

# The Fate of the Evangeline

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Doyle uses his famous Sherlock Holmes' maxim "Eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth"



"Wait, I shall if you will call it 'parsons' again."

## THE FATE OF THE EVANGELINE

I

My wife and I often laugh when we happen to glance at some of the modern realistic sensational stories, for, however strange and exciting they may be we invariably come to the conclusion that they are tame compared to our own experiences when life was young with us.

More than once, indeed, she has asked me to write the circumstances down, but when I considered how few people there are in England who might remember the Evangeline or care to know the real history of her disappearance, it has seemed to me to be hardly worth while to revive the subject.

Even here in Australia, however, we do occasionally see some reference to her in the papers or magazines, so that it is evident that there are those who have not quite forgotten the strange story: and so at this merry Christmastide I am tempted to set the matter straight.

At the time her fate excited a most intense and lively interest all over the British Islands, as was shown by the notices in the newspapers and by numerous letters which appeared upon the subject. As an example of this, as well as to give the facts in a succinct form, I shall preface this narrative by a few clippings chosen from many which we collected after the event, which are so numerous that my wife has filled a small scrapbook with them. This first one is from the "Inverness Gazette" of September 24th, 1873.

*"PAINFUL OCCURRENCE IN THE HEBRIDES.—A sad accident, which it is feared has been attended with loss of life, has occurred at Ardvoe, which is a small uninhabited island lying about forty miles north-west of Harris and about half that distance south of the Flannons. It appears that a yacht named the Evangeline, belonging to Mr. Scholefield, jun., the son of the well-known banker of the firm Scholefield, Davies, and Co., had put in there, and that the passengers, with the two seamen who formed the crew, had pitched two tents upon the beach, in which they camped out for two or three days.*

*This they did no doubt out of admiration for the rugged beauty of the spot, and perhaps from a sense of the novelty of their situation upon this lonely island. Besides Mr. Scholefield there were on the Evangeline a young lady named Miss Lucy Forrester, who is understood to be his fiancée, and her father, Colonel Forrester, of Teddington, near London. As the weather was very warm, the two gentlemen remained upon shore during the night, sleeping in one tent, while the seamen occupied the other. The young lady, however, was in the habit of rowing back to the yacht in the dinghy and sleeping in her own cabin, coming back by the same means in the morning. One day, the third of their residence upon the island, Colonel Forrester, looking out of the tent at dawn, was astonished and horrified to see that the moorings of the boat had given way, and that she was drifting rapidly out to sea. He promptly gave the alarm, and Mr. Scholefield, with one of the sailors, attempted to swim out to her, but they found that the yacht, owing to the fresh breeze and the fact that one of the sails had been so clumsily furled as to offer a considerable surface to the wind, was making such headway that it was impossible to overtake her. When last seen she was drifting along in a west-sou'-westerly direction with the unfortunate young lady on board. To make matters worse, it was three days before the party on the island were able to communicate with a passing fishing-boat and inform them of the sad occurrence. Both before and since, the weather has been so tempestuous that there is little hope of the safety of the missing yacht. We hear, however, that a reward of a thousand pounds has been offered by the firm of Scholefield to the boat which finds her and of five thousand to the one which brings Miss Forrester back in safety. Apart from any recompense, however, we are sure that the chivalry of our brave fishermen will lead them to do everything in their power to succour this young lady, who is said to possess personal charms of the highest order. Our only grain of consolation is that the Evangeline was well provided both with provisions and with water."*

This appeared upon September 24th, four days after the disappearance of the yacht. Upon the 25th the following telegram was sent from the north of Ireland:

*"Portrush.—John Mullins, of this town, fisherman, reports that upon the morning of the 21st he sighted a yacht which answered to the description of the missing Evangeline. His own boat was at that time about fifty miles to the north of Malin Head, and was hove-to, the weather being very thick and dirty. The yacht passed within two hundred yards of his starboard quarter, but the fog was so great that he could not swear to her appearance. She was running in a westerly direction under a reefed mainsail and jib. There was a man at the tiller. He distinctly saw a woman on board, and thinks that she called out to him, but could not be sure owing to the howling of the wind."*

I have many other extracts here expressive of the doubts and fears which existed as to the fate of the Evangeline, but I shall not quote one more than is necessary. Here is the Central News telegram which quashed the last lingering hopes of the most sanguine. It went the round of the papers upon the 3rd of October.

*"Galway, October 2nd, 7.25 p.m.—The fishing boat Glenmullet has just come in, towing behind her a mass of wreckage, which leaves no doubt as to the fate of the unfortunate Evangeline and of the young lady who was on board of her. The fragments brought in consist of the bowsprit, figurehead, and part of the bows, with the name engraved upon it. From its appearance it is conjectured that the yacht was blown on to one of the dangerous reefs upon the north-west coast, and that after being broken up there this and possibly other fragments had drifted out to sea. Attached to it is a fragment of the fatal rope, the snapping of which was the original cause of the disaster. It is a stout cable of manilla hemp, and the fracture is a clean one—so clean as to suggest friction against a very sharp rock or the cut of a knife. Several boats have gone up and down the coast this evening in the hope of finding some more débris or of ascertaining with certainty the fate of the young lady."*

From that day to this, however, nothing fresh has been learned of the fate of the Evangeline or of Miss Lucy Forrester, who was on board of her. These three extracts represent all that has ever been learned about either of them, and in these even there are several statements which the press at the time showed to be incredible. For example, how could the fisherman John Mullins say that he saw a man on board when Ardvoe is an uninhabited island, and therefore no one could possibly have got on board except Miss Forrester? It was clear that he was either mistaken in the boat or else that he imagined the man. Again, it was pointed out in a leader in the "Scotsman" that the conjecture that the rope was either cut by a rock or by a knife was manifestly absurd, since there are no rocks around Ardvoe, but a uniform sandy bottom, and it would be preposterous to suppose that Miss Forrester, who was a lady as remarkable for her firmness of mind as for her beauty, would deliberately sever the rope which attached her to her father, her lover, and to life itself. "It would be well," the "Scotsman" concluded, "if those who express opinions upon such subjects would bear in mind those simple rules as to the analysis of evidence laid down by Auguste Dupin. 'Exclude the impossible,' he remarks in one of Poe's immortal stories, 'and what is left, however improbable, must be the truth.' Now, since it is impossible that a rock divided the rope, and impossible that the young lady divided it, and doubly impossible that anybody else divided it, it follows that it parted of its own accord, either owing to some flaw in its texture or from some previous injury that it may have sustained. Thus this sad occurrence, about which conjecture is so rife, sinks at once into the category of common accidents, which, however deplorable, can neither be foreseen nor prevented."

There was one other theory which I shall just allude to before I commence my own personal narrative. That is the suggestion that either of the two sailors had had a spite against Mr. Scholefield or Colonel Forrester and had severed the rope out of revenge. That, however, is quite out of the question, for they were both men of good character and old servants of the

Scholefields. My wife tells me that it is mere laziness which makes me sit with the scrapbook before me copying out all these old newspaper articles and conjectures. It is certainly the easiest way to tell my story, but I must now put them severely aside and tell you in my own words as concisely as I can what the real facts were.

My name is John Vincent Gibbs, and I am the son of Nathaniel Gibbs, formerly a captain in one of the West Indian regiments. My father was a very handsome man, and he succeeded in winning the heart of a Miss Leblanche, who was heiress to a good sugar plantation in Demerara. By this marriage my father became fairly rich, and, having left the army, he settled down to the life of a planter. I was born within a year of the marriage, but my mother never rose again from her bed, and my father was so broken-hearted at his loss that he pined away and followed her to the grave within a few months.

I have thus never known either of my two parents, and the loss of their control, combined perhaps with my tropical birthplace, made me, I fear, somewhat headstrong and impetuous.

Immediately that I became old enough to be my own master I sold the estate and invested the money in Government stock in such a way as to insure me an income of fifteen hundred a year for life. I then came to Europe, and for a long time led a strange Bohemian life, flitting from one University to another, and studying spasmodically those subjects which interested me. I went to Heidelberg for a year in order to read chemistry and metaphysics, and when I returned to London I plunged for the first time into society. I was then twenty-four years of age, dark-haired, dark-eyed, swarthy, with a smattering of all knowledge and a mastery of none.

It was during this season in London that I first saw Lucy Forrester. How can I describe her so as to give even the faintest conception of her beauty? To my eyes no woman ever had been or could be so fair. Her face, her voice, her figure, every movement and action, were part of one rare and harmonious whole. Suffice it that I loved her the very evening that I saw her, and that I went on day after day increasing and

nourishing this love until it possessed my whole being.

At first my suit prospered well. I made the acquaintance of her father, an elderly soldier, and became a frequent visitor at the house. I soon saw that the keynote of Miss Forrester's character was her intense devotion to her father, and accordingly I strove to win her regard by showing extreme deference and attention to him. I succeeded in interesting her in many topics, too, and we became very friendly. At last I ventured to speak to her of love, and told her of the passion which consumed me. I suppose I spoke wildly and fiercely, for she was frightened and shrank from me.

I renewed the subject another day, however, with better success. She confessed to me then that she loved me, but added firmly that she was her father's only child, and that it was her duty to devote her life to comforting his declining years. Her personal feelings, she said, should never prevent her from performing that duty. It mattered not. The confession that I was dear to her filled me with ecstasy. For the rest I was content to wait.

During this time the colonel had favoured my suit. I have no doubt that some gossip had exaggerated my wealth and given him false ideas of my importance. One day in conversation I told him what my resources were. I saw his face change as he listened to me, and from that moment his demeanour altered.

It chanced that about the same time young Scholefield, the son of the rich banker, came back from Oxford, and having met Lucy, became very marked in his attentions to her. Colonel Forrester at once encouraged his addresses in every possible way, and I received a curt note from him informing me that I should do well to discontinue my visits.

I still had hopes that Lucy would not be influenced by her father's mercenary schemes. For days I frequented her usual haunts, seeking an opportunity of speaking to her. At last I met her alone one morning in St. James's Park. She looked me straight in the face, and there was an expression of great tenderness and sadness in her eyes, but she would have passed me without speaking. All the blood seemed to rush into my

head, and I caught her by the wrist to detain her.

"You have given me up, then?" I cried. "There is no longer any hope for me."

"Hush, Jack!" she said, for I had raised my voice excitedly. "I warned you how it would be. It is my father's wish and I must obey him, whatever it costs. Let me go now. You must not hold me any more."

"And there is no hope?"

"You will soon forget me," she said. "You must not think of me again."

"Ah, you are as bad as he," I cried, excitedly. "I read it in your eyes. It is the money—the wretched money." I was sorry for the words the moment after I had said them, but she had passed gravely on, and I was alone.

I sat down upon one of the benches in the park, and rested my head upon my hands. I felt numbed and stupefied. The world and everything in it had changed for me during the last ten minutes. People passed me as I sat—people who laughed and joked and gossiped. It seemed to me that I watched them almost as a dead man might watch the living. I had no sympathy with their little aims, their little pleasures and their little pains. "I'll get away from the whole drove of them," I said, as I rose from my seat. "The women are false and the men are fools, and everything is mean and sordid." My first love had unhappily converted me to cynicism, rash and foolish as I was, as it has many such a man before.

For many months I travelled, endeavouring by fresh scenes and new experiences to drive away the memory of that fair false face. At Venice I heard that she was engaged to be married to young Scholefield. "He's got a lot of money," this tourist said—it was at the table d'hôte at the Hotel de l'Europe. "It's a splendid match for her." For her!

When I came back to England I flitted restlessly about from one place to another, avoiding the haunts of my old associates, and leading a lonely and gloomy life. It was about this time that the idea first occurred to me of separating my person from mankind as widely as my thoughts and feelings were distinct from theirs. My temperament was, I think, naturally a

somewhat morbid one, and my disappointment had made me a complete misanthrope. To me, without parents, friends, or relations, Lucy had been everything, and now that she was gone the very sight of a human face was hateful to me. Loneliness in a wilderness, I reflected, was less irksome than loneliness in a city. In some wild spot I might be face to face with nature and pursue the studies into which I had plunged once more, without interruption or disturbance.

As this resolution began to grow upon me I thought of this island of Ardvoe, which, curiously enough, had been first mentioned to me by Scholefield on one of the few occasions when we had been together in the house of the Forresters. I had heard him speak of its lonely and desolate position, and of its beauty, for his father had estates in Skye, from which he was wont to make yachting trips in summer, and in one of these he had visited the island. It frequently happened, he said, that no one set foot upon it during the whole year, for there was no grass for sheep, and nothing to attract fishermen. This, I thought, would be the very place for me.

Full of my new idea, I travelled to Skye, and from thence to Uist. There I hired a fishing-boat from a man named McDiarmid, and sailed with him and his son to the island. It was just such a place as I had imagined—rugged and desolate, with high, dark crags rising up from a girdle of sand. It had been once, McDiarmid said, a famous emporium for the goods of smugglers, which used to be stored there, and then conveyed over to the Scotch coast as occasion served. He showed me several of the caves of these gentry, and one in particular, which I immediately determined should be my own future dwelling. It was approached by a labyrinth of rocky paths, which effectually secured it against any intruder, while it was roomy inside, and lit up by an aperture in the rock above, which might be covered over in wet weather.

The fisherman told me that his father had pointed the spot out to him, but that it was not commonly known to the rare visitors who came to the island. There was abundance of fresh water, and fish were to be caught in any quantity.

I was so well satisfied with my survey that I returned to Scotland with the full intention of realising my wild misanthropical scheme.

In Glasgow I purchased most of the more important things that I wanted to take with me. These included a sleeping bag, such as is used in the Arctic seas; several mathematical and astronomical instruments; a very varied and extensive assortment of books, including nearly every modern work upon chemistry and physics; a double-barrelled fowling-piece, fishing-tackle, lamps, candles, and oil. Subsequently at Oban and Stornoway I purchased two bags of potatoes, a sack of flour, and a quantity of tinned meats, together with a small stove. All these things I conveyed over in McDiarmid's boat, having already bound both himself and his son to secrecy upon the matter—a promise which, as far as I know, neither of them ever broke. I also had a table and chair conveyed across, with a plentiful supply of pens, ink, and paper.

All these things were stowed away in the cave, and I then requested McDiarmid to call upon the first of each month, or as soon after as the weather permitted, in case I needed anything. This he promised to do, and having been well paid for his services, he departed, leaving me upon the island.

It was a strange sensation to me when I saw the brown sail of his boat sinking below the horizon, until at last it disappeared, and left one broad, unbroken sheet of water before me. That boat was the last tie which bound me to the human race. When it had vanished, and I returned into my cave with the knowledge that no sight or sound could jar upon me now, I felt the first approach to satisfaction which I had had through all those weary months. A fire was sparkling in the stove, for fuel was plentiful on the island, and the long stove-pipe had been so arranged that it projected through the aperture above, and so carried the smoke away. I boiled some potatoes and made a hearty meal, after which I wrote and read until nightfall, when I crept into my bag and slept soundly.

It might weary my readers should I speak of my existence upon this island, though the petty details of my housekeeping seem to

interest my dear wife more than anything else, and ten years have not quite exhausted her questions upon the subject. I cannot say that I was happy, but I was less unhappy than I could have believed it possible. At times, it is true, I was plunged into the deepest melancholy, and would remain so for days, without energy enough to light my fire or to cook my food. On these occasions I would wander aimlessly among the hills and along the shore until I was worn out with fatigue. After these attacks, however, I would become, if not placid, at least torpid for a time. Occasionally I could even smile at my strange life as an anchorite, and speculate as to whether the lord of the manor, since I presumed the island belonged to some one, would become aware of my existence, and if so, whether he would evict me ignominiously, or claim a rent for my little cavern.

## II

Three months had passed, as I knew by the regular visits of the worthy fisherman, when the event occurred which altered the course of my whole life, and led in the end to the writing of this narrative.

I had been out all day surveying my little kingdom, and having returned about four o'clock, had settled down to Ricardo's "Principles of Political Economy," of which work I was writing a critical analysis. I had been writing about three hours, and the waning light (it was in September) was warning me that the time had come to stop, when suddenly, to my intense astonishment, I heard a human voice. Crusoe, when he saw the footstep, could hardly have been more surprised. My first idea was that some unforeseen circumstance had induced McDiarmid to come across before his time, and that he was hailing me; but a moment's reflection showed me that the voice which I had heard was very different from the rough Gaelic accents of the fisherman. As I sat pen in hand, wondering and listening, a peal of laughter rose up from the beach. An unreasoning indignation at this intrusion on my privacy then took possession of me, and I rushed out of my cave and peered over the rocks to see who the invaders might be.

Down beneath me in the bay a trim little yacht of five-and-twenty tons or thereabouts was riding at anchor. On the beach two yachtsmen—a young man and an old—were endeavouring with the aid of a sailor to raise a canvas tent, and were busily engaged knocking pegs into the crumbling sand and fastening ropes to them. Between the shore and the yacht there was a small boat rowed by one man, and in the sheets there sat a lady. When the boat reached the shore one of the yachtsmen, the younger of the two, ran down and handed its passenger out. The instant she stood erect I recognised her. Even after the lapse of ten years I feel again the rush and whirlwind of emotion which came over me when I saw once more in this strange place the woman whom I loved better than all the world besides.

At first it seemed so extraordinary, so utterly inexplicable, that I could only surmise that she and her father and lover (for I had now recognised the two men also) had heard of my presence here and had come with the intention of insulting me. This was the mad notion which came into my disordered brain. The unconcerned air of the party showed, however, that this could not be. On second thoughts I convinced myself that it was no very wonderful coincidence after all. No doubt Scholefield was taking up the young lady and her father to pay a visit to his rich friends in Skye. If so, what more natural than that in passing they should visit this island concerning which I remembered that Lucy had expressed interest and curiosity when Scholefield spoke of it originally? It seemed to me now to be such a natural sequence of events that my only wonder was that the possibility of it had not occurred to me earlier.

The tent was soon up, and they had supper inside it, after raising another smaller tent for the two seamen. It was evident that the whole party intended to camp out for a time.

I crept down towards the beach after it was dark, and came as near to them as I dared. After a time Scholefield sang a sea song; and then, after some persuasion, she sang too—a melancholy ballad, one which had been a favourite of mine in the old days in London. What would she have thought, I wondered, could she

have seen me, unshaven and dishevelled, crouching like a wild beast among the rocks! My heart was full, and I could bear it no longer. I went back to my lonely cave with all my old wounds ripped open afresh.

About ten o'clock I saw her in the moonlight go down to the beach alone, and row to the yacht, where she fastened the dinghy astern. She was always proud, I remembered, of being at home upon the water. I knew then for certain that she was not married yet, and a gush of senseless joy and hope rose up in my bosom.

I saw her row back in the morning, and the party breakfasted together in the tent. Afterwards they spent the day in exploring the island and in gathering the rare shells which are to be found upon the beach. They never came my way—indeed the rocks among which my cave lay were well-nigh inaccessible to any one who did not know the steep and intricate pathway. I watched the lady wandering along the sands, and once she passed immediately beneath my citadel. Her face was pale, I thought, and she seemed graver than when I saw her last, but otherwise there was no change. Her blue yachting costume with white lace and gilt buttons suited her to perfection. Strange how small details may stick in the memory!

It was on the evening of the second day of their visit that I found that the stock of fresh water which I usually kept in my cave had run short, which necessitated my going to the stream for more. It was about a hundred yards off, and not far from the tent, but it seemed to me that since darkness had set in I should be running no risk of discovery; so taking my bucket in my hand I set off. I had filled it and was about to return when I heard the footsteps and voices of two men close to me, and had hardly time to crouch down behind a furze bush when they stopped almost within arm's length of me.

"Help you!" I heard one of them say, whom I at once identified as old Forrester. "My dear fellow, you must help yourself. You must be patient and you must be resolute. When I broached the matter to her she said that she had obeyed me in not speaking to the other, but when I asked for more than that I exceeded the

claims which a father has upon a daughter. Those were her very words."

"I can't make it out," the other said peevishly; "you always hold out hopes, but they never come to anything. She is kind to me and friendly, but no more. The fellows at the club think that I am engaged to her. Everybody thinks so."

"So you will be, my boy, so you will be," Forrester answered. "Give her time."

"It's that black chap Gibbs who runs in her head," said Scholefield. "The fellow is dead, I believe, or gone mad, as I always said he would. Anyway he has disappeared from the world, but that seems to make no difference to her."

"Pshaw!" the other answered. "Out of sight is out of mind, sooner or later. You will have exceptional opportunities at Skye, so make the most of them. For my part I promise to put on all the pressure I can. At present we must go down to the tent or she'll think we are lost," with which they moved off, and their steps died away in the distance.

I stood up after they were gone like one in a dream, and slowly carried back my bucket. Then I sat down upon my chair and leaned my head upon my hands, while my mind was torn by conflicting emotions. She was true to me then. She had never been engaged to my rival. Yet there was the old prohibition of her parent, which had no doubt the same sacred weight with her as ever. I was really no nearer her than before. But how about this conspiracy which I had overheard—this plot between a mercenary father and a mean-spirited suitor. Should I, ought I, to allow her to be bullied by the one or cajoled by the other into forsaking me? Never! I would appeal to her. I would give her one more chance at least of judging between her father and myself. Surely, I thought, I who love her so tenderly have more claim upon her than this man who would sell her to the highest bidder.

Then in a moment it came into my head how I could take her away from them, so that no one should stand between us, and I might plead my cause without interruption. It was such a plan as could only have occurred perhaps to a man of my impetuous nature. I knew that if once she left the island I might never have the chance

again. There was but one way to do it, and I was determined that it should be done.

All night long I paced about my cave pondering over the details of my scheme. I would have put it into execution at once, but the sky was covered with clouds and the night was exceptionally dark. Never did time pass more slowly. At last the first cold grey light began to show upon the horizon and to spread slowly along it. I thrust a clasp knife into my pocket and as much money as I had in the cave. Then I crept down to the beach, some distance from the sleeping party, and swam out to the yacht. The ladder by which Lucy had got on board the night before was still hanging down, and by it I climbed on board. Moving softly so as not to awake her, I shook out enough of one of the sails to catch the breeze, and then stooping over the bows I cut the thick rope by which we were moored. For a minute or so the yacht drifted aimlessly, and then getting some way on her she answered the helm, and stood out slowly towards the Atlantic.

Do not misunderstand me. I had no intention of forcing the lady's inclinations in any way, or compelling her to break her promise to her father. I was not base enough for that. My sole and only object was to have an opportunity of appealing to her, and pleading my cause for the last time. If I had not known, on the authority of her suitor, that she still loved me, I would have cut my right hand off as soon as cut that cable. As it was, if I could persuade her to be my wife we could run down to Ireland or back to Oban, and be married by special licence before the prisoners at Ardvoe could get away. If, on the other hand, she refused to have anything to do with me, I would loyally take the Evangeline back to her moorings and face the consequences, whatever they might be. Some have blamed me for putting the lady in such a compromising situation. Before they judge they must put themselves in my position, with but one chance of making life happy, and that chance depending upon prompt action. My savage life, too, may have somewhat blunted my regard for the conventionalities of civilisation.

As the boat slowly headed out to sea I heard a great outcry upon the beach, and saw

Forrester and Scholefield, with the two sailors, running frantically about. I kept myself carefully out of sight. Presently Scholefield and one of the sailors dashed into the water, but after swimming a little way they gave it up as hopeless, for the breeze was very fresh, and even with our little rag of canvas we could not have been going less than five knots. All this time Miss Forrester had not been disturbed, nor was there anything to let her know that the yacht was under way, for the tossing was no greater than when she was at anchor.

### III

The moorings had been at the south end of the island, and as the wind was cast, we headed straight out to the Atlantic. I did not put up any more sail yet, for it would be seen by those we had left, and I wished at present to leave them under the impression that the yacht had drifted away by accident, so that if they found any means of communicating with the mainland they might start upon a wrong scent. After three hours, however, the island being by that time upon the extreme horizon, I hoisted the mainsail and jib.

I was busily engaged in tugging at the halliards, when Miss

Forrester, fully dressed, stepped out of her cabin and came upon deck. I shall never forget the expression of utter astonishment which came over her beautiful features when she realised that she was out at sea and with a strange companion. She gazed at me with, at first, terror as well as surprise. No doubt, with my long dark hair and beard, and tattered clothing, I was not a very reassuring object.

The instant I opened my lips to address her, however, she recognised me, and seemed to comprehend the situation.

"Mr. Gibbs," she cried. "Jack, what have you done? You have carried me away from Ardvoe. Oh, take me back again! What will my poor father do?"

"He's all right," I said. "He is hardly so very thoughtful about you, and may not mind doing without you now for a little." She was

silent for a while, and leaned against the companion rail, endeavouring to collect herself.

"I can hardly realise it," she said, at last. "How could you have come here, and why are we at sea? What is your object, Jack? What are you about to do?"

"My only object is this," I said, tremblingly, coming up closer to her. "I wished to be able to have a chance of talking to you alone without interruption. The whole happiness of my life depends upon it. That is why I have carried you off like this. All I ask you to do is to answer one or two questions, and I will promise to do your bidding. Will you do so?"

"Yes," she said, "I will."

She kept her eyes cast down and seemed to avoid my gaze. "Do you love this man Scholefield?" I asked.

"No," she answered, with decision.

"Will you ever marry him?"

"No," she answered again.

"Now, Lucy," I said, "speak the truth fearlessly, let me entreat you, for the happiness of both of us depends upon it. Do you still love me?"

She never spoke, but she raised her head and I read her answer in her eyes. My heart overflowed with joy.

"Then, my darling," I cried, taking her hand, "if you love me and I love you, who is to come between us? Who dare part us?"

She was silent, but did not attempt to escape from my arm.

"Not your father," I said. "He has no power or right over you. You know well that if one who was richer than Scholefield appeared to-morrow he would bid you smile upon him without a thought as to your own feelings. You can in such circumstances owe him no allegiance as to giving yourself for mere mercenary reasons to those you in heart abhor."

"You are right, Jack. I do not," she answered, speaking very gently, but very firmly. "I am sorry that I left you as I did in St. James's Park. Many a time since I have bitterly regretted it. Still at all costs I should have been true to my father if he had been true to me. But he has not been so. Though he knows my dislike to Mr. Scholefield he has continually thrown us

together as on this yachting excursion, which was hateful to me from the first. Jack," she continued, turning to me, "you have been true to me through everything. If you still love me I am yours from this moment—yours entirely and for ever. I will place myself in their power no more."

Then in that happy moment I was repaid for all the long months of weariness and pain. We sat for hours talking of our thoughts and feelings since our last sad parting, while the boat drifted aimlessly among the tossing waves, and the sails flapped against the spars above our heads. Then I told her how I had swum off and cut the cable of the *Evangeline*.

"But, Jack," she said, "you are a pirate; you will be prosecuted for carrying off the boat."

"They may do what they like now," I said, defiantly; "I have gained you, in carrying off the boat."

"But what will you do now?" she asked.

"I will make for the north of Ireland," I said; "then I shall put you under the protection of some good woman until we can get a special licence and be able to defy your father. I shall send the *Evangeline* back to Ardvoe or to Skye. We are going to have some wind, I fear. You will not be afraid, dear?"

"Not while I am with you," she answered, calmly.

The prospect was certainly not a reassuring one. The whole eastern horizon was lined by great dark clouds, piled high upon each other, with that lurid tinge about them which betokens violent wind. Already the first warning blasts came whistling down upon us, heeling our little craft over till her gunwale lay level with the water. It was impossible to beat back to the Scotch coast, and our best chance of safety lay in running before the gale. I took in the topsail and flying-jib, and reefed down the mainsail; then I lashed everything moveable in case of our shipping a sea. I wished Lucy to go below to her cabin, but she would not leave me, and remained by my side.

As the day wore on the occasional blasts increased into a gale, and the gale into a tempest. The night set in dark and dreary, and still we sped into the Atlantic. The *Evangeline*

rose to the seas like a cork, and we took little or no water aboard. Once or twice the moon peeped out for a few moments between the great drifting cloud-banks. Those brief intervals of light showed us the great wilderness of black, tossing waters which stretched to the horizon. I managed to bring some food and water from the cabin while Lucy held the tiller, and we shared it together. No persuasions of mine could induce her to leave my side for a moment.

With the break of day the wind appeared to gain more force than ever, and the great waves were so lofty that many of them rose high above our masthead. We staggered along under our reefed sail, now rising upon a billow, from which we looked down on two great valleys before and behind us, then sinking down into the trough of the sea until it seemed as if we could never climb the green wall beyond. By dead reckoning I calculated that we had been blown clear of the north coast of Ireland. It would have been madness to run towards an unknown and dangerous shore in such weather, but I steered a course now two more points to the south, so as not to get blown too far from the west coast in case that we had passed Malin Head. During the morning Lucy thought that she saw the loom of a fishing-boat, but neither of us were certain, for the weather had become very thick. This must have been the boat of the man Mullins, who seems to have had a better view of us than we had of him.

All day (our second at sea) we continued to steer in a south-westerly direction. The fog had increased and become so thick that from the stern we could hardly see the end of the bowsprit. The little vessel had proved herself a splendid sea boat, and we had both become so reconciled to our position, and so confident in her powers, that neither of us thought any longer of the danger of our position, especially as the wind and sea were both abating. We were just congratulating each other upon this cheering fact, when an unexpected and terrible catastrophe overtook us.

It must have been about seven in the evening, and I had gone down to rummage in the lockers and find something to eat, when I heard Lucy give a startled cry above me. I sprang upon

deck instantly. She was standing up by the tiller peering out into the mist.

"Jack," she cried. "I hear voices, There is some one close to us."

"Voices!" I said; "impossible. If we were near land we should hear the breakers."

"Hist!" she cried, holding up her hand. "Listen!"

We were standing together straining our ears to catch every sound, when suddenly and swiftly there emerged from the fog upon our starboard bow a long line of Roman numerals with the figure of a gigantic woman hovering above them. There was no time for thought or preparation. A dark loom towered above us, taking the wind from our sails, and then a great vessel sprang upon us out of the mist as a wild beast might upon its prey. Instinctively, as I saw the monster surging down upon us, I flung one of the life-belts, which was hanging round the tiller, over Lucy's head, and seizing her by the waist, I sprang with her into the sea.

What happened after that it is hard to tell. In such moments all idea of time is lost. It might have been minutes or it might have been hours during which I swam by Lucy's side, encouraging her in every possible way to place full confidence in her belt and to float without struggling. She obeyed me to the letter, like a brave girl as she was. Every time I rose to the top of a wave I looked around for some sign of our destroyer, but in vain. We joined our voices in a cry for aid, but no answer came back except the howling of the wind. I was a strong swimmer, but hampered with my clothes my strength began gradually to fail me. I was still by Lucy's side, and she noticed that I became feebler.

"Trust to the belt, my darling, whatever happens," I said.

She turned her tender face towards me.

"If you leave me I shall slip it off," she answered.

Again I came to the top of a great roller, and looked round. There was nothing to be seen. But hark! what was that? A dull clanking noise came on my ears, which was distinct from the splash of the sea. It was the sound of oars in rowlocks. We gave a last feeble cry for aid. It was answered by a friendly shout, and the next

that either of us remember was when we came to our senses once more and found ourselves in warm and comfortable berths with kind anxious faces around us. We had both fainted while being lifted into the boat.

The vessel was a large Norwegian sailing barque, the Freyja, of five hundred tons, which had started five days before from Bergen, and was bound for Adelaide in Australia. Nothing could exceed the kindness of Captain Thorbjorn and his crew to the two unfortunates whom they had picked out of the Atlantic Ocean. The watch on deck had seen us, but too late to prevent a collision. They had at once dropped a boat, which was about to return to the ship in despair, when that last cry reached their ears.

Captain Thorbjorn's wife was on board, and she at once took my dear companion under her care. We had a pleasant and rapid voyage to Adelaide, where we were duly married in the presence of Madame Thorbjorn and of all the officers of the Freyja.

After our marriage I went upcountry, and having taken a large farm there, I remained a happy and prosperous man. A sum of money was duly paid over to the firm of Scholefield, coming they knew not whence, which represented the value of the Evangeline.

One of the first English mails which followed us to Australia announced the death of Colonel Forrester, who fractured his skull by falling down the marble steps of a Glasgow hotel. Lucy was terribly grieved, but new associations and daily duties gradually overcame her sorrow.

Since then neither of us have anything to bind us to the old country, nor do we propose to return to it. We read the English periodicals, however, and have amused ourselves from time to time in noticing the stray allusions to the yacht Evangeline, and the sad fate of the young lady on board her. This short narrative of the real facts may therefore prove interesting to some few who have not forgotten what is now an old story, and some perhaps to whom the circumstances are new may care to hear a strange chapter in real life.