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The Terrible Lot of Eliza Bott

Combined attraction with finesse. Romantic-pale-she might have been The toast of Paris, or a Queen: Temptation lurked upon her lips: but Genius fired her fingertips So with her National Savings she Obtained a cottage by the sea And, scorning Woman's wordly role, Retired: inspired: and full of Soul. To write with swiftly flowing pen Uplifting thoughts (of Mice and Men) That in their beauty burned so bright Their reader nearly lost his sight. That was no doubt, the reason why Few readers cared to risk an eye; And as more flaming grew her verse, The prospects of her books grew worse, For with the growth of her finesse So shrank their chances of success But she (above all hope of gain) Continued to assail (in vain) The publishers (to their distress) with even better MSS Which they, as firmly, still returned With their regrets. (And eyes that

burned.)
Then Fate cast up upon the sand
The dashing Captain Contraband.
You know the type. He says that he
Would die to serve you. (For a fee.)
Francesca looked him up and down
And as she looked, began to frown.
His shoulders did not thrill her through.
His eyes she thought a little "too."
And though he had an Old World grace
It left her cold. Then, on his face—
Ahl—on his face she saw a sleek,
Seductive, shining, snaky, chic,
Moustache. She gazed. Her eyes grew

crossed.

And — ah — Francesca's Soul was lost.

A different girl in every port

Had by that black moustache been caught,

And as they walked along the beach It seemed to crudely leer at each; While, when Francesca closed her door, It grew more rakish than before, Ah! Woe is me! Let's draw a veil Upon this chapter of my tale! Suffice to say that from the first The Captain was a man accursed. Through that moustache. One awful day Francesca found he'd sailed away. (He slipped his hook, a vessel stole, And with him took Francesca's Soul.) O reader, shudder at her fate! Francesca, I regret to state, Without her Soul became a heel. She cursed the Captain-mast and keel. And thus alas! she learned to swear. Her eyes grew dull. She had to wear Enormous glasses. And her skin She sought to keep in trim with gin. She smoked too much and did not care To change her clothes or brush her hair, Her looks soon faded. Then-far worse!-

Her lack of Soul showed in her verse. No longer did it glint and gleam Or dazzle. Now its sordid theme Was one of mud and ooze and tar And claimed to tell what sailors are. It had no metre and no sense And at a rhyme made no pretence. And (just to show how low she'd got) She signed herself, "Eliza Bott." Then (really quite from habit) she Despatched it all away to the

Delighted publishers and took Her pen to write another book. The publisher first turned to read The author's name upon the screed. "Eliza Bott!" He smiled, relieved, "Aha!" he said (and so believed) "A really intellectual type! A Bott could not put pen to tripe!" He neither knew nor understood A single word. It must be good! And when he looked at Chapter Ten-"This authoress knows Life and Men!" He said and slyly winked. "Oho! She might be interesting to know!" So with excitement and delight He, then and there, that very night Despatched a letter to Miss Bott Post-haste to tell her that he'd got A contract there for her to sign Next Tuesday morn at half-past nine. But she, by now, grown quite engrossed



She thought his eyes a little "too"

Wrote on and quite ignored the post, When she his letter answered not The publisher saw that Miss Bott Must be of foremost rank indeed. For £.S.D. she had no need! So, making out a contract new That multiplied the old by two, He went himself to make her sign Her name upon the dotted line. In answer to his knock, the door Flew open and there stood before His outraged eyes Bott's awful shape. He stood, at first, with mouth agape To see Francesca's matted hair And shuddered when he heard her swear. But, soon recovering his poise, He realised her horrid noise And strange appearance (though they'd

In Bott were Genius no doubt.

And so he took his contract out,
Increased its offer once again,
And sought her signet to obtain.

Each time she stamped and shouted

"NO!"

A thousand higher he would go
Until, at last, she signed the deed.
And now was truly damned indeed!
She's lost her Soul but now 'twas plain
She'd vilely sold her pen for gain.
(And what's more shocking to reveal—
Had made a profit on the deal!)
So reader, learn from this my rhyme
And save yourself while yet there's
time!

With black moustaches trifle not Lest you become another Bott!
—Nancy Page