

**THE 'LADY MAUD':
SCHOONER YACHT. IN
THREE VOLUMES. VOL. III**

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The 'Lady Maud': Schooner Yacht. In Three Volumes. Vol. III by W. Clark Russell

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W. CLARK RUSSELL

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THE "LADY MAUD:"

SCHOONER YACHT.

A NARRATIVE OF
HER LOSS ON ONE OF THE BAHAMA CAYS,
FROM THE ACCOUNT OF A GUEST ON BOARD.

BY
W. CLARK RUSSELL,
AUTHOR OF "A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART," "AN OCEAN FREE LANCE,"
"THE WRECK OF THE 'GOVERNOR,'" ETC.

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THE "LADY MAUD."

CHAPTER I.

WHEN I recovered I found myself on my back. My senses were active at once, and I had no difficulty in recollecting what had befallen us. I sat upright, and pressing my hands to my eyes, so as to clear my sight, I looked about me.

Some twenty paces away was assembled a small group of persons. These people consisted of Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton, both of whom crouched over the body of Carey, and were chafing her hands, supporting her head, and the like; and near them Norie, wringing out his coat. I was amazed to see him alive. A little beyond sat Sir

Mordaunt, with his face bowed down to his knees and buried in his hands, and his back turned upon a recumbent figure, the head of which was hidden by a man's jacket. The man whom we had noticed on the beach when the dawn broke, and whom I now recognized as one of the crew named Tom Hunter, was down near the breakers, shading his eyes, and intently gazing towards the sea.

I took the scene in at a glance, and was beginning to count the people, to see how many we were in all, when Tripshore stepped round from behind me.

"I thought you wasn't drowned, sir," said he. "You didn't look like a drowned man. There was no good going on chafing of you. How do you feel yourself, sir?"

"I can't tell you yet, Tripshore," I answered. "Is the poor girl I came ashore with alive?"

"I don't know, sir. I've been looking at the ladies rubbing her. I think they'll pull her through."

"And Lady Brookes?" said I.

"Ah, she's dead, sir. She was dead afore Tom and I could haul her through the breakers."

I asked him to give me his hand, and then struggled on to my feet. My limbs were sound, and I suffered from no other inconvenience than a feeling of faintness and giddiness. No one noticed me until I was close to the group, and then Miss Tuke, seeing me, uttered a cry, started to her feet, and grasped my hand. Sir Mordaunt must have heard her, but he did not raise his head nor shift his posture.

"Thank God you are spared!" cried the girl, speaking wildly, like a delirious person.

"Are these all of us?" I said, motioning with my hand.

"These are all—and my aunt is dead! Oh, Mr. Walton, my aunt is dead!" she exclaimed.

I could make no reply. Mrs. Stretton

put out her hand for mine. I gave it to her, and she pressed it. She could not rise, because Carey's head lay on her lap, but the poor maid was alive, and followed me with her eyes, though she could not move for exhaustion.

I stepped over to Lady Brookes' body, and lifted the jacket. It was not necessary to look twice at her face to know that she was dead. Her features were very calm; death was in every line; her eyes were open, and the expression they gave the face was like a command to keep it covered.

As I replaced the jacket softly, Sir Mordaunt turned his head. His face was dreadfully hollow, his complexion ashen, he was without coat or hat, and the strong wind having dried his hair, was blowing it wildly upon his head. His clothes were streaming wet—as, for that matter, were mine and the others'. He gazed at me for a while like a man struggling with his mind. Then said he, "Walton, my wife is dead. I brought

her from home to save her life, and my hope and my love have ended in that!" And he pointed to the body. "Why am I spared? I vow to God I would willingly be dead." Thus he went on complaining and mourning until his voice died away, when he burst into tears, and turned his back upon his wife's body, and resumed his former attitude.

Bitter sad this blow was indeed, to him and to all of us. I looked at the body, with a dreadful remorse in my heart. I felt as if I had killed her by that struggle on the yacht's forecastle. But it would not do to sit lamenting our misfortunes and bewailing the dead. We were eight living men and women, castaways, and in me, at least, the instinct of life was a passion that seemed to have taken a violence from my salvation from the sea that lay boiling and roaring in front of me. Where had we been shipwrecked? What was this island? What shelter would it offer us? Was help to be