

TOURMALIN'S TIME CHEQUES

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Tourmalin's time cheques by F. Anstey

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F. ANSTEY

TOURMALIN'S TIME CHEQUES

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TIME CHEQUES

BY

F. ANSTEY

AUTHOR OF VICE VERSÀ, THE TINTED VENUS,
THE BLACK FOOTLE, ETC.



NEW YORK
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1891

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TOURMALIN'S TIME CHEQUES.

THE PROLOGUE.

*On Deck.—Curry and Culture.—Alternative Distractions.
—A Period of Probation.—The Oath and the Talisman.
—Wavering.—A Chronological Error.—The Time Bargain.—Tourmalin Opens an Account.*

MR. PETER TOURMALIN was sitting, or rather lying, in a steamer-chair, on the first-class saloon-deck of the P. and O. ship *Boomerang*, which had not been many days as yet on the voyage home from Sydney. He had been trying to read; but it was a hot morning, and the curry, of which he had partaken freely at breakfast, had made him feel a little heavy and disinclined for mental exertion just then, particularly as Buckle's *History of Civilization*, the first volume of which he had brought

up from the ship's library, is not exactly light literature at any time.

He wanted distraction of some sort, but he could not summon up sufficient energy to rise and pace the deck, as his only acquaintance on board, a Mr. Perkins, was doing with a breezy vigor which Tourmalin found himself feebly resenting.

Another alternative was open to him, it is true: not far away were other deck-chairs, in which some of the lady passengers were reading, writing, and chatting more or less languidly. There were not very many on board—for it was autumn, a time at which homewardbound vessels are not apt to be crowded—but even in that small group there were one or two with whom it might have seemed possible to pass a little time in a pleasant and profitable manner. For instance, there was that tall, graceful girl in the navy-blue skirt, and the striped cotton blouse confined at her slender waist by a leathern belt. (Tourmalin, it should be mentioned, was in the habit of noticing the details of feminine costume.) She had regular features, gray eyes which lighted up whenever she spoke, and an expression of