

**A ROMANCE AT  
THE ANTIPODES**

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A Romance at the Antipodes by Mrs. R. Dun Douglass

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**MRS. R. DUN DOUGLASS**

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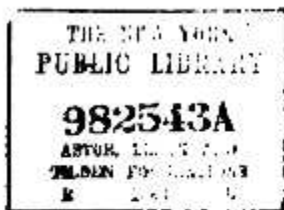
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## CHAPTER I.

" Like warp and woof all destinies  
Are woven fast,  
Linked in sympathy like the keys  
Of an organ vast.  
Pluck one thread and the web ye mar;  
Break but one  
Of a thousand keys, and the painful jar  
Through all will run."

WHITTIER.

" It is astonishing how easily it rains in England," is the original remark my brother volunteers, as he turns from a window in Hotel Royal, Plymouth, one dull November morning. " It comes down so slowly and gently that a little water goes a great way in the nature of a long-drawn-out spread."

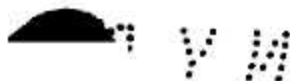
Plymouth is prettily situated in the lovely county of Devonshire ; but we are weary of its attractions, and even sated with its clouted cream. We have whiled away four rainy days by visiting Stone House, the Hoe, and other points of interest ; have duly admired the Devonport Navy Yard, with its superb dry-docks ; and are heartily glad to hear of the arrival this day of the good ship *Florence*, which is to carry us to the Antipodes.

The next morning proves wretchedly rainy and murky, as usual, so that our transfer in a small open tug from Plymouth Dock to our

ship is by no means a pleasant operation. It is, however, successfully accomplished ; but as we step upon the main deck the outlook is cheerless indeed. The flag hangs like a limp string, and every object seems fairly streaming with moisture. My state-room, being a stern one, is large, and has four port-holes. It is comfortably fitted up with easy-chairs and rugs. The book-shelves contain many volumes of favorite authors, which gives one a "homey" feeling.

Soon the rattling of chains announces the heaving in of the anchor ; then there is creaking of cordage, flapping of shrouds, and complication of confused sounds, and at last we are *en route* for Australia. There is a stiff head-wind, and we plunge heavily into the rough sea. The waves run high, every little while a fierce one arrests the ship in mid career and tosses her with frantic tremors aloft, until shivering and shrinking, she drops down, tremulous but unconquered, into the trough of the sea, sullenly ready to renew the contest for supremacy. The sea seems to say : " I will beat you and shake you until I drive you away " ; and the ship responds with many a doleful groan, and fills the air with mournful sounds, but vouchsafes no other reply.

We might have sailed from London in the *Florence*, but our decision to board her at Ply-





mouth was certainly fortunate, for we learn that the Channel trip was unusually boisterous. The life-boats were stove in, and the good ship narrowly escaped being wrecked on the coast of France. We had been informed that a sailing ship would pitch, but not roll. Certainly for lying first on one side, and then on the other, dancing about and apparently going all ways at once, the *Florence* would take the lead.

After succumbing for three days to uncomfortable sensations while rolling around in the Bay of Biscay, I venture on deck one fine morning and find a pleasing group of young people near the wheel. My deck-chair is happily placed in their vicinity, where I may be cheered by the sound of their merry voices. At times the thought of being on the bosom of this desert of blue for an indefinite period is simply distracting. One longs for something nobler and broader than a purely animal existence, which, though beneficial physically to me to-day, may occasion utter vacuity of brain. The loss of accustomed occupations and pleasures depresses one's spirits; but on the other hand, the air is deliciously stimulating, and we are treated to most lovely, evanescent, ever-changing seascapes, while there is a delightful sense of freedom from responsibility. We are neither here nor there, and amenable to no laws, save those of the aquatic gods.

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When the weighty "oughts" are all off duty,  
Life truly seems a thing of beauty,  
Until we weary of too much play,  
And long again to work all day.

My brother and I are the only Americans among fifty-six more or less sturdy Britons. Experience inclines us to extreme conservatism in the formation of friendships, and, while interested in those around us, we resolve not to drift into any thing deeper than casual acquaintanceship until we learn, through tell-tale words and actions, to differentiate between the desirable and undesirable companions.

There are always restless spirits roaming around who respect no one's privacy; therefore, the best way to secure immunity from intrusion at all hours is to immediately form a plan for the day which will leave but a small portion to be frittered away, for we share the popular prejudice in favor of having a portion of one's time to one's self. The anticipated refreshing repose and quietude of life in a sailing ship are found wanting. Freedom from the vibrations of machinery is of course enjoyed, but there are the necessarily noisy bracing and trimming of yards, and the hoarse cries of the sailors while throwing the log, heaving the lead, etc. Morning slumbers are all too early disturbed by the pumping of water, accompanied by the careless dropping

of buckets overhead during the washing of the decks, to be succeeded by quoit and cricket playing, or firing at bottles, all of which, together with piano practising by unskilled musicians, is rather trying to delicate nerves. To one fond of analytical character-study, however, the public, unguarded life of shipboard affords a fine field, for within this narrow sphere all the feelings and passions of humanity are represented, and from the paucity of events personalities become more important. Many strange and unforeseen things are brought to the surface by the process of vivisection which all undergo.

In mixed assemblies there is usually found a sprinkling of queer people whose erratic proceedings and open indulgence of pet peculiarities furnish never-failing topics of conversation. While we have our share of these independent individuals, chiefly portly dames, we are gladdened by the presence of a fair proportion of charming lassies, as well as goodly men.

I infer from the variety of expression in form and feature that various strata are represented in this social pot-pourri. Oh! for a Reade or a Hardy, who, with a few rapid strokes of his pen, could present vivid pictures of the emotions concealed beneath these unknown but not impassive exteriors. It is only novelists who lay bare the quivering of hearts for the outside