

Quarantine Island.

BY WALTER BESANT.

I.

“**N**O,” he cried, passionately. “You drew me on: you led me to believe that you cared for me: you encouraged me. What? Can a girl go on as you have done without meaning anything? Does a girl allow a man to press her hand—to keep her hand—without meaning anything? Unless these things mean nothing, you are the most heartless girl in the whole world; yes—I say the coldest, the most treacherous, the most heartless!” It was evening, and moonlight, a soft and delicious night in September. The waves lapped gently at their feet, the warm breeze played upon their faces, the moon shone upon them—an evening wholly unfit for such a royal rage, as this young gentleman—two and twenty is still young—exhibited. He

She sat on one of the seaside benches, her hands clasped, her head bent. He went on—he recalled the day when first they met, he reminded her of the many, many ways in which she had led him on to believe that she cared for him, he accused her of making him love her in order to laugh at him. When he could find nothing more to say he flung himself upon the bench, but on the other end of it, and crossed his arms, and dropped his head upon them. So that there were two on the bench: one at either end, and both with their heads dropped—a pretty picture, in the moonlight, of a lovers’ quarrel. But this was worse than a lovers’ quarrel. It was the end of everything, for the girl was engaged to another man.

She rose. If he had been looking up he would have seen that there were tears in her eyes, and on her cheek.



A LOVERS' QUARREL.

walked about on the parade, which was deserted, except for this solitary pair, gesticulating, waving his arms, mad with the madness of wounded love.

“Mr. Fernie,” she stammered, timidly, “I suppose there is nothing more to say. I am, no doubt, all that you have called me. I am heartless. I have led you on. Well

—but I did not know—how could I tell that you were taking things so seriously? How can you be so angry just because I can't marry you? One girl is no better than another. There are plenty of girls in the world. I thought you liked me, and, I—but what is the use of talking? I am heartless and cold. I am treacherous, and vain, and cruel, and—and—won't you shake hands with me once more, Claude, before we part?"

"No, I will never shake hands with you again; never—never. By Heavens! nothing that could happen now would ever make me shake hands with you again. I hate you, I loathe you, I shudder at the sight of you, I could not forgive you—never. You have ruined my life. Shake hands with you! Who but a heartless and worthless woman could propose such a thing?"

She shivered and shook at his wild words. She could not, as she said, understand the vehemence of the passion that held the man. He was more than half mad, and she was only half sorry. Forgive the girl. She was only seventeen, just fresh from her governess. She was quite innocent and ignorant. She knew nothing about the reality and the vehemence of passion; she thought that they had been very happy together. Claude, to be sure, was ridiculously fond of taking her hand; once he kissed her head to show the depth of his friendship; he was such a good companion; they had had such a pleasant time; it was a dreadful pity that he should be so angry. Besides, it was not as if she liked the other man, who was old and horrid.

"Good-bye, then, Claude," she said. "Perhaps, when we meet again, you will be more ready to forgive me. Oh!" she laughed, "it is so silly that a man like you, a great, strong, clever, handsome man, should be so foolish over a girl. Besides, you ought to know that a girl can't have things her own way always. Good-bye, Claude, won't you shake hands?" She laid her hand upon his shoulder; just touched it; turned—and fled.

II.

SHE had not far to go. The villa where she lived was within five minutes' walk. She ran in and found her mother alone in the drawing-room.

"My dear," the mother said irritably, "I wish to goodness you wouldn't run out after dinner. Where have you been?"

"Only into the garden, and to look at the sea."

"There's Sir William in the dining-room still."

"Let him stay there, mother dear. He'll drink up all the wine and go to sleep, perhaps, and then we shall be rid of him."

"Go in, Florence, and bring him out. It isn't good for him, at his age, to drink so much."

"Let the servants go," the girl replied, rebellious.

"My dear—your own accepted lover. Have you no right feeling? Oh! Florence, and when I am so ill, and you know—I told you—"

"A woman should not marry her grandfather. I've had more than enough of him to-day already. You made me promise to marry him. Until I do marry him he may amuse himself. As soon as we are married, I shall fill up all the decanters, and keep them full, and encourage him to drink as much as ever he possibly can."

"My dear, are you mad?"

"Oh! no; I believe I have only just come to my senses. Mad? No. I have been mad. Now, when it is too late, I am sane. When it is too late—when I have just understood what I have done."

"Nonsense, child! What do you mean by being too late? Besides, you are doing what every girl does. You have accepted the hand of an old man who can give you a fine position, and a great income, and every kind of luxury. What more can the girl desire? When I die—you know already—there will be nothing—nothing at all for you. Marriage is your only chance."

At this moment the door opened, and Sir William himself appeared. He was not, although a man so rich and therefore so desirable, quite a nice old man to look at; not quite such an old man as a girl would fall in love with at first sight; but, perhaps, under the surface there lay unsuspected virtues by the dozen. He was short and fat; his hair was white; his face was red; he had great white eyebrows; he had thick lips; his eyes rolled unsteadily, and his shoulders lurched; he had taken more wine than is good for a man of seventy.

He held out both hands and lurched forwards. "Florenshe," he said, thickly, "let's sit down together somewhere. Let's talk, my dear."

The girl slipped from the proffered hands and fled from the room.



"WHATSH MATTEE WITH THE GIRL?" SAID SIR WILLIAM."

"Whatsh matter with the girl?" said Sir William.

III.

OUT at sea—all by itself—somewhere about thirty miles from a certain good-sized island in a certain ocean, there lies another little island—an eyot—a mile long and half a mile broad. It is a coral islet. The coral reef stretches out all round it, except in one or two places where the rock shelves suddenly, making it possible for a ship to anchor there. The islet is flat, but all round it runs a kind of natural sea wall, about ten feet high and as many broad; behind it, on the side which the wall protects from the wind, is a little grove of low, stunted trees, the name of which the successive tenants of the island have never been curious to ascertain. The area protected by the sea wall, as low as the sea level, was covered all over with long, rank grass. At the north end of the islet a curious round rock, exactly like a martello tower, but rather higher, rose out of the water, separated from the sea wall by twenty or thirty feet of deep water, dark blue, trans-

parent; sometimes rolling and rushing and tearing at the sides of the rock, sometimes gently lifting the sea-weed that clung to the sides. Round the top of the rock flew, screaming, all the year round, the sea birds. Far away on the horizon, like a blue cloud, one could see land; it was the larger island to which this place belonged. At the south end was a lighthouse, built just like all lighthouses, with low, white buildings at its foot, and a flagstaff, and an enclosure, which was a feeble attempt at a flower garden. Half a mile from the lighthouse, where the sea wall broadened into a wide level space, there was a wooden house of four rooms—dining-room, *salon*, and two bedrooms. It was a low house, provided with a verandah on either side. The windows had no glass in them, but thick shutters in case of hurricanes. There were doors to the rooms, but they were never shut. Nothing was shut, or locked up, or protected. On the inner, or land, side there was a garden in which roses—a small red rose—grew in quantities, and a few English flowers. The Elephant Creeper, with its immense leaves, clambered up the

verandah poles and over the roof. There was a small plot of ground planted with pine apples, and a solitary banana tree stood under the protection of the house, its leaves blown to shreds, its head bowed down.

Beyond the garden was a collection of three or four huts, where lived the Indian servants and their families.

The residents of this retreat—this secluded earthly paradise—were these Indian servants with their wives and children; the three lighthouse men, who messed together; and the captain, governor, or commander-in-chief, who lived in the house all by himself, because he had no wife or family.

Now the remarkable thing about this Island is that, although it is so far from any other inhabited place, and although it is so small, the human occupants number many thousands. With the exception of the people above-named, these thousands want nothing: neither the light of the day nor the warmth of the sun; neither food nor drink. They lie side by side under the rank grass, without headstones or even graves to mark their place; without a register or record of their departure; without even coffins! There they lie—sailors, soldiers, coolies, negroes—forgotten and lost, as much as if they had never been born. And if their work lives after them, nobody knows what that work is. They belong to the vast army of the Anonymous. Poor Anonymous! They do all the work. They grow our corn and breed our sheep; they make and mend for us; they build up our lives for us. We never know them, nor thank them, nor think of them. All over the world, they work for their far-off brethren; and when one dies, we know not, because another takes his place. And at the last a mound of green grass, or even nothing but an undistinguished strip of ground!

Here lay, side by side, the Anonymous—thousands of them. Did I say they were forgotten? Not quite; they are remembered by the Indian women who live there. At sunset they and their children retreat to their huts, and stay in them till sunrise next morning. They dare not so much as look outside the door, because the place is crowded with white, shivering, sheeted ghosts! Speak to one of these women: she will point out to you, trembling, one—two—half a dozen ghosts. It is true that the dull eye of the Englishman can see nothing. She sees them—distinguishes them one from the other. She can see

them every night; yet she can never overcome her terror. The Governor, or Captain, or Commander-in-Chief, for his part, sees nothing. He sleeps in his house quite alone, with his cat and his dog, windows and doors wide open, and has no fear of any ghosts. If he felt any fear, of course, he would be surrounded and pestered to death every night with multitudes of ghosts. But he fears nothing. He is a doctor, you see; and no doctor ever yet was afraid of ghosts.

How did they come here—this regiment of dead men? In several ways. Cholera accounts for most; yellow fever for some; other fevers for some; but for most cholera has been the destroyer. Because, you see, this is Quarantine Island. If a ship has cholera or any other infectious disease on board, it cannot touch at the island close by, which is a great place for trade, and has every year a quantity of ships calling; the infected ship has to betake herself to Quarantine Island, where her people are landed, and where they stay until she has a clear bill; and that, sometimes, is not until the greater part of her people have changed their berths on board for permanent lodgings ashore. Now you understand. The place is a great cemetery. It lies under the hot sun of the tropics. The sky is always blue; the sun is always hot. It is girdled by the sea. It is always silent, for the Indian children do not laugh or shout, and the Indian women are too much awed by the presence of the dead to wrangle—always silent, save for the crying of the sea-birds on the rock. There are no letters, no newspapers, no friends, no duties—none, save when a ship puts in, and then, for the doctor, farewell rest, farewell sleep, until the bill of health is clean. Once a fortnight or so, if the weather permits, and if the communications are open—that is, if there is no ship there—a boat arrives from the big island with rations, and letters, and supplies. Sometimes a visitor comes, but not often, because, should an infected ship put in, he would have to stay as long as the ship. A quiet, peaceful, monotonous life for one who is weary of the world, or for a hermit; and as good as the top of a pillar for silence and for meditation.

IV.

THE islet lay all night long in much the same silence which lapped and wrapped it all the day. The water washed musically upon the shore: the light in the lighthouse

flashed at intervals—there was no other sign of life. Towards six o'clock in the morning the dark east grew grey; thin, long, white rays shot out across the sky, and then the light began to spread. Before the grey turned to pink, or the pink to crimson; before there was any corresponding glow in the western sky, the man who occupied the bungalow turned out of bed, and came forth to the verandah clad in the silk pyjamas and silk jacket, which formed the evening, or dress suit, in which he slept. The increasing light showed that he was a young man still, perhaps about thirty—a young man with a strong and resolute face, and a square forehead. He stood under the verandah watching, as he had done every day for two years and more, the break of day and

and came out again clad in a rough suit of tweeds and a helmet. His servant was waiting for him with his morning tea. He drank it, and sallied forth. By this time the shortlived splendour of the East was fast broadening to right and left, until it stretched from pole to pole. Suddenly the sun leaped up, and the colours fled and the splendour vanished. The sky became all over a deep, clear blue, and round and about the sun was a brightness which no eye but that of the sea bird can face and live. The man in the helmet turned to the seashore, and walked briskly along the sea wall. Now and then he stepped down upon the white coral sand, picked up a shell, looked at it, and threw it away. When he came to the Sea Birds' Rock he sat down,



"SEA BIRDS' ROCK."

the sunrise. He drank in the delicious breeze, cooled by a thousand miles and more of ocean. No one knows the freshness and sweetness of the air until he has so stood in the open and watched the dawn of a day in the tropics. He went back to the house

and watched it. In the deep water below sea snakes, red and purple and green, were playing about; great blue fish rolled lazily round and round the rock; in the recesses lurked unseen the great conger eel, which dreads nothing but the Thing of long and

horny tentacles, the ourite or squid, the humorous tazar which bites the bathers in shallow waters all for fun and mischief, and with no desire at all to eat their flesh; and a thousand curious creatures, which this man, who had trained his eyes by days and days of watching, came here every day to look at. While he stood there the sea birds took no manner of notice of him, flying close about him, lighting on the shore close at his feet. They were intelligent enough to know that he was only dangerous with a gun in his hand. Presently he got up, and continued his walk. All round the sea wall of the island measures three miles. He took this walk every morning and every evening in the early cool and the late. The rest of the time he spent indoors.

When he got back it was past seven, and the day was growing hot. He took his towels, went down to the shore, to a place where the coral reef receded, leaving a channel out to the open. The channel swarmed with sharks, but he bathed there every morning, keeping in the shallow water while the creatures watched him from the depths beyond with longing eyes. He wore a pair of slippers, on account of the *láf*, which is a very pretty little fish indeed to look at, but he lurks in dark places near the shore, and he is too lazy to get out of the way, and if you put your foot near him, he sticks out his dorsal fin, which is prickly and poisoned, and when a man gets that into the sole of his foot, he goes home and cuts his leg off, and has to pretend that he lost it in action. But the *láf* only chuckles.

When he had bathed, the Doctor went back to his house, and performed some simple additions to his toilette. That is to say, he washed the salt water out of his hair and beard—not much else. As to collars, neckties, braces, waistcoats, black coats, rings, or any such gewgaws, they were not wanted on this island. Nor are watches and clocks; the residents go by the sun. The doctor got up at daybreak, and took his walk, as you have seen, and his bath. He was then ready for his breakfast, and for a solid meal, in which fresh fish, newly caught that morning, and curried chicken, with claret and water, formed the principal part. A cup of coffee came after, with a cigar and a book on the verandah. By this time the sun was high, and the glare of forenoon had succeeded the coolness of the dawn. After the cigar the doctor went indoors. The room was furnished with a few pictures, a large book-

case full of books, chiefly medical, a table covered with papers, and two or three chairs. No curtains, carpets, or blinds; the doors and windows wide open to the verandah on both sides.

He sat down and began writing—perhaps he was writing a novel. I think no one would think of a more secluded place for writing a novel. Perhaps he was doing something scientific. He continued writing till past midday. When he felt hungry he went into the dining-room, took a biscuit or two and a glass of vermouth. Then, because it was now the hour for repose, and because the air outside was hot, and the sea breeze had dropped to a dead calm, and the sun was like a red-hot glaring furnace over head, the Doctor kicked off his boots, and threw off his coat, lay down on a grass mat under the mosquito curtain, and instantly fell fast asleep. About five o'clock he awoke, and got up; the heat of the day was over; he took a long draught of cold tea, which is the most refreshing and the coolest drink in the world. The sun was now getting low, and the air was growing cool. He put on his helmet, and set off again to walk round his domain. This done, he bathed again. Then he went home as the sun sank, and night fell instantly without the intervention of twilight. They served him dinner, which was like his breakfast, but for the addition of some cutlets. He took his coffee, he took a pipe—two pipes, slowly, with a book—he took a whisky and soda—and he went to bed. I have said that he had no watch—it hung idly on a nail—therefore he knew not the time, but it would very likely be about half-past nine. However that might be, he was the last person up in this ghostly Island of the Anonymous Dead.

This doctor, Captain-General and Commandant of Quarantine Island, was none other than the young man who began this history with a row royal and a kingly rage. You think, perhaps, that he had turned hermit in the bitterness of his wrath, and for the faults of one simple girl had resolved on the life of a solitary. Nothing of the kind. He was an army doctor, and he left the service in order to take this very eligible appointment, where one lived free, and could spend nothing except a little for claret. He proposed to stay there for a few years in order to make a little money, by means of which he might become a specialist. This was his ambition. As for that love business, seven years past, he had clean forgotten it, girl and all. Perhaps there had been other

tender passages. Shall a man, wasting in despair, die because a girl throws him over? Never! Let him straightway forget her. Let him tackle his work, let him put off the business of love—which can always wait—until he can approach it once more in the proper spirit of illusion, and once more fall to worshipping an angel.

V.

NEITHER nature nor civilisation ever designed a man's life to be spent in monotony. Most of us have to work for our daily bread, which is always an episode, and sometimes a pretty dismal episode, to break and mark the day. One day there came such a break in the monotonous round of the Doctor's life. It came in the shape of a ship. She was a large steamer, and she steamed slowly.

It was early in the morning, before breakfast. The Doctor and one of the lighthouse men stood on the landing-place watching her.

"She's in quarantine, Doctor, sure as sure," said the man. "I wonder what's she's got. Fever, for choice. Cholera, more likely. Well, we take our chance."

"She's been in bad weather," said the Doctor, looking at her through his glass. "Look, she's lost her mizen, and her bows are stove in. I wonder what's the meaning of it. She's a transport." She drew nearer. "Troops! Well, I'd rather have soldiers than coolies."

She was a transport. She was full of soldiers, time-expired men and invalids going home. She was bound from Calcutta to Portsmouth. She had met with a cyclone; driven out of her course and battered, she was making for the nearest port, when cholera broke out on board.

Before nightfall the island was dotted with white tents; a hospital was rigged up with the help of the ship's spars and canvas. The men were all ashore, and the Quarantine Doctor with the ship's doctor was hard at work among the cases, and the men were dropping in every direction.

Among the passengers were a dozen ladies and some children. The Doctor gave up his house to

them, and retired to a tent, or to the lighthouse, or anywhere to sleep. Much sleep could not be expected for some time to come. He saw the boat land with the ladies on board; he took off his hat as they walked past. There were old ladies, middle-aged ladies, young ladies. Well, there always is this combination. Then he went on with his work. But he had a curious sensation, as if something of the past had been revived in his mind. It is, however, not an uncommon feeling. And one of the ladies changed colour when she saw him.

Then began the struggle for life. No more monotony in Quarantine Island. Right and left, all day long, the men fell one after the other; day after day more men fell, more men died. The two doctors quickly organised their staff. The ship's officers became clinical clerks, some of the ladies became nurses. And the men, the rough soldiers, sat about in their tents with pale faces, expecting. Of those ladies who worked



"SHE WAS AT WORK DAY AND NIGHT."

there was one—a nurse—who never seemed weary, never wanted rest, never asked for relief. She was at work all day and all night in the hospital; if she went out it was only to cheer up the men outside. The doctor was but conscious of her work and of her presence, he never spoke to her; when he came to the hospital another nurse received him; if he passed her she seemed always to turn away. At a less troubled time he would have observed this. At times he felt again that odd sensation of a recovered past, but he regarded it not—he had other things to consider. There is no time more terrible for the courage of the stoutest man than a time of cholera on board ship or in a little place whence there is no escape; no time worse for a physician than one when his science is mocked and his skill avails nothing. Day after day the doctor fought from morning till night and far on to the morning again; day after day new graves were dug; day after day the chaplain read over the new-made graves the service of the dead for the gallant lads who thus died, inglorious, for their country.

There came a time, at last, when the conqueror seemed tired of conquest. He ceased to strike. The fury of the disease spent itself; the cases happened singly, one or two a day, instead of ten or twenty; the sick began to recover, they began to look about them. The single cases ceased; the pestilence was stayed; and they sat down to count the cost. There had been on board the transport three hundred and seventy-five men, thirty-two officers, half a dozen ladies, a few children, and the ship's crew. Twelve officers, two of the ladies, and a hundred men had perished when the plague abated.

"One of your nurses is ill, Doctor."

"Not cholera, I do hope."

"No, I believe a kind of collapse. She is at the bungalow. I told them I would send you over."

"I will go at once."

He left a few directions and walked over to the house. It was, he found, the nurse who had been of all the most useful and the most active. She was now lying hot and feverish, her mind wandering, inclined to ramble in her talk. He laid his hand upon her temples; he felt her pulse, he looked upon her face; the odd feeling of something familiar struck him again. "I don't think it is very much," he said. "A little fever. She may have been in the sun; she has been working too hard;

her strength has given way." He still held her wrist.

"Claude," murmured the sick girl, "you are very cruel. I didn't know—and a girl cannot always have her own way."

Then he recognised her.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, "it is Florence!"

"Not always have her own way," she repeated. "If I could have my own way, do you think I would—?"

"Florence," he said again, "and I did not even recognise her. Strange!"

Another of the ladies, the Colonel's wife, was standing beside him.

"You know her, Doctor?"

"I knew her a long time ago—some years ago—before she married."

"Married? Florence is not married. You must be thinking of someone else."

"No. This is Florence Vernon, is it not? Yes. Then she was formerly engaged to marry a certain Sir William Dupont."

"Oh! I believe there was some talk about an old man who wanted to marry her. But she wouldn't have him. It was just before her mother died. Did you know her mother?"

"I knew her mother a little when they were living at Eastbourne. So she refused the old man, did she? and has remained unmarried. Curious! I had almost forgotten her. The sight of her brings back the old days. Well, after she has pulled so gallantly through the cholera, we cannot have her beaten by a little fever. Refused the old man, did she?"

In the dead of night he sat watching by the bedside, the Colonel's wife with him.

"I had almost forgotten," whispered the lady, "that story of the old baronet. She told me about it once. Her mother was ill and anxious about her daughter, because she had next to nothing, except an annuity. The old man offered; he was an unpleasant old man; but there was a fine house and everything; it was all arranged. The girl was quite a child, and understood nothing. She was to be sold, in fact, to this old person, who ought to have been thinking of his latter end, instead of a pretty girl. Then the mother died suddenly, and the girl broke it off. She was a clever girl, and she has been teaching. For the last three years she has been in India, now she is going home under my charge. She is a brave girl, Doctor, and a good girl. She has received half a dozen offers, but she

has refused them all. So I think there must be somebody at home.

"Claude," murmured the girl, wandering, "I never thought you would care so much. If I had thought so, I would not have encouraged you. Indeed, indeed, I would not. I thought we were only amusing ourselves."

"Claude is a pretty name. What is your own Christian name, Doctor?" asked the Colonel's wife, curiously.

"It is—in fact—it is—Claude," he replied blushing; but there was not enough light to see his blushes.

"Dear me!" said the Colonel's wife.

VI.

A FEW days later the patient, able to sit for a while in the shade of the verandah, was lying in a long cane chair. Beside her sat the Colonel's wife, who had nursed her through the attack. She was reading aloud to her. Suddenly she stopped. "Here comes the doctor," she said, "and, Florence,

a pretty room to look at. In the twilight the fragile figure, pale, thin, dressed in white, would have lent interest even to a stranger. To the doctor I suppose it was only a "case." He pushed the blinds aside and stepped in, strong, big, masterful. "You are much better," he said; "you will very soon be able to walk about. Only be careful for a few days. It was lucky that the attack came when it did, and not a little earlier, when we were in the thick of the trouble. Well, you won't want me much longer, I believe."

"No, thank you," she murmured, without raising her eyes.

"I have had no opportunity," he said, standing over her, "of explaining that I really did not know who you were, Miss Vernon. Somehow, I didn't see your face, or I was thinking of other things; I suppose you had forgotten me; anyhow, it was not until the other day, when I was called in, that I remembered. But I dare say you have forgotten me."



"DEAR ME! SAID THE COLONEL'S WIFE."

my dear, his name, you know, is Claude. I think you have got something to talk about with Claude besides the symptoms." With these words she laughed, nodded her head, and ran into the *salon*.

The verandah, with its green blinds of cane hanging down, and its matting on the floor, and its easy-chairs and tables, made

"No; I have not forgotten."

"I thought that long ago you had become Lady Duport."

"No, that did not take place."

"I hear that you have been teaching since your mother's death. Do you like it?"

"Yes, I like it."

"Do you remember the last time we met—on the seashore—do you remember, Florence?" His voice softened suddenly. "We had a quarrel about that old villain—do you remember?"

"I thought you had forgotten such a little thing as that long ago, and the girl you quarrelled with."

"The point is rather whether you remember. That is of much more importance."

"I remember that you swore that you would never forgive a worthless girl who had ruined your life. Did I ruin your life, Dr. Fernie?"

He laughed. He could not honestly say that she had. In fact, his life, so far as concerned his work, had gone on much about the same. But, then, such a man does not allow love to interfere with his career.

"And then you went and threw over the old man. Florence, why didn't you tell me that you were going to do that? You might have told me."

She shook her head. "Until you fell into such a rage, and called me such dreadful names, I did not understand."

"Why didn't you tell me, Florence?" he repeated.

She shook her head again.

"You were only a little innocent, ignorant child then," he said; "of course you could not understand. I was an ass and a brute and a fool not to know."

"You said you would never forgive me. You said you would never shake hands with me again."

He held out his hand. "Since," he said, "you are not going to marry the old man, and since you are not engaged to anybody else, why—then—in that case—the old state of things is still going on—and—and—Florence—but if you give me your hand, I shall keep it, mind."

"Dear me," said the Colonel's wife, standing in the doorway. "Do Quarantine Doctors always kiss their patients? But you told me, Doctor dear, that your Christian name was Claude. Didn't you? That explains everything."

The ship, with those of her company whom the plague had spared, presently steamed away, and, after being repaired, made her way to Portsmouth Dockyard. But one of her company stayed behind, and now is Queen or Empress of the Island of which her husband is King, Captain, Commandant, and Governor-General, and resident Quarantine Doctor.

