

# IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

by

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(Author of *Mark of the Beast*)

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### HER CABIN COMPANION

"THERE'LL be one other lady with you in your cabin, miss."

The berth-steward's announcement in no way disconcerted Madge Finisterre. She had had two cabin companions on the outward voyage.

She was arranging her cabin necessities when her fellow-traveler entered. She was a wee, winsome girl, very fragile in appearance, with a yearning sweetness in her great grey eyes, such as Madge had never seen in any eyes before. With half-a-dozen words of exchanged greeting and a very warm handshake, the pair became instant friends.

By a strange but happy coincidence neither of them ever suffered from sea-sickness, and from the first moment of the great liner's departure they became inseparable.

As the vessel forged her way down Channel that evening, a glorious moon shining down upon them, the two girls, arm-in-arm, paced the promenade deck talking. The subject of the acute distress among the poor and out-of-works in all the world's great cities came up between them.

"Oh, if only our Lord would come quickly!" cried the girl - Kate Harland was her name.

"What do you mean, Kate?" Madge's voice was full of amazed wonder.

"I mean that -"

The fragile girl paused; then, glancing quickly up into Madge's face, she cried:

"You love JESUS, of course, Madge? You are saved, dear, and looking for His coming?"

For an instant Madge was silent. Then, with a deep sigh, she replied:

"Oh, me! I am afraid I am not saved, as you call it.

Katie, dear, the fact is -"

She halted in her speech. She did not know how to put into words all that her friend's question had aroused within her.

While she halted thus, the girl at her side put her arms about her, clasping her with a kind of yearning - an "I will not let you go" kind of clasp - as she cried, softly:

"Oh, my darling, you must not lie down to-night until you know you are CHRIST's. Then - then - after that, nothing can ever matter. Come weal, come woe, come life, come death, all is well!"

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It was past midnight before the two girls climbed into their berths, but by that time Madge Finisterre knew that she had passed from death into life.

Before the vessel reached New York she had learned something of the truth of the near return of the Lord.

On the quay, when they landed, the two girls bade each other a sorrowful farewell.

"We shall meet in heaven, Katie, if nevermore on earth," sobbed Madge.

"In the air, my darling," replied the other. "Do not let us lose sight of that. When our Lord shall come,

'Loved ones shall meet in a joyful surprise,  
Caught up together to Him in the skies,  
When JESUS shall come once again.' "

Kate Harland's friends, who had travelled to meet her from Denver, carried her off, and Madge took the car to the Central.

One hour later she boarded the train and began the last lap of her long journey.

Her spirits rose higher every moment.

She had conceived a very bold idea, and she was going to carry it through after her own fashion. She sent no message of warning of her coming, as this would spoil her little plot.

Her eyes rested delightedly upon every place she passed. At Garrisons, where the train waited a few minutes, she caught a glimpse of the father of the man whom she was hurrying to meet.

The white-haired old father lived at Garrisons, and was a preacher of the Gospel, like his son. He was leaving the depot as her train pulled up. She easily recognized him, because several times during his son's pastorate at Balhang he had been to see him, staying a week at a time, and preaching once on the Sunday on each occasion.

At Duchess Junction she had to change trains. To her joy, she met no one from Balhang; there was not a soul at the depot whom she even knew by sight.

Just before her train reached Balhang she donned a thick brown gauze veil. No one could see her face through this to recognize it. There would be nothing to detain her at the depot, for her baggage was all "expressed."

The train stopped; she alighted. Several people peered hard at her, the depot manager especially, as he took her check, but no one recognized her. She passed on. Twenty yards from the depot she met Judge Anstey.

She stopped him with a "Good day, Judge; can I speak with you?"

"Certainly, madam," the official replied genially.

"Come aside, Judge," she whispered. "I don't want anyone to recognize me, or to hear what I am saying to you, should people pass."

As he moved on by her side in the direction she wished, she whispered:

"I have put on this thick veil, Judge, so as not to be recognized. I am Madge Finisterre."

"Do say!" he gasped. "I knew the voice, but could not recall whose it was. I hadn't heard a breath of your coming home, Miss Madge."

"I let no one, not even mamma and poppa, know that I was coming," she replied. "The fact is, Judge- "

She was glad, as she prepared to take him into her confidence, that the thick veil would hide the hot color that she felt leaped into her face.

"Momma wrote me," she went on, "that the pastor was very sick, and that the doctor didn't understand his case. I only got the letter last Saturday morning. The boat was to start that day at two; but I caught it, for I knew that would cure the pastor."

She felt how fiercely the blushes burned in her cheeks, but, assured that he could not see them, she went on:

"Just before I started for Europe, Judge, pastor told me he loved me, and asked me to be his wife."

She watched the amused amaze leap into the Judge's face, and smiled herself at his low whistle.

"I told him," she continued, "I could make him no definite promise, as I was not quite sure of myself; but that, when I was, I would not wait for him to ask me again - I would come and tell him. I am going straight to him now, Judge, and I want you to give me a clear quarter of an hour's start. While I am gone to fix him up and to make him happy, I want you to go 'long to mumma and poppa, and bring them right along with you, and marry me and pastor as soon as you git up to us. So-long for a quarter of an hour."

Without another word she moved swiftly away.

"She's tropical!" he laughed, as he saw her making for Mrs. Keller's, where the pastor boarded.

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The French windows of the pastor's sitting-room were open, for the day was like a spring one. Madge moved quickly across the patch of grass, mounted the. stoop, and peered in.

In a large rocker, looking very frail and ill, the young pastor was lying back with his eyes closed.

Madge felt her eyes fill with tears. She lifted the disguising veil, and wiped the salt drops away. She did not lower her veil again, but with a little glad cry of -

"Homer, dear love!" she crossed the threshold, and dropped on her knees by his side, flung her arms around his neck, and laid her hot lips to his.

It was like a dream to him - a wondrous, delicious dream. His thin arms clasped her. His kisses were rained upon her, but at first he found no words to say. Between their passionately-exchanged kisses she poured out, in rapid, caress-punctured speech, how she came to be there.

"I have not seen mumma or pappa yet," she explained; "but I met Judge Anstey down by the depot. I have sent him home for mumma and poppa; they will be here in no time now. The Judge will come with .them, and will marry us right off, dear. For, say, you do want some nursing."

He found his voice at last, declared that her coming, her first kiss, had made him strong; that he would need no nursing now that she had come. Getting on to his feet, he gathered her into his arms, and rained fresh kisses upon her lips, her cheeks, her brow, her eyes.

She managed to whisper the good news, "I have found JESUS, dear, or He found me, and now."

A sound of voices and of hurrying steps outside checked her. She had only time to tear herself from his arms when her mother and father reached her side.

An hour later, when the Judge had been and gone again, Madge Finisterre was the wife of the pastor.

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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