

## CHAPTER XXVII

### HOME AGAIN

THE company on the junk to which Galahad returned was a quiet one. There was no hilarity. How could there be, when after the toll had been taken, it was found that Stromborsky, the Russian, and one member of the crew were dead, and that Green and MacGregor had both been wounded, though not seriously. Of the pirate crew of seventeen (they learned the number from the prisoners), six had been captured alive, and two who had jumped into the sea had afterwards swum up and begged to be taken on board. The eight were all tied securely and were already fast asleep as if they had not a trouble in the world.

The contents of the junk's hold had been examined. There was a large quantity of clothing, much of it of a superior quality and carefully done into bundles, evidently the booty from numerous marauding expeditions. A large box was found nearly full of women's jewelry, bric-a-brac, heirlooms, several pairs of vases, and considerable money. There was in addition a quantity of food.

The latter was left on the junk, but the valuables were transferred to the launch, where they were piled high on the deck. The prisoners, too, were left on their own boat under guard, together with the bodies of Stromborsky and Ching, the member of the launch's crew.

The launch's cable was attached to the prow of the Chinese ship and the journey homeward began. The men talked in quiet tones of the disposition of the vessel and the plunder. Hawley was especially proud

of the way his crew had behaved, and felt that they should be rewarded liberally. Provision, too, must be made for Ching's wife and family.

Before the lights on Frenchman's Island appeared, the suggestion of MacGregor had been discussed and adopted—namely, that the pirate ship, in which she had been abducted, should be given to Mrs. Yao. After each had selected what he fancied from the booty, the rest was to be sold and the proceeds divided among the Chinese crew.

It was growing light as they came in sight of Consular Hill and its winking light, which, with the morning star, was still shining.

About midnight the wind had changed and was blowing chilly from the north. Galahad had sought for something warm with which to cover Jeanne. One of the bundles piled on the deck had broken open and from it he had, without being able to see clearly in the dark, drawn out a garment and carried it down to spread over his wife.

Now MacGregor and Galahad were talking together as the vessel ran along the shore toward Chefoo. The former had his arm in a sling. "How can I ever thank you and these others for what you have done?" asked Galahad.

"Don't try," said MacGregor. "They would do it again to-morrow for any other man. Just let them see Mrs. Yao and that will be reward enough."

Taking the hint, Galahad went below, and just as the launch passed the breakwater and entered the quiet of the inner harbor, he reappeared on deck, leading Jeanne. The men sprang to their feet at once and, it must be confessed, stared open-mouthed at the vision they beheld. What they had expected to see, no one knows, perhaps some dull type of peasant woman; but what they did see was a dainty little creature wrapped in an exquisite Chinese coat of dark-blue satin embroidered

with many-colored flowers, yet all in perfect harmony. From beneath this robe peeped tiny feet incased in Chinese satin slippers. Her hairpins had all been shaken out on that all-night ride to the coast, so that she had merely arranged her hair in two large braids. She seemed like a child to these great men.

Jeanne recognized MacGregor at once and came to him with outstretched hand, "O Monsieur MacGregor; and you have been wounded."

He assured her it was nothing. For each one she had some word of appreciation, especially for Green, who was too badly wounded to rise. His knowledge of her mother tongue was limited to a word or two, so he kept repeating, "Merci, madame, awfully, don't you know."

"This is Captain Hawley, our commander," said Galahad, introducing the Standard C-1 representative.

"Admiral Hawley, you mean," suggested MacGregor. "He commands a fleet now, you know."

"No, MacGregor, you forget that the other ship belongs to some one else," replied Hawley. His tall, spare frame towered above Jeanne, making her look very small indeed. "I'd like to tell you," he said in fairly good French, "that we all think you are a mighty plucky little girl, and to prove it we want to make you a present."

"A present for me?" exclaimed Jeanne, looking from one to the other.

"Yes," went on Hawley, smiling, "your present is back there." He pointed to the junk. "We want you to have the pirate ship."

"But what shall I ever do with a pirate ship?" she asked.

"You might sell it and go on a second honeymoon. I know a certain lady, who is not nearly so small as you are who, if she had passed through all you have in the last thirty-six hours, would insist on a long, long

trip to the U. S. A. But you may do anything you like with it."

"Oh, I know what I shall do with it," cried Jeanne, her face radiant. "I'll sell it and use the money for my school and girls."

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Galahad's father had arrived during their absence and was waiting for them at the school with impatience and anxiety. When he saw Jeanne safe and sound, he so far forgot himself as to rush forward and take her by both hands. The spell was broken, however, when she kissed him on the cheek and the old man looked around to see if anybody had noticed his slip.

Of course the story had to be told from the beginning, but when all questions had been asked and answered, Jeanne said, "Father, when can we start for home?"

"As soon as I can hire animals," responded the farmer, with alacrity. Galahad thought that there was no need for haste, but Jeanne seemed intent on leaving that very day.

When MacGregor knew of it, he came to protest. "Don't you think it would be safer for you here in the port?" he asked.

"Safer, perhaps," replied Jeanne, with a laugh, "but not nearly so interesting."

"But you ought to stay a few days at least to see your friends."

"Yes, sometime, but not now. You forget my girls."

It was not altogether the girls, if the truth must be told, which made her so eager to be gone, but clothes or the lack of them. She was wearing a garment which, though beautiful and becoming, was more suitable for the opera than for morning wear. Under this was not suit of Chinese clothes which would not be

noticed once she got over the hill, but which here, among Europeans and Americans, would make her embarrassingly conspicuous.

By two that afternoon mules had been secured and the start made. Galahad was allowed to accompany them as far as the south hills. Jeanne would not hear to her husband's leaving his work, declaring that his father and Lao Li were able to protect her against all dangers, now that the bandits were all dead or behind the bars.

The day was one of those wonderful spring days when nature, like some bird, is preening herself in her new feathers of green. Jeanne gave herself up to the delight of the ride. Her first journey in that direction had been full of interest in unusual sights; this was replete with the perennial charm of familiar things such as spring flowers and half-grown leaves.

She had never seen such a profusion of violets lining the path and begging to be gathered. The humble dandelion and the purple foxglove were also plentiful. But the crown of all were the fruit trees in full bloom. The trees, often no higher than a man, covered the terraces of the hills. The pure white of the pear contrasted with the soft pink of the peach blossoms, while here and there both pink and white blended in the delicate garments of the apple trees, and the blood peach wore its almost red suit like some unabashed Chinese bride.

The balmy air was vibrant with the hum of bees working overtime. The streams added their murmur to the harmony of sound, fragrance, and color. How lovely China was, after all!

And her home-coming was no less happy. As she wrote the next day in a letter to her husband:

"No one could have had a more perfect home-coming. You remember how last year they all turned out to laugh and stare. Well, this time it seemed as if the whole village appeared, but I never believed it could be so different. This

time they seemed so glad to see me and cried, 'Back again' and 'All safe,' in such cordial tones that I could not keep the lump from coming up in my throat.

"And then when the schoolgirls all wanted to hold my hand at once and said, 'We were afraid you would never come back to us,' I just broke down and cried joy tears. And when they saw me crying they all began to cry too, and we had a very moist time for a while.

"Your mother said something to me last night when we were alone which I think you will be glad to hear. She laid her hand on my arm (I think it is the first time she has ever touched me) and said, 'I prayed to your God to keep you safe, and He has heard me.'

"How beautiful China is and how kind her people are! It is good to be home again. I am very happy."

The End

