

A SISTER'S VENGEANCE

By GEORGE MANVILLE FENN

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

What followed was one terrible scene of despairing men striving for their lives against a foe of overpowering strength. The fierce fire of the schooner, as she came nearer and nearer, was feebly responded to, and in a short time the deck streamed with blood, as the shot came crashing through the bulwarks, sending showers of splinters to do deadly work with the hail of grape. There was no thought of capture now; no need of bidding the men attack, following the example of their officers, and one and all doggedly determined to sell their lives dearly, the men dragged gun after gun round as those they worked were disabled, and sent a shot in reply as often as they could.

With uniform torn and bestabbed, with blood, face blackened with powder, and the red light of battle in his eyes, Humphrey Armstrong saw plainly enough that his case was hopeless, and that, with all her pomp of war and pride of discipline and strength, his sloop was prostrate before the buccaneer's snaky craft.

The schooner's sides were vomiting smoke and flame, and she was close along-side now. She had been so maneuvered as to sail right round the end of the reef, whose position seemed to be exactly known, so that from firing upon the sloop's bows and raking from stem to stern, the firing had been continued as she passed along the leeward side.

Hardly had Humphrey seen the enemy's intentions and gathered his men together, than the schooner's side ground up against the shattered stern of the sloop. Heavy grappling irons were thrown on board, and with a furious yelling a horde of blackened, savage-looking men poured on to the bloody, splinter-strewn deck, and coming comparatively fresh upon the sloop's exhausted crew, bore down all opposition. Men were driven below, cut down, stunned and driven to ask for quarter; and so furious was the onslaught that the sloop's crew were divided into two half-helpless bodies, one of which threw down their arms, while the other, which included the captain and the officers, backed slowly toward the bows, halting at every step where they could make a stand, but forced to yield foot by foot, till their fate was to surrender or be driven through the shattered bulwarks into the sea.

It was a matter of minutes. The fight was desperate, but useless; Humphrey Armstrong and those around him seeming determined to sell their lives dearly, for no quarter was asked. They had given way step by step till there was nothing behind them, but the shattered bulwarks and the sea, when, headed by their leader, the buccaneers made a desperate rush; there was the clashing of sword and pike; and, as sailor and officer fell or were disarmed, Humphrey stepped in a half-coagulated pool of blood, slipped, and went heavily backward, the buccaneer's lieutenant leaping forward to brain him with a heavy ax.

There was a rush, a fierce shout, Black Mazard was thrust aside, and the commodore sprang past him to plant his foot upon the fallen officer's chest, while, the light being over, the rest held their hands—the conquerors and conquered—to see what would be the captain's fate.

"Now, Captain Armstrong," cried the buccaneer leader, "beg for your wretched life, you cowardly dog!"

"Coward!" roared Humphrey, raising himself slightly on one hand, as with the other he swept the blood from his ensanguined face. "You cursed hound! you lie!"

The buccaneer shrunk back as if from some blow; his foot was withdrawn from the wounded officer's chest, he lowered the point of his sword and stood gazing at his prostrate enemy wildly:

"The captain shrieks the job, lads," cried a coarse voice. "Here, let me come."

It was Black Mazard who spoke, and, drunk with the spirit of the furious fight, he pressed forward, ax in hand.

Humphrey raised himself a little higher, with his white teeth bared in fierce defiance as he prepared to meet the death-blow he saw about to fall.

But at that moment the buccaneer caught his lieutenant's upflung arm.

"Enough!" he cried, fiercely; "no more blood. He is no coward. Bart—Dinny, take this gentleman ashore."

Humphrey Armstrong did not bear the words, for his defiant act exhausted his falling strength, and he fell back, insensible to all that happened for many hours to come.

CHAPTER XII.

"Not dying, Bart?"

"No, not exactly dying," said worthy in a low growl, "but 'spos you shoots and wings a gull, picks it up, and takes it and puts it in a cage; the wound heals up, and the bird seems sound; but after a time it don't peck, and don't preen its plumage, and if it don't beat itself against the bars of the cage, it sits and looks at the sea."

"Then you mean that Captain Armstrong is pining away?"

"That's it."

"Has he any suspicion of who we are?"

"Not a bit."

"And you think he is suffering for want of change?"

"Course I do. Anyone would—shut up to that dark place."

"Has he complained?"

"Not he. Too brave a lad. Why not give him and his lads a boat, and let them go?"

"To come back with a strong force and destroy us?"

"Ah, I never thought of that! Make him swear he wouldn't. He'd keep his word."

"But his men would not, Bart. No; he will have to stay."

"Let him loose, then, to run about the place. He can't get away."

"I am afraid."

"What of it?"

"Some trouble arising. Mazard does not like him."

"The buccaneer took a turn or two up on the quarters he occupied in the of buildings buried in the from the head of the compass lay; and Bart ofly till he stopped, Mazar, and the boys a lower.

not to attempt to escape, Bart," said the captain, pausing at last before his follower.

"Twasn't likely," said Bart. "Who would? He'd get away if he could."

"The prisoners cannot escape through the forest; there is no way but the sea, and that must be properly watched. Due notice must be given to all that any attempt to escape will be followed by the punishment of death."

"I hear," said Bart. "Am I to tell the captain that?"

"No. He must know it; but I give him into your charge. You must watch over him, and protect him from himself and from anyone else."

"Black Mazard?"

"From anyone likely to do him harm," said the captain, sternly. "You understand?"

"Yes. I'm going," replied Bart, in a low growl, as he gazed in his leader's eyes; and then, with a curious, thoughtful look in his own, he went out of the captain's quarters and in the direction of the prison of the king's officer.

As Bart approached he became aware of a faint rustling sound, as of someone retreating from the window among the trees, and starting forward, he looked out. But all was still; not a long speck-like bird quivering, no leaf cracked.

"Some monkey," muttered Bart, and turning back, he gazed down with a heavy frown at the frank, handsome face of the young officer, till he saw the features twitch, the eyes open and stare wonderingly into his, and once more the prisoner, roused by the presence of another gazing upon his sleeping face, suddenly sprang up.

"You here?"

"Yes, sir, I'm here," said Bart.

"What for? Why?"

"Nothing much, sir; only to tell you that you can go."

"Go?" cried the captain, excitedly.

"Yes, sir, Captain Jack's orders—where you like, so long as you don't try to escape."

"But I must escape!" cried Humphrey, indignantly. "Tell the captain I will not give my parole."

"He don't want it, sir. You can go where you like, only if you try to escape you will be shot."

Humphrey Armstrong rose from where he had been lying and made as if to go to the door, his face full of excitement, his eyes flashing, and his hands all of a tremble.

"There, the sickness has passed off. Now help me out into the sunshine," Humphrey Armstrong was weaker from his wounds than he believed; but the change from being shut up in the dim temple chamber with the great stone idol for company to the comparatively free open air of the forest clearing rapidly restored the elasticity of his nature, and gave him ample opportunity for studying the state of affairs.

He found that the buccaneers went out but seldom, and that when expeditions were made they would be quickly divided. At one time the captain would be in command, at another the lieutenant, so that their settlement was never left unprotected.

As far as he could judge, they were about a hundred in number, and great dilapidated chambers in the range of temples and palaces formed admirable barracks and means of defense, such as in time of need could easily be held against attack.

But Humphrey's great idea was to escape, and to accomplish this it seemed to him that his first need was to open up communication with his men.

This he determined to accomplish, for with the liberty given it seemed to be a very easy thing to walk to some heap of stones at the edge of the forest and there seat himself till he was unobserved, when he could quietly step into the dense thickets, and make his way to where his followers were imprisoned.

He had not long to wait, for it seemed that, after being closely watched for the first few days, the latitude allowed to him was greater. He had but to walk to the edge of the forest and wait, for the opportunity was sure to come.

The forest path had evidently been rarely used of late, for the soft earth showed no imprints, the tender sickly growth of these deep shades had not been crushed, and as Humphrey realized these facts, he glanced back to see how easily his trail could be followed—each step he had taken being either impressed in the vegetable soil or marked by the crushing down of moss or herb.

The sight of this impelled him to additional effort, so that he might gain some definite information about his people, and perhaps seek them by night, when once he had found the means of communication. In this spirit he was hurrying on when he came suddenly, in one of the darkest paths, upon a figure which barred his way, and it was with the addition of a rage-wrung savage exclamation that he uttered his captor's name.

There was a dead silence in the dark forest as these two stood face to face, buried, as it were, in a gloomy tunnel. After Humphrey's impatient ejaculation, quite a minute elapsed; and then, half mockingly, came in a deep, low voice:

"Yes! Commodore Junk!"

Humphrey stood glaring down at the obstacle in his path. He was tall and athletic, and, in spite of his weakness and the tales he had heard of the other's powers, he felt that he could seize this man, hurl him down and plant his foot upon his chest; for the buccaneer captain was without weapons, and stood looking up at him with one hand resting upon his hips, the other raised to his beardless face, with a well-shaped, small index finger slightly impressing his rounded cheek.

"Yes," he said mockingly, "Commodore Junk! Well, Humphrey Armstrong, what mad fit is this?"

"Mad fit!" cried Humphrey, quickly recovering himself. "You allowed me to be at liberty, and I am exploring the place."

The buccaneer looked in his eyes, with the mocking smile growing more marked.

"Is this Captain Humphrey Armstrong, brave commander sent to exterminate me and mine, stooping to make a miserable excuse—to tell a lie?"

"A lie?" cried Humphrey, fiercely, as he took a step in advance.

"Yes, a lie!" said the buccaneer, with-

SUPPOSE WE SMILE.

HUMOROUS PARAGRAPHS FROM THE COMIC PAPERS.

Pleasant Incidents Occurring the World Over—Sayings that are Cheerful to Old or Young—Funny Selections that Everybody Will Enjoy.

"Women are certainly queer creatures," remarked the old physician.

"What is it now?" asked the druggist.

"Why," answered the old pill dispenser, "I just received a postal card from a woman patient marked 'Personal'."

Had Not Decided.
Theatrical Manager—Here's a letter from the lithographer, and he wants to know what will be the color of your hat this season."
Actress—Tell him I'll wire him next week.

Very Active.



Jones—Were you there when they passed around the cheese?
Smith—Yes; I took an active part.

Best Course.
"Husband," wailed the speckled hen, "I laid my eggs high up in the loft and some one took them. What should I do now?"
"Lay low!" chuckled the red rooster, as he strutted away.

His Confession.
"To what," asked the inquisitive person, "do you owe your success in life?"
"To my wife," replied the man who was in the tax-dodger class.
"Would you mind giving me further details?" asked the I. p.
"Details are scarce," replied the capitalist, "I simply married a widow who had half a million in cold cash."

An Awful Jolt.
"I say, barabab," queried the very young man as he paused at the door of a crowded tonorial parlor, "how long will I—aw—have to wait for a shave?"
"Oh," replied the barber as he glanced at the headless face of the speaker, "you might come back in a couple of years."

Not a compliment.
"I see Reginald has changed his mind and decided to prosecute the owner of the automobile that ran over him."
"Yes, indeed. At first he thought it was the racing machine of a Newport millionaire, but now he finds it only belonged to a common broker."

Useless.
Sue—Yes, it was terribly lonesome down to the beach. No one to make love.
Belle—But you said there was one man down there?
Sue—Yes; but he was no use to us. He was the "armless wonder" from the museum.

Did Not Understand.



"What on earth's the matter with Mrs. Safta, anyhow?"
"Jealous of Safta, I guess. She's been made ever since he told her the other day that he was going to buy a new ribbon for his typewriter."
A Draw.
Summer Boarder—Tell me something to decide a bet. Is that horse of yours older than the wagon?
The Farmer—They're twins.—Puck.

Like a Book.
Mrs. Judson says she knows her husband like a book.
"Yes, and she treats him like one."
"How's that?"
"Treats him carelessly and shuts him up."

Ready to Take Chances.
First Old Maid—Well, you know, marriage is a lottery, and I truly believe it.
Second Old Maid—So do I! But where do you suppose I could get a ticket?

As Indicated.
Ping—That fellow Graspit certainly knows the value of a dollar.
Pong—Been trying to borrow one of his?—Chicago News.

Practical Experience.
"What we require," said the managing editor, "is the services of a man capable of taking full charge of our 'Query Box.' Are you capable of answering all kinds of questions?"
"Well, I rather guess yes," replied the applicant. "I'm the father of eleven children."—Chicago News.

Awaited.
Young Man—So Miss Ella is your oldest sister? Who comes after her?
Small Brother—Nobody ain't come as yet; but pa says the first fellow that comes can have her.—Pearson's.

In Good Shape.
That young bimber who married the Mixer girl says he's going right to housekeeping."
"Indeed, is he well fixed?"
"I guess he is. One of his friends told me that he had enough coal to last him through the winter."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The Real Problem.
"Do you expect that you will be able to make a flying machine that will really fly?"
"I'm absolutely certain of it," answered the inventor. "It's no trouble at all to get a flying machine to fly. The difficulty is to make one that will let you save some idea of which way it is going and how it will light."—Washington Star.

An Advantage.
"Wealth has its embarrassments," "Yes," answered Mr. Cumrox with a sigh. "It's a great advantage to a man to be able to say he must stay at home and work instead of being dragged around from one fashionable resort to another."—Washington Star.

The Worried Housewife.
Husband—What have you been looking so blue about all day, my dear?
Wife—I'm afraid our hired girl won't approve of our new washwoman.—Boston Post.

They Cost Money.
She—Certainly you have some friends?
He—Yes, but it takes every cent I can rake and scrape.—Town Topics.

Easy to Go Off.
"So your former employer is considered a big gun?" interrogated the friend.
"Yes, a rapid-fire gun," sighed the clerk who had been discharged without notice.

Wedding Stock.
Customer (looking over the stock)—I can't see a useful thing in all your stock.
Jeweler—Of course you can't! These are all wedding presents.—Pearson's.

Point of View.



Duet—"Who in the world would want to use that stuff?"

Enjoyable.
"How did you enjoy the automobile parade?"
"Very much indeed," answered the timid pedestrian. "It was very gratifying to see so many automobile proprietors going along peacefully, all in honor bound not to run over the people in front of them."—Washington Star.

The Late Arrival.
"Was old Bender sober when he came home last night?"
"Judge for yourself. He thought a lightning bug was a street lamp and tried to light his cigar by it."—Chicago News.

The Only One.
Madge—What's the prize in the girl ping-pong tournament?
Marjorie—The young man who has just arrived.—Puck.

The Thorn and the Rose.
Mrs. Temperton—I've got the dearest old darling of a husband that ever happened. He has an awful temper and about once a month he gets mad and tears up my best hat.
Miss Singleton—And you call him a dear old darling after that? How can you?
Mrs. Temperton—Well, you see, he always has a fit of remorse next day and buys me a better one."

Freddy's Preference.
"What does Freddy like to play?" asked the caller.
"Freddy," replied papa, "likes to play whatever games mamma and I decide are too rough for him."

Well Watered.
Stubbs—You complain about these streets being damp. Why, I know a city where the streets are always a field of water.
Penn—What city is that?
Stubbs—Venice.

But Not Patisier.
The Author—This is all nonsense about the literary profession being unhealthy.
The Poet—Of course. Why, it is the greatest appetite producer in the world.

Impossible.
Biggs—They say Mrs. Gabbleton is guilty of an attempt at blackmail.
Diggs—Why not?
Biggs—No woman on earth would think of accepting "black money."