

THE ASHBOURNE FAMILY SAGA

CHAPTER XXXV

and

Saucy Sophia's Snippets, Humorous Quotations plus trailer for next month.

June, 2026.

For a few moments Edward stood on the boat deck below the starboard bridge wing in a mixture of emotions. Not since the days of their courtship had he experienced such profound emotional turmoil, whilst at the same time he reminded himself not to be so stupid – after all he had only met the lady yesterday at dinner, and how did she just happen to be at the café in Main Street observing the Sergeant and himself descending from the galleries overlooking the Spanish town of La Linea de la Concepcion. He had a beautiful and intensely loyal young wife at home, involvement with another spelt disaster, and the wreck of his career. No! He must tread very carefully. He knew nothing of the lady, and as Sergeant Burton had observed she asked too many militarily sensitive questions for a lady, even the widow of an officer. Something was not quite as it seemed.

Edward turned away to make his way to his own cabin on the port side and was halfway there when he was approached by the second officer who saluted smartly and presenting the captain's compliments enquired if Captain Ashbourne would be so kind as to accept the captain's invitation to dine in the state dinning saloon at 2000 hours. Edward thanked the officer adding that he would be delighted to accept.

By now the "Prince of Baden" had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and into the Atlantic. The breeze they experienced entering the Straits had increased considerably and with it the swell so that the ship soon was buffeted by waves which grew in height and power. Edward was not alarmed, he had experienced far greater danger in the South China Sea on his second voyage, but then he had been kept very occupied having assumed responsibility for the ship while the second mate had become a blithering wreck of his former self. Now he had nothing to occupy his mind, he retired to his cabin, and lying on his bunk proceeded to study the book he had brought with him on Togoland. He thought of himself as being all at sixes and sevens and that it would be better not to join any of the gentlemen passengers in the smoking room. Also, the combination of a heaving ship and cigar smoke would be far from a healthy combination.

Lying on his bunk reading the book the movement of the ship's pitching motion as she rose to meet each oncoming wave and as it passed dipping her bows into the trough before meeting the next wave lulled him to sleep. He was awakened by the steward calling him to dinner. He awoke in a far more stable mind, he would not let the lady play havoc with his senses, he had a mission to fulfil and a lovely wife waiting for him in Berlin. For all he knew Katerina could well be on an intelligence gathering mission, a dubious business he would not wish to be associated with.

Arriving at the state dining room, having navigated his way along the heaving deck Edward was surprised to be greeted by the Scottish School Mistress, the flamboyant Frenchman and the Colonial Officer who introduced himself as Hermann Glinka and

informed his fellow guests that his wife, Bertha, would not be coming. Was he the only one relieved to hear that they would be spared the presence of the good chap's cantankerous wife? Edward tried very hard not to look relieved, he hoped he succeeded. A pre dinner glass of schnaps had already been served by the time Katerina made her entrance.

"Mein strahlender Ritter." She exclaimed on catching sight of Edward. "My you do look so magnificent in your uniform, truly my shining knight, and ignoring the other guests took Edward to one side to continue her attempts to win his heart by her display of charm, a charm offensive if ever there was one. She cannot read my mind surely, or perhaps she can sense a change however well-guarded, next she will be inviting me to her cabin, and then what?

Almost immediately Captain Schmit joined his guests, and the steward served a generous spread of veal, a speciality of Andalusia with fresh vegetables all of which had been taken on board in Gibraltar, together with several bottles of Alsace wine, and for dessert Apfelkuchen (German Apple and Custard Cake). The ship being equipped with refrigeration facilities supplied by the Bell Coleman Company the wine was served cold, much to the delight of all the guests except the Frenchman, Maurice de la Motte who complained that the label was printed in German and not French. They all looked at the irksome 'frog' while the Scots lady, Maud McKillin, enquired whatever is the matter, it's what's in the bottle that counts not the label. Maurice glared at her, while the Captain, realising that inadvertently he had touched a particularly raw nerve attempted to both apologise and explain that Maurice, being French, objects to Alsace having been incorporated within the Kaiser's empire.

The excitable former resident of Metz exploded, knocking over his wine glass he rose from the table and stormed out, but in the doorway he turned declaring that both Lorraine and Alsace are French not German, before 1871 they were French and had always been French, and will be French again. Looking directly at Captain Schmit and raising his voice even higher stated that France would recover the lost provinces at great cost to your country and with that he left slamming the door.

It was Katerina who broke the shocked silence by observing that it was so like the French to expect always to win and for the vanquished foe to quietly accept their defeat. The arrogant French think they can always be 'top dog' or perhaps 'top Cockrel.' There was general laughter while Captain Schmit looked relieved and declared that their glasses needed to be topped up, motioning to the steward to recharge the glasses.

Maud, who had said very little, and to Edward had seemed to be a dour Scot, now sat back in her chair and to everyone's surprise threw her head back and collapsed into peals of laughter. It was Hermann the Colonial Officer who enquired in English "Vot est so amusing?"

The Scottish Lass immediately assumed an air of quiet repose saying. "I am sure, sir, that you are aware that Lorraine in the time of Marie Therasa of Austria had been independent the property of her husband Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine who was forced to cede the dukedom to King Stanislaus I of Poland in 1733. In exchange he received the Grand

Duchy of Tuscany. On the death of Stanislaus in 1765, or was it 1766, yes it was 1766 the dukedom passed to King Louis XV of France who just happened to be married to the frumpy pios daughter of King Stanislaus"

"And what of Alsace?" Enquired Hermann.

"My you are an expert!" Declared Katerina.

"Hermann, I do hope you do not mind me addressing you by your Christian name, I was just coming to the matter of Alsace. It was not French, or not for any length of time until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, and French possession was further confirmed by the Treaty of Ryswick which if I remember correctly was 1697, our pompous Frenchman is rather barking up the wrong tree, those unreliable 'Frogs' only held Lorraine for 105 years and Alsace for 223 years. Hardly 'for ever' before you lot took the land by right of conquest."

"Brav oh!" Exclaimed Hermann. "We could do with your expertise in Berlin."

"That's as maybe, but I'm on my way to take up a teaching post in Brazil, but whilst we are on the subject of the two provinces France lost nineteen years ago that our pompous Frenchman is so emotional over it is interesting to note that although Prussia occupies 90% of Alsace, they only have 25% of Lorraine, very far from the whole region as the French would have us believe."

Over the course of the next few days while the "Prince of Baden" made her way steadily southwards, and then rounding Cape Palmas on the frontier between Liberia and the French colony of Cote d'Ivoire sailing almost due east along the Slave Coast passing numerous fortresses most on the shoreline, former trading posts of Dutch, French, Portuguese, British and other nations. It was to these defensive locations, some within hailing distance of each other that tribal chieftains would bring prisoners of war, the result of tribal warfare, to exchange for goods not otherwise available. Sometimes the numbers would be increased by surplus children especially in times of poor harvests. The unfortunate negros would be confined in cells usually below the fort awaiting the arrival of a slaver for transportation to the New World. Europeans were by no means the first to participate in a trade in negro slaves, the Arabs were first raiding from the north across the

Sarah would descend on tribal villages, round up as many as they wanted and depart. Opposition would be met with swift and deadly reprisals. Although the life expectancy of Europeans on the African coast was a mere six months, for the successful young man of humble origin the prospect of returning home with funds to establish a comfortable living and afford a wife were rather appealing.

The day before passing Cape Palmas they had sailed past the coast of Mauretania but at a safe distance of some forty miles to avoid the notorious Arquin Shoal the large mud and sand bank on which the French frigate the *Medusa* had run aground on the 2nd July, 1816. The incident was immortalised by the romantic artist Theodor Géricault in his large painting 'The Raft of the *Medusa*' exhibited in the Salon de Paris of 1819. Of the 146 unfortunates who were abandoned to the perils of the ocean without food or fresh water only 15 survived a duration of 13 days before being rescued by the Royal Navy. The

Medusa had run aground at the height of a spring tide.



The Raft of the *Medusa* by Theodor Géricault.

It had been the Frenchman Maurice de la Motte, by then recovered from his bout of feverish Germanophobia, who had described the story of the 'Medusa', adding his admiration of the artist whom he described as a true and loyal republican. Obviously himself an ardent son of the revolution. He evidently took delight in the embarrassment caused to King Louis XVIII, and that now the painting has a position of prominent public display and importance in the Musée du Louvre in Paris.

They had all listened respectfully to Maurice's portrayal of the awful events of 1816 although few had sympathy with his revolutionary ardour. A few days after Maud's enthusiastic revelation of the political reality concerning the provinces of Alsace and

Lorraine Edward joined her in the dining salon where she was enjoying afternoon tea. After obtaining her agreement he took a seat at her table and summoning the Kellner (Waiter) ordered tea for themselves. He had been intrigued by the lady's knowledge of Continental history. Although he kept his thoughts to himself regarding her character, he was astounded by how wrong his first impression of her personality had proved to be, but more was to follow.

"You mentioned that you are travelling to Brazil for a teaching post, may I enquire the subject you will be teaching?" Enquired Edward.

"But of course, I am, contracted to teach English and European history at the University in Rio de Janeiro."

Edward failed to help himself saying. "That first evening you were so quiet and reserved and yet your knowledge of Continental history is superb, Brazil will be delighted with

your ability, I am sure."

It was then that Maud revealed even more of her background, probably because, although they were not alone taking tea, they could not be overheard.

"Really it's all my grandmother's doing." She explained and continued saying that her parents are and grandparents were devoutly Presbyterian and that when she was about ten years of age, one day Grandmother had told her a story, which Gran had believed to be true, although now she, Maud, was not so sure. The story related to events probably in the seventeenth century when Scotland had been at war with itself, part of the population actively supporting the Covenanters whilst the others remained faithful to the Church of Rome. There had been great cruelty practiced by both sides. A distant female ancestor of theirs had been accused of betraying secrets to a Covenanter army, she was found guilty by a drum head trial and condemned to death. As they lived at that time near the north shore of the Solway Firth, sentence was carried out by chaining the young maid to a stake in the Firth



The Martyr of the Solway by John Everett Millais

at low tide so that as the tide rose she gradually sank below the rising waters until totally

submerged she drowned. Was this true, or the result of an overactive imagination after seeing a reproduction of John Everett Millais's painting 'The Martyr of the Solway' in a book. She could not be sure, but the story started her interest in the past firstly to know more of the background to her grandmother's story which whetted her appetite for ever more information. She had devoured Sir Walter Scott's novels and then progressed to serious factual histories. A bursary to the University at Aberdeen had been an eye opener, and whilst she seemed to be despised by many of the other students from wealthy families, a professor of history had taken a special interest in her studies, and she had obtained a Batchelor of Arts degree with distinction.



**Cover for the piano score of Rosen aus Dem Suden (Roses of the South)
by Johann Strauss, 1880.**

All this she had imparted to Edward and the history of the Slave Coast whilst they drank tea together and a small trio of musicians played ‘Roses of the South’ and other waltzes by Johann Strauss and they gazed from the window by their table at the distant horizon of the African coast.

In their separate ways and individually both Maud and Edward were pleased and grateful to each other, though they said nothing of this, for the opportunity that had arisen to get to know the other and for dispelling the incorrect first impression assumptions. Maud had thought Edward to be a wealthy haughty naval officer, true he was an officer, but not wealthy or aristocratic; and Edward had found a shy but inquisitive lady below the strait-laced exterior.

How long they sat together Edward could not say, he had not checked the time by his pocket watch when entering the dining salon, but it was very pleasant listening to Maud’s intellectually inspiring and stimulating conversation while on the starboard or opposite side the blinds had been lowered to provide some protection from the heat and glare of the afternoon African sun. The musicians played softly in the background whilst on the port side, seated near a window overlooking the boat deck they were lulled by the gentle swell

lapping against the sides of the ship and the bright sunlight reflected by the shallow waves playing a shimmering reflection on the ceiling of the salon. Out at sea could be seen the occasional native fishing boat, a dug-out canoe with outriggers for stability.

They would be arriving the following day off the coast of Togoland and fleetingly Edward wondered what awaited him.

Saucy Sophia's Snippets



Haren l'egyptienne

by Stevens Agapit.

Humorous Quotations

“I refuse to admit I’m more than fifty-two
even if that does I refuse make my sons illegitimate.”

Viscountess Nancy Astor.

Trailer for July.

Edward arrives in Togoland where the Kommissar, one Eugen von Zimmerer could not have been more helpful, charming and considerate.

Dorian M. Osborne

1st June, 2026.

