

Literature.org:
[Authors](#)
[Contact](#)

[The Return of Tarzan](#)

[Edgar Rice Burroughs](#)

This Book:
[Contents](#)
[Previous Chapter](#)
[Next Chapter](#)

Chapter 13 - The Wreck of the "Lady Alice"

The next morning at breakfast Tarzan's place was vacant. Miss Strong was mildly curious, for Mr. Caldwell had always made it a point to wait that he might breakfast with her and her mother. As she was sitting on deck later Monsieur Thuran paused to exchange a half dozen pleasant words with her. He seemed in most excellent spirits--his manner was the extreme of affability. As he passed on Miss Strong thought what a very delightful man was Monsieur Thuran.

The day dragged heavily. She missed the quiet companionship of Mr. Caldwell--there had been something about him that had made the girl like him from the first; he had talked so entertainingly of the places he had seen--the peoples and their customs--the wild beasts; and he had always had a droll way of drawing striking comparisons between savage animals and civilized men that showed a considerable knowledge of the former, and a keen, though somewhat cynical, estimate of the latter.

When Monsieur Thuran stopped again to chat with her in the afternoon she welcomed the break in the day's monotony. But she had begun to become seriously concerned in Mr. Caldwell's continued absence; somehow she constantly associated it with the start she had had the night before, when the dark object fell past her port into the sea. Presently she broached the subject to Monsieur Thuran. Had he seen Mr. Caldwell today? He had not. Why?

"He was not at breakfast as usual, nor have I seen him once since yesterday," explained the girl.

Monsieur Thuran was extremely solicitous.

"I did not have the pleasure of intimate acquaintance with Mr. Caldwell," he said. "He seemed a most estimable gentleman, however. Can it be that he is indisposed, and has remained in his stateroom? It would not be strange."

"No," replied the girl, "it would not be strange, of course; but for some inexplicable reason I have one of those foolish feminine presentiments that all is not right with Mr. Caldwell. It is the strangest feeling--it is as though I knew that he was not on board the ship."

Monsieur Thuran laughed pleasantly. "Mercy, my dear Miss Strong," he said; "where in the world could he be then? We have not been within sight of land for days."

"Of course, it is ridiculous of me," she admitted. And then: "But I am not going to worry about it any longer; I am going to find out where Mr. Caldwell is," and she motioned to a passing steward.

"That may be more difficult than you imagine, my dear girl," thought Monsieur Thuran, but aloud he said: "By all means."

"Find Mr. Caldwell, please," she said to the steward, "and tell him that his friends are much worried by his continued absence."

"You are very fond of Mr. Caldwell?" suggested Monsieur Thuran.

"I think he is splendid," replied the girl. "And mamma is perfectly infatuated with him. He is the sort of man with whom one has a feeling of perfect security--no one could help but have confidence in Mr. Caldwell."

A moment later the steward returned to say that Mr. Caldwell was not in his stateroom. "I cannot find him, Miss Strong, and"--he hesitated--"I have learned that his berth was not occupied last night. I think that I had better report the matter to the captain."

"Most assuredly," exclaimed Miss Strong. "I shall go with you to the captain myself. It is terrible! I know that something awful has happened. My presentiments were not false, after all."

It was a very frightened young woman and an excited steward who presented themselves before the captain a few moments later. He listened to their stories in silence--a look of concern marking his expression as the steward assured him that he had sought for the missing passenger in every part of the ship that a passenger might be expected to frequent.

"And are you sure, Miss Strong, that you saw a body fall overboard last night?" he asked.

"There is not the slightest doubt about that," she answered. "I cannot say that it was a human body--there was no outcry. It might have been only what I thought it was--a bundle of refuse. But if Mr. Caldwell is not found on board I shall always be positive that it was he whom I saw fall past my port."

The captain ordered an immediate and thorough search of the entire ship from stem to stern--no nook or cranny was to be overlooked. Miss Strong remained in his cabin, waiting the outcome of the quest. The captain asked her many questions, but she could tell him nothing about the missing man other than what she had herself seen during their brief acquaintance on shipboard. For the first time she suddenly realized how very little indeed Mr. Caldwell had told her about himself or his past life. That he had been born in Africa and educated in Paris was about all she knew, and this meager information had been the result of her surprise that an Englishman should speak English with such a marked French accent.

"Did he ever speak of any enemies?" asked the captain.

"Never."

"Was he acquainted with any of the other passengers?"

"Only as he had been with me--through the circumstance of casual meeting as fellow shipmates."

"Er--was he, in your opinion, Miss Strong, a man who drank to excess?"

"I do not know that he drank at all--he certainly had not been drinking up to half an hour before I saw that body fall overboard," she answered, "for I was with him on deck up to that time."

"It is very strange," said the captain. "He did not look to me like a man who was subject to fainting spells, or anything of that sort. And even had he been it is scarcely credible that he should have fallen completely over the rail had he been taken with an attack while leaning upon it --he would rather have fallen inside, upon the deck. If he is not on board, Miss Strong, he was thrown overboard--and the fact that you heard no outcry would lead to the assumption that he was dead before he left the ship's deck--murdered."

The girl shuddered.

It was a full hour later that the first officer returned to report the outcome of the search.

"Mr. Caldwell is not on board, sir," he said.

"I fear that there is something more serious than accident here, Mr. Brently," said the captain. "I wish that you would make a personal and very careful examination of Mr. Caldwell's effects, to ascertain if there is any clew to a motive either for suicide or murder--sift the thing to the bottom."

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded Mr. Brently, and left to commence his investigation.

Hazel Strong was prostrated. For two days she did not leave her cabin, and when she finally ventured on deck she was very wan and white, with great, dark circles beneath her eyes. Waking or sleeping, it seemed that she constantly saw that dark body dropping, swift and silent, into the cold, grim sea.

Shortly after her first appearance on deck following the tragedy, Monsieur Thuran joined her with many expressions of kindly solicitude.

"Oh, but it is terrible, Miss Strong," he said. "I cannot rid my mind of it."

"Nor I," said the girl wearily. "I feel that he might have been saved had I but given the alarm."

"You must not reproach yourself, my dear Miss Strong," urged Monsieur Thuran. "It was in no way your fault. Another would have done as you did. Who would think that because something fell into the sea from a ship that it must necessarily be a man? Nor would the outcome have been different had you given an alarm. For a while they would have doubted your story, thinking it but the nervous hallucination of a woman--had you insisted it would have been too late to have rescued him by the time the ship could have been brought to a stop, and the boats lowered and rowed back miles in search of the unknown spot where the tragedy had occurred. No, you must not censure yourself. You have done more than any other of us for poor Mr. Caldwell--you were the only one to miss him. It was you who instituted the search."

The girl could not help but feel grateful to him for his kind and encouraging words. He was with her often--almost constantly for the remainder of the voyage--and she grew to like him very much indeed. Monsieur Thuran had learned that the beautiful Miss Strong, of Baltimore, was an American heiress--a very wealthy girl in her own right, and with future prospects that quite took his breath away when he contemplated them, and since he spent most of his time in that delectable pastime it is a wonder that he breathed at all.

It had been Monsieur Thuran's intention to leave the ship at the first port they touched after the disappearance of Tarzan. Did he not have in his coat pocket the thing he had taken passage upon this very boat to obtain? There was nothing more to detain him here. He could not return to the Continent fast enough, that he might board the first express for St. Petersburg.

But now another idea had obtruded itself, and was rapidly crowding his original intentions into the background. That American fortune was not to be sneezed at, nor was its possessor a whit less attractive.

"SAPRISTI! but she would cause a sensation in St. Petersburg." And he would, too, with the assistance of her inheritance.

After Monsieur Thuran had squandered a few million dollars, he discovered that the vocation was so entirely to his liking that he would continue on down to Cape Town, where he suddenly decided that he had pressing engagements that might detain him there for some time.

Miss Strong had told him that she and her mother were to visit the latter's brother there--they had not decided upon the duration of their stay, and it would probably run into months.

She was delighted when she found that Monsieur Thuran was to be there also.

"I hope that we shall be able to continue our acquaintance," she said. "You must call upon mamma and me as soon as we are settled."

Monsieur Thuran was delighted at the prospect, and lost no time in saying so. Mrs. Strong was not quite so favorably impressed by him as her daughter.

"I do not know why I should distrust him," she said to Hazel one day as they were discussing him. "He seems a perfect gentleman in every respect, but sometimes there is something about his eyes--a fleeting expression which I cannot describe, but which when I see it gives me a very uncanny feeling."

The girl laughed. "You are a silly dear, mamma," she said.

"I suppose so, but I am sorry that we have not poor Mr. Caldwell for company instead."

"And I, too," replied her daughter.

Monsieur Thuran became a frequent visitor at the home of Hazel Strong's uncle in Cape Town. His attentions were very marked, but they were so punctiliously arranged to meet the girl's every wish that she came to depend upon him more and more. Did she or her mother or a cousin require an escort--was there a little friendly service to be rendered, the genial and ubiquitous Monsieur Thuran was always available. Her uncle and his family grew to like him for his unflinching courtesy and willingness to be of service. Monsieur Thuran was becoming indispensable. At length, feeling the moment propitious, he proposed. Miss Strong was startled. She did not know what to say.

"I had never thought that you cared for me in any such way," she told him. "I have looked upon you always as a very dear friend. I shall not give you my answer now. Forget that you have asked me to be your wife. Let us go on as we have been--then I can consider you from an entirely different angle for a time. It may be that I shall discover

that my feeling for you is more than friendship. I certainly have not thought for a moment that I loved you."

This arrangement was perfectly satisfactory to Monsieur Thuran. He deeply regretted that he had been hasty, but he had loved her for so long a time, and so devotedly, that he thought that every one must know it.

"From the first time I saw you, Hazel," he said, "I have loved you. I am willing to wait, for I am certain that so great and pure a love as mine will be rewarded. All that I care to know is that you do not love another. Will you tell me?"

"I have never been in love in my life," she replied, and he was quite satisfied. On the way home that night he purchased a steam yacht, and built a million-dollar villa on the Black Sea.

The next day Hazel Strong enjoyed one of the happiest surprises of her life--she ran face to face upon Jane Porter as she was coming out of a jeweler's shop.

"Why, Jane Porter!" she exclaimed. "Where in the world did you drop from? Why, I can't believe my own eyes."

"Well, of all things!" cried the equally astonished Jane. "And here I have been wasting whole reams of perfectly good imagination picturing you in Baltimore--the very ideal! And she threw her arms about her friend once more, and kissed her a dozen times.

By the time mutual explanations had been made Hazel knew that Lord Tennington's yacht had put in at Cape Town for at least a week's stay, and at the end of that time was to continue on her voyage--this time up the West Coast--and so back to England. "Where," concluded Jane, "I am to be married."

"Then you are not married yet?" asked Hazel.

"Not yet," replied Jane, and then, quite irrelevantly, "I wish England were a million miles from here.

Visits were exchanged between the yacht and Hazel's relatives. Dinners were arranged, and trips into the surrounding country to entertain the visitors. Monsieur Thuran was a welcome guest at every function. He gave a dinner himself to the men of the party, and managed to ingratiate himself in the good will of Lord Tennington by many little acts of hospitality.

Monsieur Thuran had heard dropped a hint of something which might result from this unexpected visit of Lord Tennington's yacht, and he wanted to be counted in on it. Once when he was alone with the Englishman he took occasion to make it quite plain that his engagement to Miss Strong was to be announced immediately upon their return to America. "But not a word of it, my dear Tennington--not a word of it."

"Certainly, I quite understand, my dear fellow," Tennington had replied. "But you are to be congratulated--ripping girl, don't you know--really."

The next day it came. Mrs. Strong, Hazel, and Monsieur Thuran were Lord Tennington's guests aboard his yacht. Mrs. Strong had been telling them how much she had enjoyed her visit at Cape Town, and that she regretted that a letter just received from her attorneys in Baltimore had necessitated her cutting her visit shorter than they had intended.

"When do you sail?" asked Tennington.

"The first of the week, I think," she replied. "Indeed?" exclaimed Monsieur Thuran. "I am very fortunate. I, too, have found that I must return at once, and now I shall have the honor of accompanying and serving you."

"That is nice of you, Monsieur Thuran," replied Mrs. Strong. "I am sure that we shall be glad to place ourselves under your protection." But in the bottom of her heart was the wish that they might escape him. Why, she could not have told.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Lord Tennington, a moment later. "Bully idea, by Jove!"

"Yes, Tennington, of course," ventured Clayton; "it must be a bully idea if you had it, but what the deuce is it? Goin' to steam to China via the south pole?"

"Oh, I say now, Clayton," returned Tennington, "you needn't be so rough on a fellow just because you didn't happen to suggest this trip yourself--you've acted a regular bounder ever since we sailed.

"No, sir," he continued, "it's a bully idea, and you'll all say so. It's to take Mrs. Strong and Miss Strong, and Thuran, too, if he'll come, as far as England with us on the yacht. Now, isn't that a corker?"

"Forgive me, Tenny, old boy," cried Clayton. "It certainly IS a corking idea--I never should have suspected you of it. You're quite sure it's original, are you?"

"And we'll sail the first of the week, or any other time that suits your convenience, Mrs. Strong," concluded the big-hearted Englishman, as though the thing were all arranged except the sailing date.

"Mercy, Lord Tennington, you haven't even given us an opportunity to thank you, much less decide whether we shall be able to accept your generous invitation," said Mrs. Strong.

"Why, of course you'll come," responded Tennington. "We'll make as good time as any passenger boat, and you'll be fully as comfortable; and, anyway, we all want you, and won't take no for an answer."

And so it was settled that they should sail the following Monday.

Two days out the girls were sitting in Hazel's cabin, looking at some prints she had had finished in Cape Town. They represented all the pictures she had taken since she had left America, and the girls were both engrossed in them, Jane asking many questions, and Hazel keeping up a perfect torrent of comment and explanation of the various scenes and people.

"And here," she said suddenly, "here's a man you know. Poor fellow, I have so often intended asking you about him, but I never have been able to think of it when we were together." She was holding the little print so that Jane did not see the face of the man it portrayed.

"His name was John Caldwell," continued Hazel. "Do you recall him? He said that he met you in America. He is an Englishman."

"I do not recollect the name," replied Jane. "Let me see the picture." "The poor fellow was lost overboard on our trip down the coast," she said, as she handed the print to Jane.

"Lost over--Why, Hazel, Hazel--don't tell me that he is dead--drowned at sea! Hazel! Why don't you say that you are joking!" And before the astonished Miss Strong could catch her Jane Porter had slipped to the floor in a swoon.

After Hazel had restored her chum to consciousness she sat looking at her for a long time before either spoke.

"I did not know, Jane," said Hazel, in a constrained voice, "that you knew Mr. Caldwell so intimately that his death could prove such a shock to you."

"John Caldwell?" questioned Miss Porter. "You do not mean to tell me that you do not know who this man was, Hazel?"

"Why, yes, Jane; I know perfectly well who he was--his name was John Caldwell; he was from London."

"Oh, Hazel, I wish I could believe it," moaned the girl. "I wish I could believe it, but those features are burned so deep into my memory and my heart that I should recognize them anywhere in the world from among a thousand others, who might appear identical to any one but me."

"What do you mean, Jane?" cried Hazel, now thoroughly alarmed. "Who do you think it is?"

"I don't think, Hazel. I know that that is a picture of Tarzan of the Apes."

"Jane!"

"I cannot be mistaken. Oh, Hazel, are you sure that he is dead? Can there be no mistake?"

"I am afraid not, dear," answered Hazel sadly. "I wish I could think that you are mistaken, but now a hundred and one little pieces of corroborative evidence occur to me that meant nothing to me while I thought that he was John Caldwell, of London. He said that he had been born in Africa, and educated in France."

"Yes, that would be true," murmured Jane Porter dully.

"The first officer, who searched his luggage, found nothing to identify John Caldwell, of London. Practically all his belongings had been made, or purchased, in Paris. Everything that bore an initial was marked either with a 'T' alone, or with 'J. C. T.' We thought that he was traveling incognito under his first two names--the J. C. standing for John Caldwell."

"Tarzan of the Apes took the name Jean C. Tarzan," said Jane, in the same lifeless monotone. "And he is dead! Oh! Hazel, it is horrible! He died all alone in this terrible ocean! It is unbelievable that that brave heart should have ceased to beat--that those mighty muscles are quiet and cold forever! That he who was the personification of life and health and manly strength should be the prey of slimy, crawling things, that--" But she could go no further, and with a little moan she buried her head in her arms, and sank sobbing to the floor.

For days Miss Porter was ill, and would see no one except Hazel and the faithful Esmeralda. When at last she came on deck all were struck by the sad change that had taken place in her. She was no longer the alert, vivacious American beauty who had charmed and delighted all who came in contact with her. Instead she was a very quiet and sad little girl--with an expression of hopeless wistfulness that none but Hazel Strong could interpret.

The entire party strove their utmost to cheer and amuse her, but all to no avail. Occasionally the jolly Lord Tennington would wring a wan smile from her, but for the most part she sat with wide eyes looking out across the sea.

With Jane Porter's illness one misfortune after another seemed to attack the yacht. First an engine broke down, and they drifted for two days while temporary repairs were being made. Then a squall struck them unaware, that carried overboard nearly everything above deck that was portable. Later two of the seamen fell to fighting in the forecabin, with the result that one of them was badly wounded with a knife, and the other had to be put in irons. Then, to cap the climax, the mate fell overboard at night, and was drowned before help could reach him. The yacht cruised about the spot for ten hours, but no sign of the man was seen after he disappeared from the deck into the sea.

Every member of the crew and guests was gloomy and depressed after these series of misfortunes. All were apprehensive of worse to come, and this was especially true of the seamen who recalled all sorts of terrible omens and warnings that had occurred during the early part of the voyage, and which they could now clearly translate into the precursors of some grim and terrible tragedy to come.

Nor did the croakers have long to wait. The second night after the drowning of the mate the little yacht was suddenly wracked from stem to stern. About one o'clock in the morning there was a terrific impact that threw the slumbering guests and crew from berth and bunk. A mighty shudder ran through the frail craft; she lay far over to starboard; the engines stopped. For a moment she hung there with her decks at an angle of forty-five degrees--then, with a sullen, rending sound, she slipped back into the sea and righted.

Instantly the men rushed upon deck, followed closely by the women. Though the night was cloudy, there was little wind or sea, nor was it so dark but that just off the port bow a black mass could be discerned floating low in the water.

"A derelict," was the terse explanation of the officer of the watch.

Presently the engineer hurried on deck in search of the captain.

"That patch we put on the cylinder head's blown out, sir," he reported, "and she's makin' water fast for'ard on the port bow."

An instant later a seaman rushed up from below.

"My Gawd!" he cried. "Her whole bleedin' bottom's ripped out. She can't float twenty minutes."

"Shut up!" roared Tennington. "Ladies, go below and get some of your things together. It may not be so bad as that, but we may have to take to the boats. It will be safer to be prepared. Go at once, please. And, Captain Jerrold, send some competent man below, please, to ascertain the exact extent of the damage. In the meantime I might suggest that you have the boats provisioned."

The calm, low voice of the owner did much to reassure the entire party, and a moment later all were occupied with the duties he had suggested. By the time the ladies had returned to the deck the rapid provisioning of the boats had been about completed, and a moment later the officer who had gone below had returned to report. But his opinion was scarcely needed to assure the huddled group of men and women that the end of the LADY ALICE was at hand.

"Well, sir?" said the captain, as his officer hesitated.

"I dislike to frighten the ladies, sir," he said, "but she can't float a dozen minutes, in my opinion. There's a hole in her you could drive a bally cow through, sir."

For five minutes the LADY ALICE had been settling rapidly by the bow. Already her stern loomed high in the air, and foothold on the deck was of the most precarious nature. She carried four boats, and these were all filled and lowered away in safety. As they pulled rapidly from the stricken little vessel Jane Porter turned to have one last look at her. Just then there came a loud crash and an ominous rumbling and pounding from the heart of the ship--her machinery had broken loose, and was dashing its way toward the bow, tearing out partitions and bulkheads as it went--the stern rose rapidly high above them; for a moment she seemed to pause there--a vertical shaft protruding from the bosom of the ocean, and then swiftly she dove headforemost beneath the waves.

In one of the boats the brave Lord Tennington wiped a tear from his eye--he had not seen a fortune in money go down forever into the sea, but a dear, beautiful friend whom he had loved.

At last the long night broke, and a tropical sun smote down upon the rolling water. Jane Porter had dropped into a fitful slumber--the fierce light of the sun upon her upturned face awoke her. She looked about her. In the boat with her were three sailors, Clayton, and Monsieur Thurau. Then she looked for the other boats, but as far as the eye could reach there was nothing to break the fearful monotony of that waste of waters--they were alone in a small boat upon the broad Atlantic.