-night to the assembled guests. Mr. Dalken accompanied her to the elevator, mildly persuading her to change her mind. The lift arrived at the door, and Elizabeth pecked at her father's chin, then left as if she had never heard one word of his persuasion.

Eleanor leaned close to Polly's ear and murmured: "From all forecasts from the weather bureau, I should judge that we are in for nasty weather on this cruise; I am surprised that Dalky could be so short-sighted as this."

And Polly replied in the same subdued tone: "It looks most suspicious to me, Nolla. Perhaps that mother of Elizabeth's heard of a certain handsome woman whom I might mention, and fears, should Dalky marry again, that Elizabeth might not get her father's fortune. You know how tender hearted is Dalky where anything concerns his daughter. If she asked him to take her to the North Pole he would try and obey her wish."

"Then you believe that she got Dalky to invite her on this cruise?" wondered Eleanor.

"From all I heard and saw to-night, I certainly do! I think Dalky was pleased that she wished to go with him, and agreed instantly without stopping to think how such an addition might give the entire party the odd member who opposes whatever is suggested for the mutual enjoyment of all."

"I believe you are right, Polly," said Eleanor. "And if it turns out that Elizabeth Dalken becomes a member of our cruising party, it will behoove us to protect Mrs. Courtney from her thrusts, and spare her as many bites from the sharp tongue which we know Elizabeth wags as is possible for us to do."

With Elizabeth gone the others in the group gathered at Mr. Dalken's apartment felt freer to talk over plans and propositions for the yachting trip the host so magnanimously offered. Before they said good-night and departed from Mr. Dalken's that evening, it was agreed to try out the plan presented by Polly and Eleanor. Should they find it disagreeable, by the time they reached Panama, they could continue the cruise to Japan from that point.

CHAPTER II – “THEY'RE OFF!”

The result of that evening's discussion at Mr. Dalken's apartment was soon revealed to those interested in the cruise. After certain sundry meetings at different places such as Ashby's Shop where the friends grouped in Polly's office, at Fabian's dinner table, and at Mrs. Ashby's home of an evening, it was decided that the trip outlined by Polly and Eleanor at Mr. Dalken's dinner party was the most alluring of any. Hence it was agreed to follow their plan.

Once it was decided to cruise to South America the next question to decide was when to start. Unanimously it was agreed to start the following week. The yacht needed no overhauling as it was always kept in perfect order to sail at a few hours' notice. Mr. Dalken seemed anxious to get away from the City, saying his doctor ordered him to go without delay, and the girls were more than anxious to get away.

The days following the sudden decision to start in a week's time, were filled with hurrying, scurrying females of the party, especially Elizabeth Dalken. She shopped as if she expected to visit an Emperor and attend Court instead of going on board her father's private Yacht for a pleasure trip to South America.

Everybody felt it necessary to advise everybody else about what to take and what not to take. It seemed to Polly that the days fairly *crept* by, instead of galloping past as they had been wont to do in the last three years. But everything comes to an end – even long, tedious waiting for a certain day to arrive. And then the day came – a day of unusual sunshine and balmy breezes: a perfect day for a sea voyage to begin.

To the two eager girls who waved last goodbys to the maids at the Fabian home it seemed that there never had been such a crowded week of work as the one just finished. As the auto started to the Yacht Club wharf, even Mr. Fabian, usually so peaceful and quiet, sighed as if he, too, felt thankful that the rush and confusion was over.

“Goodness me! Look at the crowd waiting on the dock to see us off!” cried Polly, looking from the window of the car.

Eleanor looked and exclaimed at the unexpected number of groups, whereas it had been expected that only a few of the young men would be present to bid the girls goodbye. Mr. and Mrs. Ashby and Ruth, Mrs. Courtney and Elizabeth Dalken expected to be on board the yacht; and Eleanor Maynard's father from Chicago had wired that he would wait at Jacksonville, Florida, for them to pick him up, as he had found it impossible to leave his banking affairs in time to start with them from New York. Polly's father and mother were at Pebbly Pit and they wired their regrets that they could not join the merry mariners, but John and Anne expected to arrive in New York in time to say goodbye to the party. Then where could these many people have come from? It was soon explained.

As the Fabian car came up close to the Dalken yacht, Mr. Fabian leaned out of the open window to try and see if he recognized the number of friends who had come to wish them *bon voyage*. When he drew back into the automobile he was smiling. The girls had no time to ask him the cause of his amusement, because the chauffeur stopped the car and immediately, a number of handsome young men crowded close to the door and began showering questions upon the youthful occupants.

Then Polly got out and looked around, fully expecting to find her father and mother waiting to surprise her at her sailing away for the adventure to Southern Seas. But the girls were doomed to a fall in their vanity – thinking all these persons on the dock were assembled to bid them goodbye! To their chagrin they saw that the majority of merry-makers were there to see another family of friends off! not one of them had the slightest acquaintance with Mr. Dalken's party.

In the group eagerly waiting for the last arrivals – the unit composed of Mr. and Mrs. Fabian and Nancy, Polly and Eleanor, – were to be seen our old friends Mr. and Mrs. Latimer and Tom. Tom had come all the way from the mine at Pebbly Pit in order to see Polly, and hold her hand just once before having her go so far away. There, too, were Dr. and Mrs. Evans and Kenneth; John Baxter and Mrs. Courtney. Evidently the owner of the yacht and his daughter Elizabeth were already on board, as a shout, to attract Polly's attention to the beautiful craft, came from a number of young persons who were talking in the prow of the yacht.

"Look, Nolla! Isn't that Paul Stewart and Pete Maynard up there with Elizabeth Dalken?" whispered Polly hurriedly, as she tried to see who were the individual members in the group.

"Well! If that doesn't beat all! Come on, Poll – let's run in and shake hands. I haven't had a word with Paul for so long that my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth." And Eleanor ran.

Polly was forcibly detained at the moment she started to follow Eleanor. Tom Latimer had caught hold of her coat sleeve and was saying: "Aren't you going to wait here to see John and Anne when they arrive?"

"Oh! Aren't we all going on board? Why not visit with John and Anne, and all the rest of you, while on the yacht?" asked Polly.

Tom always became humble when in Polly's presence, and this occasion was no exception to the rule. He meekly followed at Polly's heels as she led the way up the steps of the wharf to the gangplank. In another moment Polly was surrounded by her young friends and dragged to the luxurious lounging room on the deck, where wicker chairs and tables and divans invited one to sit and enjoy life.

A few moments after seating herself in one of the wide-armed chairs – chosen in order to compel Tom to select another chair and not try to squeeze close to her side as he would have done had she seated herself on the divan – Polly saw Mr. Dalken hurrying to join the group of young friends.

"Oh, Polly! I had a 'phone message from John – he says Anne and he just got in at Grand Central and would hurry here in a taxi. He must be almost here by this time, I judge, so you keep on the look-out for them, will you? I have so many other things to attend to," was Mr. Dalken's request.

"All right, Dalky! Go on and do your duty, but don't kill yourself working for others – as you always do," laughed Polly, waving a hand at him.

"There, Polly! Now you'd better come with me and stand at the rail to watch for your brother and Anne," advised Tom, anxiously.

"Yes? and have you stand there and talk nonsense to me, eh," laughed Polly, softly, in order that others might not hear.

Tom bit his lip. Polly knew she was uncharitable, but she rebelled at Tom's constant tagging her when she wanted to enjoy the company of other friends, too, and she generally spoke impulsively and regretted it later.

At this crisis between the two conditional lovers, Eleanor unconsciously played the good fairy by drawing Polly's attention to a little side-play between Elizabeth and Pete Maynard. They had quietly withdrawn from the group of young people and were now enjoying a tête-à-tête back of the funnel which acted as a partial screen for them.

"I just wanted to say that Elizabeth's mother has trained her carefully to encourage only such young men as can show an attractive bank-roll. Totty never deigned to notice Ken and Paul, but quickly attached herself to Pete. Well, Pete is playing the same game as Elizabeth's mother plays, and Dad knows too much to let Pete use *his* money for fortune hunters!" was Eleanor's sarcastic remark.

"But you must remember, Nolla, Totty isn't what one might call a fortune-hunter, any more than Pete is. Mr. Dalken has no other heir to his wealth, and some day Elizabeth will have more than she can use," remonstrated Polly.

“Pooh! Mr. Dalken is a handsome youngish man, Polly, and our Mrs. Courtney is a fascinating, lonely youngish woman – there!”

At such frank match-making between the two girls, Tom Latimer gasped. The girls laughed at his shocked expression, and Eleanor added in a whisper: “Tom, old dear, why do you think Elizabeth’s mother sent her on this cruise with the father who is so heartily detested by the social moth, and has been completely ignored for years?”

“W-e-ell,” stammered Tom, innocently, “I’m sure I don’t know. Now that you mention it, I think I can see a little light.”

Eleanor laughed as she patted Tom on the back. “That’s a good boy! Go to the head of the class!”

Just as a taxi drove recklessly up to the wharf, the whistle on the yacht blew a terrific blast. Every one glanced apprehensively at the pilot house to see what this meant. Surely the Captain had no intentions of leaving then and there! Mr. Dalken was seen to hurry to the Captain’s room to inquire into the unexpected signal.

John and Anne hurried on board and were soon surrounded by welcoming friends, Polly the center of the group. All concern over the whistle was forgotten in the gossip about the gold mine and all the doings at Pebbly Pit Ranch. Anne had many packages to deliver to Polly from her mother, and John had advices galore from her father.

At a second warning call from the ear-splitting siren Mr. Dalken came hurrying from the Captain’s room. His face expressed impatience as he joined his friends. They paused in their noisy conversation to hear what he wished to say.

“Captain Blake tells me that the pilot he has on board to take us out as far as Sandy Hook declares he will leave this boat unless he can get started at once. He avers that he is losing the tide, as well as other jobs he signed up for. If he leaves us that means we will have to delay our start until to-morrow,” explained Mr. Dalken.

“Oh, no, no!” sounded from several young throats, as their owners crowded about Mr. Dalken to give good reasons why they should start at once.

“But we just got here!” cried John in a disappointed tone.

“That’s your loss – you ought to collect damages from the Twentieth Century Limited,” retorted Eleanor.

“Oh, if only John and Anne would remain on board with us and go as far as Jacksonville, where we expect to touch to pick up Nolla’s father!” exclaimed Polly, eagerly.

“Say, John, that’s a capital idea! Why not do it?” asked Mr. Dalken, quickly.

“What of my baggage at the Grand Central – and the rooms we wired to hold for us from today?” queried John.

“I’ll see to the trunk, John, and one of the others will cancel the reservation at the hotel,” offered Kenneth Evans.

During the eager talk occasioned by Polly’s suggestion, Tom Latimer seemed very thoughtful. When it was finally decided that John and his wife would remain as Mr. Dalken’s guests as far as Florida, Tom deliberately spoke up! “I’ll reconsider my refusal to be one of your party as far as Jacksonville, Mr. Dalken. John and I have so many important business matters to discuss at once, that this short voyage will give us the opportunity we need.”

Polly looked amazed, and a general smile rippled the faces of all the others present. They knew only too well what Tom’s important business matters consisted of.

“That’s too bad of you, Tom,” exclaimed Polly, daringly. “I had hoped to have a few words with my brother myself; now that all your time will be engaged in business affairs I shall have to attach my company to another champion until we reach Florida.”

Tom sulked at these words and a number of the friends in the group laughed outright. But the sudden shrill blast overhead summarily disposed of such trifles as a lover’s scene. “There!”

declared Mr. Dalken. "That's the last call he'll give us, he said. If we don't obey his orders he'll leave at once."

This rude manner of sending his guests away seemed to hurt Mr. Dalken's gentle heart, but his friends laughed at his concern.

Midst shouts of goodbys and many advices to the would-be mariners, the visiting party hurried from the yacht, leaving Tom and John and Anne on deck with those remaining for the cruise.

Just as the friends on shore hoped to see the sailor cast off the rope which had been looped about the heavy post on the wharf, a frenzied cry from a young man seen to be racing like mad down the walk to the dock, drew all attention that way. Even the Captain watched the sprinter to see what might be wrong at the last minute.

It turned out to be Jim Latimer laden with boxes of bon bons and flowers. He had sent Ken on ahead to tell the girls he was hunting in the locality for proper little memos of his faithful love for them all, but Kenneth had forgotten to mention it.

"Heigh, there!" shouted Jim, furiously, to the man he saw grinning from the pilot house, "don't you start until I get on with these presents!"

Jim's father tried to prevent his son from springing on board the yacht where all hands were hastening to cast off, but Jim had not become an expert football player on Yale's team for nothing.

In a few giant leaps he was on board and in a few more strides he joined the young people. Naturally the young contingent congratulated him upon arriving just in time, and the elders laughed tolerantly.

"Think I was going to chase all over the West Side for decent candies and flowers and then get left at the last moment?" demanded Jim, mopping his perspiring face with his handkerchief.

"You're just in time to say goodby and get off again," hinted his brother Tom, who felt that his temperamental younger brother might interrupt his planned tête-à-têtes with Polly that evening.

"Leave nothing!" retorted Jim. "I'll get off where you do." His hearers laughed.

"I'm sailing with them as far as Florida," remarked Tom, coolly.

"Yeh! Then so am I!" was all Jim said, as he turned away to look for Mr. Dalken.

A last and final shriek from the whistle sounded, and at the same time a voice bawled out orders. The Captain was seen watching the group of young friends, but his face looked like a black thunder-cloud. It was evident to all that not only the Captain, but the owner of the yacht, as well, were in no good humor at the behavior of the pilot. But the pilot cared nothing for friendship or lovers, and he did care for his capacity to earn dollars.

Paul shouted to his companions to run for the gang-plank, when he saw two sailors stand ready to cast off. Before Paul could warn his friends of the need of haste, a loud voice bawled: "Stand ready to cast off lines!" Then quickly followed the command: "Cast off!"

At the same moment the ropes which had moored the yacht to her dock were deftly thrown, and in another minute the beautiful craft was under way. Mr. Dalken stood amazed at such action, and the young men thus trapped and about to be carried away on the voyage, began to stutter and stammer and wonder what had best be done.

The girls, considering the manner in which their gallants had been duly warned and then punished for not obeying the orders, laughed uneasily at the result of such deafness to the siren's command. On the pier stood a group of wide-eyed, open-mouthed elders who felt on the verge of nervous collapse when they had time to remember that this departing vessel was bound for South America, and those young men were not prepared to take that trip.

Mr. Dalken ran to the Captain's quarters and there he remained, instead of returning to the deck to comfort the troubled souls of the male admirers who had been so neatly snared.

The yacht ran smoothly through the tawny waters of the Hudson River, and headed for the Statue of Liberty. Though the girls, as well as the trapped boys, were deeply concerned over the outcome of this action on the Captain's part, they confessed to each other that it was thrilling when

one realized how neatly they had been kidnapped. And then, too, what jolly times they all might have on the days and nights of this marvellous cruise!

Tom reminded Polly, as the yacht shot past the Statue, of that experience they had shared the night that same yacht collided with the ferryboat in the fog, and the unexpected dive and swim they were given – a swim that all but ended fatally for Polly.

Elizabeth had joined the other young people by this time, and she asked to be told the circumstance of that adventure on Bedloe's Island. While describing that thrilling incident, Tom gave his attention to Elizabeth, thus he failed to notice that Polly slipped away. She had seen Mrs. Courtney laughing and whispering with some one hidden back of the door which opened to the private corridor of the Captain's quarters, and she believed she knew who was standing there imparting such amusing news to the lady.

Unseen by Mrs. Courtney, Polly managed to come up quite unexpectedly and overheard Mr. Dalken remarking: "So you see they will be taught a necessary lesson at the same time."

It was too late to change the topic, or to screen the man who imparted this information, hence Mrs. Courtney laughed softly and begged Polly to keep the secret. Both she and Mr. Dalken were sure Polly had overheard all that had just been said. In truth, Polly allowed them to remain under that impression, but she knew little more than she had before she surprised them.

The three sauntered away from the Captain's quarters, and Polly remarked: "Well, we have much to be grateful for, Dalky. Especially for the Captain's unusual consideration for young maids' preference for the company of young men. He shows he was young himself at one time!" Then she laughed merrily.

"Yes; that is what he said just now, when I demanded an excuse for his unwarranted action of adding all those extra appetites to my list of passengers. We'll run short of rations long before we touch at Cuba," said Mr. Dalken.

The anxious young men now saw their host approaching, and Tom hurried forward to meet him and ask for an explanation. Having been told how amazed Mr. Dalken felt at the manner in which the Captain had acted, the disgusted young man glanced inadvertently across the Harbor.

Polly, watching Mr. Dalken's face for a cue to this hoax, saw him strive to bite his nether lip in order to keep from laughing outright. This instantly relieved her mind of any doubts, for she knew Mr. Dalken would not feel like laughing if the carrying off of the group of young men had been accidental. As it now seemed, the whole plan had been a trick.

The yacht skimmed on without as much as a swerve inland to denote that the Captain was softening his heart and was disposed to land his stolen passengers at any dock along the way. The men thus stolen began to frown heavily and every last one of them forgot to make the most of this opportunity to converse with the young ladies they had found so charming a short time before.

Finally the craft neared Sandy Hook. As the distance between the Station and the yacht seemed to diminish, a stranger in uniform came down from the pilot house and approached Mr. Dalken. He held out a hand and spoke in a low murmur. Mr. Dalken laughed and nodded his head.

The yacht swept up alongside a small power boat which had apparently kept the same course as the White Crest, and the uniformed stranger turned to the wondering group of young persons. "I'm going ashore in my launch, but there may be room for a few extra passengers in case any one here fears sea-sickness and prefers to return to land."

At this unexpected invitation, a rush of eager young men fell upon the pilot and in one voice begged to be taken ashore. The laughter from Mr. Dalken and his adult guests soon explained the joke. But the host would not let the departing guests go in peace.

"I'm shocked, boys, to find you are afraid of sea-sickness and choose to go ashore rather than take a chance with us! Well, now that my girls see for themselves what your courage amounts to, they may decide to marry other young men they are sure to find in South America."

The farewells spoken at this parting were short, and needed no more than half a minute to finish. The pilot smiled grimly as he said: "Quite different from those long-drawn-out goodbys you boys kept on saying while at the dock!"

Down in the launch, the young men who now liked to call themselves "The Castaways," waved their hats and sang a farewell song while the little chugging craft started away for land.

Eleanor sighed as she turned away from the rail. "That was the first adventure on our outward bound itinerary. What next, I wonder?"

"Well, I can tell you something we *forgot* to do, because of all this excitement over those boys!" exclaimed Polly, impatiently. Then she continued in a no less angry tone: "We had planned just how we would stand at the stern of the yacht and wave our hands and sing a farewell to our dear people waiting at the end of the pier to see the very last speck of us, and then we sail away and not as much as a *thought* do we fling at them! I feel quite guilty when I think of all my friends watching anxiously for one last look from me!"

Polly's voice had an audible regret in its tone as she ended her sentence, but Mrs. Courtney quickly changed the regret to merriment. "Oh, my dear! They never remembered you were on board. Every one in that crowd on the dock was so flustered over the fears of those boys being taken on this trip and then hearing from you girls that they all were married off as seemed best, that they were calling, running about for help, signaling, and what not, to cause the yacht to turn back and deposit those heart-breakers safely beside the parental authority once more."

CHAPTER III – THE FIRST NIGHT OUT

While sampling the tiers of candies – each box vying with another in artistic decorations – and then sniffing at the pyramids of flowers sent by loving friends to the voyagers, the girls gossiped of the recent events, the first experiences of their trip South.

From this form of light conversation, the talk drifted to the discussion of the weather and the waves. The sea was not as smooth and glassy as it might have been, and the vessel these bragging maids were now on was not as firm and quiet under foot as the *Oceanic* or the *Aquitania*. In fact, every huge roller seemed to heave the dainty *White Crest* up at one end and let it drop at the other. This rather unpleasant tumbling created a slight sense of discomfort in the bosoms of the passengers.

Several boxes of the richest bon bons had been emptied by the group of girls before Mrs. Courtney came in to join them. The moment she saw the boxes, and the girls lounging about nibbling at the sweets, she declared anxiously: “Oh, my dears! Better not eat candy to-night, you know. If we come into smoother water before to-morrow you will have ample time to finish these boxes of candy.”

Elizabeth laughed, with the suggestion of a sneer in her tone. “Any one would think, dear Mrs. Courtney, that we were not good sailors. *You* might find it necessary to deprive yourself of certain good things to eat, but *I* have crossed several times and I am *never* troubled with *mal de mer*.”

“Polly and I never felt a qualm when we went over last year; but that was on a great gigantic steamer that felt different from this rocking.” As Eleanor spoke she dropped a tempting chocolate cream back into the box.

“I was about to remark, just as Mrs. Courtney came in, that it might be wiser for us to defer sampling the rest of the candy until to-morrow. This unusual rocking between the tops and the bottoms of the waves is a bit uncanny – don’t you agree with me?” Polly looked concerned at the sensation she felt.

Elizabeth laughed unkindly. “You are in for a lovely time, my dear child!”

“Well, I’ve crossed three times myself,” now said Nancy Fabian, “but I will admit that this upheaval of the waves is causing me to worry some over my emotions.” Her friends laughed.

“This sea-sick business is only a matter of self-control, I think!” declared Elizabeth, with a superior smile. “Naturally, if one dreads it, one will feel more uncertain of keeping up. Now *I* never permit myself to dwell upon the disgusting thought of such a condition, and I am as regular at the table each meal as the old sea-seasoned Captains. I have been complimented by the Captains on having good sea-going nerves.”

Mrs. Courtney listened but offered no contribution to the conversation. Polly was about to make a remark when a tap at the door drew the attention of the occupants of the room.

“Come in,” said Eleanor, who sat nearest the door. It was a uniformed boy who came to announce afternoon tea on deck. “Mr. Dalken says to tell you’s e all that every one is there waitin’ fer ye’s e.”

“All right, thank you. We’ll be there in a moment,” said Eleanor, then she closed the door again. “Any one here want tea? We have had so much candy that I don’t see how we can eat cake or buns.”

“We will go up and join the others, however,” added Mrs. Courtney, rising to lead the way from the state room.

“But, my dears!” exclaimed Elizabeth in shocked tones. “*Surely* you would not sit down to afternoon tea in these street suits?”

“Of course, Elizabeth. Your father made it very plain that this was to be a rest and pleasure voyage, and not one for dress or social customs. We were asked to live exactly as if we were at

home in our own little apartments with no one but family members near,” explained Mrs. Courtney, kindly.

“Well, that may do all right for you, Mrs. Courtney, but I, for one, shall never lower my dignity and social prestige to such a degree that I would have to feel like apologizing to myself for my appearances.” With this rude explanation Elizabeth flounced from the room and went directly to her own stateroom.

Her erstwhile companions, believing she would change her dress and make an elaborate toilet before joining her father’s guests on deck, paid no further attention to her absence. But they hurried out of the room where Elizabeth had indulged in overmuch sweets and fruits, and were soon ensconced in comfortable chairs on deck with the elders who were sipping fragrant tea and enjoying tea cakes.

Tom made room on the divan for Polly, and she had not the initiative to refuse to sit beside him. She could not describe the lack of interest she felt in her friends, or the glorious sky and weather. John and Anne were laughing and exchanging their opinions with Mr. Dalken on the quality of his chef. It was the mutual vote of those present that the cook was a genuine find. John even said it was an appeal to the male to remain on the yacht and continue the trip to the Andes.

The crispy brown cakes were so tempting, and the high praise from the men sounded so alluring, that the girls helped themselves to the refreshments provided. An unusually heavy roller caused a little tremor in the minds of most of the mariners, but the sandwiches and cakes were not neglected for such a small cause.

“Why, of all things!” cried Polly, glancing at the coast line which was standing out clearly defined from the changing hues in the sky. “Here we are off Atlantic Highlands already! It seems just a moment since we passed Sandy Hook.”

“At this rate I fear we will land in Peru long before we are ready to leave the ship,” laughed Eleanor, munching on a chicken sandwich.

For the space of half an hour thereafter, the group of gourmands (self-styled as gourmands because they ate so much of the delicious viands provided by the chef) admired the setting sun and the colors reflected in the sea by the clouds. No one had missed Elizabeth as yet, because every one was busy with the tea table. But now Mr. Dalken glanced uneasily around at the faces so familiar to him, and wondered aloud: “Why, where is Totty?”

His companions glanced from one to the other, and Mrs. Courtney, fearing lest Polly in her frankness might blurt out the truth about suitable dressing for tea, explained: “Elizabeth left us to go to her own room to change her dress. She thought the tailor-made street suit rather heavy and uncomfortable for lounging about a tea table.”

Those who had heard Elizabeth’s unkind remark to Mrs. Courtney silently commended her kind interpretation of the girl’s sentence. Mr. Dalken, believing his daughter would soon appear, felt satisfied to wait for her coming. Then the sudden sinking to the horizon of the great sun-ball of red caused various exclamations of admiration, and also drew the friends to that side of the yacht where the sunset could be seen to the greatest advantage.

As the sun set the wind rose. In a short time a perfect gale was tearing across the waters, and the waves rose accordingly. In fact, so mighty became the rollers, and so uncertain the footing on board the yacht, that it was a risk for the “land-lubbers” to attempt to walk recklessly about the deck. Giant waves, every now and then, washed over the swiftly flying yacht and sprayed the voyagers with salty drops, and Mr. Dalken advised them all to go in and rest before dinner was announced.

Perhaps it was due to obeying his advice to lie down for a short time; perhaps it was the partaking of too much of the delicious viands provided by the jewel of a chef; perhaps it was just plain old sea sickness – but whatever it was, let it here be stated that only two adults appeared in the dining room that evening for dinner: Mrs. Courtney and Mr. Dalken.

Having waited and waited for the appearance of the others in their party, and having ascertained by continued perseverance of a questionnaire, in the form of a 'phone, that his guests preferred to dine in bed, Mr. Dalken finally concluded to eat. Therefore he sent word by said 'phone to ascertain how many trays would be wanted by sick friends.

The reply caused Mrs. Courtney a hearty laugh, while Mr. Dalken found ample pleasure for the next week in referring to that night's experience, and to their curt thanks to his humanitarian impulses.

Elizabeth had not joined her father's guests at tea that late afternoon for the very good reason that she threw herself upon the bed in her room and was glad enough to remain there for several days. She had eaten three times as much candy and fruit as any one of her companions, and now she was paying the price for self-indulgence. Where now were all her brags about being such a splendid sailor!

It was not an individual weakness on the part of Polly and Eleanor that they succumbed to the attack of sea sickness soon after they reached their small rooms. But they were not aware at the time that *all* adults, excepting Mr. Dalken and Mrs. Courtney, had decided against dining that night, and remained in their own rooms instead. Had the two girls dreamed of the truth, that the two pawns in their match-making game were enjoying a tête-à-tête dinner and evening together, this knowledge would have done much to console them for their weird sensations within.

As the evening advanced the gale increased, and those who felt too ill to leave their beds feared lest they *might* survive till morning. The yacht could not sink quick enough to please them. Elizabeth was one of this group of morbid sailors. The members of the other group who felt able to hold up their heads and take a squint at the turbulent waters and sky now and then when the craft seemed to spin about on a pivot, or suddenly soar to the sky and as quickly change its course to sink to the bottom of the sea, prayed and prayed that the shores of Florida might loom up within the next few hours – that they might go ashore.

These prayers, being selfish ones, were not answered, and the coast of Florida remained where it had been placed in the order of arranging the New World.

Having managed to drag herself across her room to the porthole, Polly looked out to see whether the moon was the next stop. She thought the yacht had been going, prow upwards, for the last hour. To her amazement she saw they were still on the sea, but such a sea! So tumbled and troubled that she wished for oil to pour upon it.

Eleanor and Polly shared one room, and now Eleanor lifted her head and wailed: "What do you see, Poll?"

"I see sea, that's all. Oh, my head!" and Polly fell into a chair and caught her head between her hands.

In spite of her wish to die, Eleanor could not refrain from laughing at her chum. "I should have said you see saw, instead of see sea, judging from the 'now we go up, and now we go down' behavior of the board we are on."

But no answering smile came from Polly's somber face.

Eleanor, not to be discouraged in her wish to help her friend cheer up, murmured: "If we feel this way, Poll, how do you suppose precious Totty is doing?"

This struck Polly's sense of humor at the right moment. She had to laugh in spite of her wish to ponder on death and the hereafter. The picture of Elizabeth as she bragged of her seamanship, gave cause to a duet of merriment from the two girls. This acted like a tonic, and thenceforth they began to feel easier. Then, too, the gale had spent its fury and began gradually to calm down.

A soft knock on the door of their room brought forth the command to come in. Mrs. Courtney, looking magnificent in her simple but elegant dinner gown entered with a cheerful smile for the girls.

"Well, well! Where are the seasoned ocean travelers?" said she in a quizzing tone.

“Lost! Went down off Sandy Hook!” retorted Eleanor.

“Who are these shadows in their place?” continued Mrs. Courtney, teasingly.

“Never mind who we are,” was Polly’s laughing rejoinder, “but tell us this much: where is Elizabeth, and what is she doing?”

“That I cannot say, my dears, till after Mr. Dalken comes from his daughter’s room. I left him just now about to visit her, then I came in here to see you. I understand she wishes to die without delay.”

This seemed to tickle Polly and Eleanor greatly. They actually exchanged delighted glances, and Eleanor said: “Serves her right.”

“Oh, come,” returned Mrs. Courtney, “don’t say that. The poor child has never had any real example of what is right and good, so how can one expect of her what we do of girls like you and Polly?”

“Well,” said Polly, swinging her feet out of bed, “I believe I am able to sit up and enjoy this visit. The sea must be calming down considerably from the smooth manner in which the yacht is moving.”

But Polly spoke too soon. The moment she tried to stand upon her feet she swayed uncertainly and her head spun around like a top. Mrs. Courtney sprang over and caught her arm and steadied her till she got back to bed. Eleanor giggled unmercifully.

“Better stay put, Poll, till morning. Then we’ll practice before we show off.”

All that night the waves which had caused the pitching and rolling of the vessel kept up a heavy under-swell that made the yacht shudder and tremble uncertainly. At times it seemed as if the great gaping rollers wished to gulp the small craft in one swallow. But inside the comfortable rooms of the yacht, the *uncomfortable* passengers waited patiently for the heavy seas to quiet down again.

After leaving his daughter’s room, Mr. Dalken went forward to find the First Mate who had said he had graduated from a medical college out west. Having found the man, Mr. Dalken called him by his title of doctor.

“I have a plan to suggest, Dr. Braxton, which ought to cure all our seasick passengers. I want you to visit each one in a professional way and diagnose their conditions. Do not find any one suffering from sea sickness, but find some light cause for their indisposition and be sure and tell them so. I have an idea that the test of changing their minds about the cause of their being in bed will change their physical conditions, too. Will you do this for me? Take your medicine chest and leave each one some melted licorice in water. Tell them to take a tablespoonful of this wonderful tonic every hour – then we’ll see.”

“Why, Mr. Dalken, you would not have me tell these poor people that they are not ill with sea sickness, would you? It would be unkind of us to do that,” objected the poor young man.

“Now listen, my good friend. I’ve heard said, over and over again, that seasickness is mostly due to fear and *concern* over one’s having it. The pneumogastric nerve acts with the mental condition of the patient – we all know that. And this nerve, it is claimed, is directly affected in a manner to make the ill one think he cannot move, or get up, or eat. I want to cure my friends in a hurry, and I want you to help me cure them. That is real kindness – not unkindness.”

The interested young man asked what more would be required of him, and Mr. Dalken explained. In a short time thereafter, Dr. Braxton called upon his first patient. It happened to be Mr. Fabian.

After using all the usual methods of taking pulse, looking at the tongue, feeling of the heart, and taking the temperature, the young physician said:

“I’m happy to say, Mr. Fabian, that this attack is not a case of sea-sickness at all, but acute comatose condition of the digestive glands. You might have experienced the same illness had you been at home. Now I shall leave you this wonderful remedy to take every hour, and in the morning you will feel fine. Three doses of this ought to put you right as a trivet.”

Mr. Fabian was so glad to hear he had not had an attack of sea-sickness that he thanked the doctor and said he felt sure he would be around in the morning.

Having visited all the sick-abed members of Mr. Dalken's party, and found one suffering from a slight attack of gastritis, another with rheumatic neurosis of the abdomen, and many other queer complaints that have never been heard of before or since that night, and then having left the great cure-all medicine for each and every one stricken, the willing physician went to report to Mr. Dalken.

CHAPTER IV – THE SECOND DAY OUT

Mr. Dalken enjoyed the joke immensely and hoped it would benefit his friends as he had planned it should. During the night the sea calmed so that by dawn it presented a beautiful surface of small playful waves. Consequently the yacht danced over the waters like a happy nautilus, but the tossing had ceased.

During the night the vessel had made wonderful headway and by breakfast time the Captain said they were opposite Old Point Comfort. The information gave rise to puns, because every member in the party except Elizabeth, presented himself at the table, ready for a hearty meal, but one and all maintained that their improvement was due to Old Point Comfort.

Upon comparing notes of their illnesses, and the dark brown medicine given by the young doctor, the patients found they had been given diluted licorice; Mr. Dalken had visited his daughter several times during the night, and again in the morning, but she complained that he disturbed her rest every time he came in. Therefore he decided not to annoy her until she felt better.

When asked by Mrs. Courtney whether it would be advisable to take a light breakfast to Elizabeth and attend her, Mr. Dalken replied: "Better leave her absolutely alone for a short time. She may recover sooner."

In spite of ravenous appetites and the temptation of the dainty dishes sent to the breakfast table, the mariners, so recently recovering from the effects of the wild waves of the night before, found a sudden relapse of well remembered conditions the moment any food touched their tongue and palate. Thus the alluring breakfast had to be sent back to the kitchen with regrets.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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