

THE PARSON AND THE PICK-POCKET

By KATHARINE H. WRENSHALL

IT was the second day out from Liverpool. The tarpaulins stretched along the dripping rails crackled with the wind; the big ship plunging through the waves rose and rolled; the girders creaked and moaned; the water gurgled in the scuppers; but the Widow sat in her deck chair absorbed in her book.

A fellow passenger standing near was watching her profile, unconscious that he was being studied closely by the Parson, until turning, he met the old man's kind blue eyes.

"She is charming," he said.

The Rev. Mr. Goodheart smiled. "Yes, blessed with the power to make all the world love her. No, not I," he hastily deprecated; "I am too old for that, but I have found her a sympathetic listener to my anxiety over my daughter, who is desperately ill in New York."

"What is the nature of your daughter's illness?"

"I do not know. The cable said: 'Come; desperately ill,' and I took this steamer, fortunately a moderately fast one." Doctor Mervin relighted his cigarette, leading the conversation to other things to distract Mr. Goodheart's thoughts, until the sound of their voices penetrated the Widow's abstraction, and she looked up with a smile.

The men, approaching, drew chairs close to hers.

"You are a veritable sea witch, Mrs. Patterson. It is so rough and stormy

that everyone is ill but the Doctor, you and myself."

"Here comes another not ill," and she glanced at a man lighting his cigar in the shelter of the tarpaulin.

"I heard that his name was Craig when I was in the smoking room last night."

"You speak as if you did not like him, Doctor Mervin."

"No," decidedly answered the Doctor, "no, I do not. He scrutinized everyone in the smoking room and especially their watches." The Widow laughed, but Mr. Goodheart clapped his hand to his watch pocket. "Doctor Mervin, you make me quite nervous; it would grieve me to lose mine."

"A good opportunity, Mr. Goodheart, for you to make a convert. Surely you could bring him to a state of grace by the time we reach New York."

The Widow was laughing, but the Parson shook his head in gentle reproof. "Do not jest, my child, upon such a subject. But your thought is excellent, though given so lightly and frivolously. I will act upon it."

The three watched Craig stroll toward them. The man was not unpleasing in appearance, but the Widow looked out to sea and the Parson was busy with his cuff links when the Doctor supplied the match Craig asked for. Craig having walked on some distance, the two looked at the Widow, whose pale cheeks were flaming.

"I never was so rude in my life to anyone; I am ashamed."