

# Mrs. Tommy's Indiscretion

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

MRS. TOMMY stood undecided. She looked down to the trim little sailboat which Peters had brought up to the pier, then gazed out over the lake, which had called to her with irresistible fascination all the morning. She did not especially think of the man. To her, Peters had always been a big, good-natured nonentity whom her husband liked and whom she tolerated and tried to like for his sake. But at the present moment Peters was opportune. He had found Mrs. Tommy in a mood to receive him graciously. So she looked down from the steps and smiled into the man's face, in a puzzled, wistful way.

"Tom hasn't taken me out for a sail this week," she said. "I've half a notion, but—"

Mrs. Tommy revealed her fears in her voice. What would Tom say if she went out with Mr. Peters? Tom was of a peculiar temperament and he possessed unalterable ideas on propriety; but— A big, dark cloud passed under the sun, the lake rippled in cool, deep shadows, and Mrs. Tommy's eyes danced in anticipation of the pleasure she might have.

"If we don't go far," she said doubtfully, "I might—" With sudden determination she turned and closed the cottage door and ran to Peters, who lumbered along beside her to the beach.

"I'm sorry Tom wasn't at home," he began. "I'd planned on inviting you both over to Wolfe's for dinner. When does he return?"

Peters blundered unconsciously into the question and Mrs. Tommy's pretty face colored slightly. "Not until this afternoon," she answered. "It is possible he will be home to luncheon." Peters arranged a number of cushions for her in the boat and she got in among them before he could straighten to offer her assistance.

As the *Peterkin*, as she had facetiously dubbed Peters's boat, heeled over before the freshening breeze, Mrs. Tommy glanced over her shoulder at the cottage nestling in its grove of maples beyond the white shore line. The cloud under the sun had deepened to a somber purple and from the gloom ashore only the cottage and the edge of country to be seen behind it still shone in a flood of sunlight. It occurred to superstitious Mrs. Tommy that it was an omen, a sign calling upon her to return, and her heart fluttered uneasily as she turned to Peters. Next to Mrs. Peters herself, Peters admired Mrs. Tommy, but it was not a look of admiration in his eyes now. At times he was as dull as he was honest and he had just guessed the cause of her nervousness.

"We'll only clear the point, then turn back," he said.

Mrs. Tommy thanked him with a smile. She appreciated Peters's perceptive genius. But ten minutes later she had forgotten the point, half an hour later she had almost forgotten Peters, and the fear of what her husband would say remained with her only in a vague sort of way. Before she became Mrs. Tommy Tubbs she had been the almost constant companion of her father, a captain shipowner, and the love of the lakes was bred in her. So now she trailed her bare arm over the *Peterkin's* gunwale, and as little whitecaps came creeping up out of the growing blackness of the sea and now and then broke in a dash of spray over the boat, she laughed with pleasure. Out from the dark clouds which be—

as it continued to grow over the *Peterkin's* bow. It was Peters who soon made a discovery.

"By George! there's a boat ashore!" he cried. "Somebody is there ahead of us!"

With a wail of despair Mrs. Tommy tried to bury herself in the cushions.

To Mrs. Tommy it seemed an eternity before there came the grinding of sand under the *Peterkin's* keel. Even then she did not move. Peters dragged the boat up out of the wash of the sea. Then he returned and spoke to her.

"We've come up on the opposite side of the island, Mrs. Tubbs," he announced. "I'm going over to see who they are. Will you remain here?"

Mrs. Tommy nodded her half-buried head emphatically and Peters walked boldly along the beach. The island was very small and Peters might have walked completely around it in ten minutes; but, notwithstanding this, as soon as he was out of Mrs. Tommy's view he dove into the wooded interior and picked his way cautiously to the other side. He was relieved when he saw only one person with the strange boat. Surely he could keep this man from seeing Mrs. Tommy—if such a thing were necessary. The stranger saw him as he emerged from the wooded center of the island. He stared hard at him as he came down to the beach, then turned and seated himself on the edge of his boat, with his chin in his hands and his head hunched disconsolately between his shoulders.

"Pretty rough, eh?" greeted Peters affably, as he came up.

The man on the boat turned slowly about. Peters stopped as suddenly as though the other had commanded him to do so at the point of a deadly weapon.

"Peters!"

"Tubbs!"

For an interval both men remained like statues, staring in mute astonishment. Peters knew that his face was ghastly white. He did not notice that Tubbs was nervous. The latter held out a hand, cold and clammy, and Peters accepted it in one equally chilling.

gale had subsided, he might get away from the island with Mrs. Tommy without her husband knowing it.

"I say, Tom, I wonder if there's any danger of my boat going adrift?" he began, as the first step toward desertion. "Guess I'll go and see if she's all right." He jumped up briskly, shook the water from his hat and started for the trees and brush above. Instantly Tubbs was at his side.

"Let's go along the beach," he said, catching Peters by the arm. "It's nearer. I don't mind going with you."

Peters almost groaned in dismay. "Come to think of it, now, I tied 'er to an old spar," he said. "She's pretty safe, I guess."

He returned to the boat and seated himself upon its edge. Tubbs sat down beside him. The rain came down in torrents.

For some time after Peters left her, Mrs. Tommy remained buried among her cushions. When the first of the rain came, she raised her head and peered cautiously about her. Peters was not in sight. She looked for him along the white lines of the beach, she scanned the edge of the thick grove above and each moment her heart beat a little faster as she realized that she was deserted. She did not blame Peters. As the minutes passed and the wind and the rain beat upon her, the fear that her companion's absence was a warning of danger became more and more agitating. He had met people whom he knew—whom she knew! She was convinced that this was his way of telling her, and, slipping out of the boat, she ran like a fugitive thing toward the thickets in the edge of the woods. In these she determined to conceal herself. She would not let even Peters know where she was until the others were gone. Deeper and deeper she penetrated toward the center of the island. In her haste her dress was torn, she scratched her hands and her loose hair was caught by the brush through which she plunged. Soon, white and breathless, she came out upon a little path. She stood undecided, wondering which way to turn, when a sudden crashing in the brush ahead caused her to cry out in fright. Her alarm was echoed in a diminutive, feminine scream. A terrified, rain-wet face stared at her from the gloom of the trees. As if each thought the other a phantom, two women stood transfixed. Then from Mrs. Tommy's throat there came a little, sobbing, strangled cry, and that cry ended with the name of Peters's wife:

"Esther P-p-p-peters!"

"Minerva Tubbs!"

Mrs. Peters came out into the path.

"Minerva, how in the world—"

"The—th—storm!" gasped Mrs. Tommy. She felt as though her limbs were giving way under her and she was seized with a desire to throw herself down among the wet bushes and cry as she had never cried before.

"I know—it's—it's terrible!" said Mrs. Peters, with a nervous flutter in her voice. "Mr. P-p-p-peters and I were driven ashore, too!"

Mrs. Tommy almost gasped. Her eyes grew big as she stared at the other.

"Esther Peters!" she cried accusingly. "Esther Peters, Tom and I saw Mr. Peters not an hour ago

A NOVEL theory as to the state of the penitentiary advanced by the warden seems that Mr. Coddling's boat. He now has one hundred and than he had two years ago, a Quaker chief executive of K. pardon or parole prisoners, a



J. K. CODDLING  
Warden of Kansas Penitentiary who  
the cause of overcrowding

Meanwhile, Warden Coddling had feed his involuntary guests on makes him. The warden's ex is homelessness. "The breaki way or another," he says, "ei the introduction of a stepfath great cause for the filling of this is a strange complaint from State of Kansas. Mr. Coddlin, known men in Kansas, was for attorney in enforcing the prohib later was the president of the A nce Society (the organization of and at present is an official of t noticed that in this case at lena tion of the all too-common caus of prisons and penitentiaries in intemperance.

MISS MAUDE McCLURE ham, Ala., is the only south of the Ohio River been admitted to the bar have with desk work in law offices. young woman, with charming n earnestness and an abundance of all the advantages of wealth an determined upon a professiona dinary work at home she ant Alabama. After receiving her ately began general practice. she lost but one case. In the se in chancery of which she was a received the largest fee ever i Miss Kelly wears her cap and got a very picturesque figure before

## The Triumph of Traffic.

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WHERE long ago the Indian trail  
Went winding to and fro,  
The Pennsylvania's iron steeds  
With smoke and thunder go.  
Deep down beneath the river bed,  
Along the trestle high,  
And through the mountain's mighty heart,  
From coast to coast they fly.

The tireless engines never rest,  
The wheels are never still.  
The whistles sound from State to State  
A summons loud and shrill.  
The steam across the azure sky  
A silver banner spreads,  
And lo! the route is evermore  
The path that empire treads.

A metal web of many strands  
By Trade and Traffic spun,  
Behold the lines of polished trucks  
That glidan in the sun.  
They bridge the yawning gulf of time.  
They span the gaps of space,  
And with Manhattan's miles of rails  
At last they interlace.

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"Never saw a gale come up so suddenly in my life!" he shouted to her.

The woman was enough of a sailor to see the danger. In an agony of suspense she watched Peters as he tried the other tack. But before the wind the sloop sped out like a bird, and with the losing of the point the great bay stretched out in a growing tumult of frothing seas, with the land a hazy line ready to fade away in the sky gloom. The cottage had disappeared and Mrs. Tommy's face turned as white as the bits of foam that beat over the side when she saw that it was gone. The hopelessness of her situation stunned her. She was with Peters! If she was drowned, it would be with him! Even if she was saved, it would be with him! In the agony of the thought that came to her she flung herself into the bottom of the boat and sobbed among the cushions, while Peters made a fifth futile attempt to edge the sloop toward the point.

"Mrs. Tubbs," he shouted, "we've got to beach on Gull Island! It's our only chance. This blow won't last—and we'll get home—" He tugged at the tiller and did not finish. But Mrs. Tommy detected hope. She knew that Gull Island was uninhabited. A little of her courage returned. But what if the blow did continue and she and Peters—

"I don't want to go to Gull Island!" she screamed.

"It's our only chance, Mrs. Tubbs," reiterated the man. He spoke with determination, and Mrs. Tommy, huddled in a wet, miserable heap, watched the island

come suddenly as the point of a deadly weapon. "Peters!" "Tubbs!"

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They bridge the yawning gulf of time,  
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And with Manhattan's miles of rails  
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All hail the terminal that brings  
The distant places near,  
The glory of the age of steel,  
The triumph of the year,  
For like a giant wedding ring,  
By golden Commerce blest,  
It has united North and South  
And married East and West.

MINNA IRVING.

"Thought I'd run in out of the blow," volunteered Mrs. Tommy's husband, pulling out a pipe and a tobacco pouch.

"Thought I'd do the same," responded Peters, fishing a cigar from his pocket. Both men hunted for matches.

"You alone?" asked Peters.

Tubbs shot a suspicious look at him. "Of course," he said. "I was on my way to the point." He glanced over Peters's shoulder at the thick growth of brush and trees above, and a feeling that Tubbs already suspected something filled the other with a nervous embarrassment which he attempted to conceal by lighting his cigar.

"You alone?" queried Tubbs.

"Sure!" affirmed Peters.

The two men seated themselves on the edge of the boat and began to smoke. A few big drops of water fell from the black clouds above. Unnoticed by either, the wind had abated and was now followed by a drenching rain. Neither Tubbs nor Peters seemed troubled by this fact. Between their snatches of conversation Peters busily invented scheme after scheme, vainly hoping to hit upon some one by means of which he could save himself and Mrs. Tommy. At the end of half an hour he inwardly cursed himself for not having confessed to his friend at the beginning. Tubbs might have been a little vexed, but he would have believed his story and Mrs. Tommy's. But now it was too late. Peters realized that his silence had condemned him. Then it occurred to him that, as the

tive thing toward the thickets in the edge of the woods. In these she determined to conceal herself. She would not let even Peters know where she was until the others were gone. Deeper and deeper she penetrated toward the center of the island. In her haste her dress was torn, she scratched her hands and her loose hair was caught by the brush through which she plunged. Soon, white and breathless, she came out upon a little path. She stood undecided, wondering which way to turn, when a sudden crashing in the brush ahead caused her to cry out in fright. Her alarm was echoed in a diminutive, feminine scream. A terrified, rain-wet face stared at her from the gloom of the trees. As if each thought the other a phantom, two women stood transfixed. Then from Mrs. Tommy's throat there came a little, sobbing, strangled cry, and that cry ended with the name of Peters's wife:

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"Esther Peters!" she cried accusingly. "Esther Peters, Tom and I saw Mr. Peters not an hour ago and borrowed his boat!" Mrs. Tommy drew herself up with dignity. "I don't see how you can possibly be here with Mr. Peters!" she added.

Mrs. Peters came up to her dripping, offended little friend and wrapped her arms about her. "Dear Minerva," she said sweetly, "when we left the other side we saw Mr. Tubbs smoking a cigar on the veranda of the Sunnyside! Are you sure he's with you, dear?"

Relief came unexpectedly. There sounded the near crackling of brush, and, tearing herself from her friend's arms, Mrs. Tommy darted down the path, with Mrs. Peters following close at her heels. Mrs. Tommy did not know that this path opened upon the beach within a short distance of the *Peterkin*. Mrs. Peters was the first to discover the boat. She drew back in alarm.

"There's nobody there!" whispered Mrs. Tommy, looking up and down the beach. "Esther—" A sudden inspiration came to her. Mrs. Peters read it in her face.

"We—we've got to do it!"

The two women ran swiftly down to the boat. Uniting their strength, they shoved it into the water and scrambled into it. The gale had subsided, and as the *Peterkin's* sail was hoisted the boat swung out and with Mrs. Tommy at the tiller came up easily on a beautiful homeward tack. Fifteen minutes later two anxious faces peered over the boat's gunwale. The island was far behind. On its exposed shore the women could see the other sailboat and two figures standing near it. Mrs. Peters gave an audible sigh of relief.

"We're saved!" she cried.

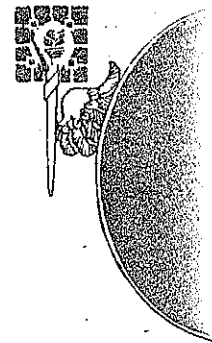
"Thank the Lord!" said Mrs. Tubbs.

That night, when two tired and repentant husbands came home, each primed with a story of the arduous duties of the day, two fond and repentant wives met them with open arms; and in her prayers that night Mrs. Peters prayed with more than usual fervor for the forgiveness of her sins.

Ditto Mrs. Tommy.

way or another," he said the introduction of a stop great cause for the fill. This is a strange complaint State of Kansas. Mr. known men in Kansas, attorney in enforcing the later was the president of the State of Kansas. Mr. Society (the organ, and at present is an official notice that in this case of the all too-common of prisons and penitentiaries intemperance.

MISS MAUDE McTarn, Ala., is the south of the Ohio been admitted to the bar with desk work in law of a young woman, with character, earnestness and an abundance of all the advantages of well-determined upon a professional work at home in Alabama. After receiving a very picturesque figure she lost but one case. In a chancery of which she received the largest fee. Miss Kelly wears her cap the office of her father, State. Recently father counsel. She appeared at the State at Montgomery, servative members of the feminine attorney the



MAUDE McTARN  
The only woman in

created in the courtroom. I never in woman suffering the cause in her State. I interfere with her social life. She is State organizer of the first chapter in Atlanta. She was named in honor of Kelly who fought in the March 27, 1814.