

A SISTER'S VENGEANCE

By GEORGE MANVILLE FENN

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

It was the scoundrel's companion come at the call for help, thought Humphrey; and he clung still in silence, wondering whether it was too late as his strained eyeballs glared upward.

"Where are you?" came in a hoarse voice.

It was to save his life; but though Humphrey recognized the voice, he could not speak, for his tongue and throat were dry.

"Are you here? Hold on!" cried the voice again; and then there was the sound of someone feeling about and dislodging stones, which kept rattling down and splashing below.

"Where are you?" cried the voice above Humphrey; but still he could not reply. His hands were giving way, and he felt that his whole energy must be devoted to the one effort of clinging to the last ere he was plunged down into that awful gulf.

But the man who clung to him heard the hoarse whisper question, and broke out into a wild series of appeals for help—for mercy—for pity.

"For heaven's sake, captain!" he yelled, "save me—save me! It was Black Mazard! He made me come! Do you hear? Help! I can't hold on longer! I'm falling! Help! Curse you—help!"

As these cries thrilled him through and through, Humphrey was conscious of the darkness that the hands he heard rustling above him and dislodging stones, every fall of which brought forth a shriek from the wretch below, suddenly touched his, and then, as if spasmodically, leaped to his wrists, round which they fastened with a grip like steel.

To Humphrey Armstrong it was all now like one hideous nightmare, during which he suffered, but could do nothing to free himself. The wretch's shrieks were growing fainter, and he clung in an inert way now, while someone seemed to be muttering above:

"I can do nothing more! I can do nothing more!" but the grip about Humphrey's wrists tightened, and two arms rested upon his hands and seemed to press them closer to the stones to which they clung.

"Captain—captain! Are you there?"

"Yes," came from close to Humphrey's face.

"Forgive me, skipper, and help me up! I'll be faithful to you! I'll kill Black Mazard!"

"I can do nothing," said the buccaneer, hoarsely, "You are beyond my reach."

"Then go and fetch the lads and a rope. Don't let me fall into this cursed, watery grave."

"If I quit my hold here, man, you will both go down; unless help comes, nothing can be done."

"Then call help! Call help now, captain, and I'll be your slave! Curse him for leaving me here! Where's Joe Thorpe?"

"He was killed by Mazard with a blow meant for me," said the buccaneer, slowly.

"Curse him! Curse him!" shrieked the man. "Oh, captain, save me, and I'll kill him for you. He wants to be skipper, and I'll kill him for you if you'll only—Ah!"

He uttered a despairing shriek, for as he spoke a sharp, tearing sound was heard; the cloth he clung to gave way, and before he could get a fresh hold he was hanging suspended by the half-torn-off garb. He swung to and fro as he uttered one cry, and then there was an awful silence, followed by a plunge far below.

Again silence and the whispering and lapping against the sides more faint; then a gurgling sound, the water beat once or twice, a fainter echo or two, and then what sounded like a sigh of relief, and a silence that was indeed the silence of death.

Suddenly the silence in that darkness was broken, for a hoarse voice said:

"Climb up!"

"Climb!" exclaimed Humphrey, who seemed to have recovered his voice, while his frozen energies appeared to expand.

"Yes, climb. I can hold you thus, but no more. Try and obtain a foothold."

Humphrey obeyed as one obeys who feels a stronger will acting upon him.

"Can you keep my hands fast?" he said. "They are numb."

"Yes, you shall not slip now. Climb."

Humphrey obeyed, and placed his feet upon a projection, strove and strained, and how he knew not, found foothold, drew himself up, and half crawling, half dragged by the buccaneer as he backed up the slope, reached the level part of the passage between the entrance and the doorway of the inner temple, where he subsided on the stones, panting, exhausted, and with an icy feeling running through his nerves.

"Commodore Junk," he whispered, hoarsely, as he lay in the semi-darkness, "you have saved my life."

"As you saved mine."

Those two lay there in the gloomy passage listening to the solemn whisperings and lappings of the water. By degrees, though, as the heavy labored panting of their breasts ceased, and their hearts ceased beating so tumultuously, a more matter-of-fact way of looking at their position came over them.

"Try if you can walk now," said the buccaneer in a low voice. "You will be better in your own place."

"Go—poor," replied Humphrey, abruptly; and once more there was silence, a silence broken at last by the buccaneer.

"Captain Armstrong," he said, softly, at last, "surely you can now be friends?"

"Friends? No! Why can we?" cried Humphrey, angrily.

"Because I claim your life, the life that I saved, as mine—because I owe you mine!"

"No, no! I tell you it is impossible! Because, sir, enemies to the bitter end. You forget why I came out here?"

"No," said the buccaneer, sadly. "You came to save my life—to destroy my people—the Fate said otherwise, and you found my prisoner—your life forfeited."

"You dare not take!" cried Humphrey, hoarsely. "I am one of the king's—your king's men."

"You are a subject of the king?"

"No!" cried the buccaneer. "When that monarch ceased to give his people the protection they asked, and cruelly and unjustly banished them across the seas for no greater crime than defending a sister, that king deserved no more obedience from those he wronged."

"The king—did this?" said Humphrey, wondering, as he gazed full in the speaker's face, struggling the while to grasp the clues of something misty in his mind.

"The king! Well, no; but the people whom he intrusted with the care of his laws."

"Stop!" cried Humphrey, raising himself upon one arm and gazing eagerly in the buccaneer's face; "a sister—defended—punished—sent away for that! No; it is impossible! Yes—ah! I know you now! Abel Dell!"

The buccaneer shrank back, gazing at him wildly.

"That is what always seemed struggling in my brain," cried Humphrey, excitedly. "Of course, I know you now. And you were sent over here—a convict, and escaped?"

The buccaneer hesitated for a few moments, with the deep color going and coming in his face.

"Yes," he said, at last. "Abel Dell escaped from the dreary plantation where he labored."

"And his sister?"

"You remember her story?"

"Remember! Yes," cried Humphrey. "She disappeared from near Dartmouth years ago."

"What became of her—poor girl?" said Humphrey, earnestly; and the buccaneer's cheeks colored as the words of pity fell.

"She joined her brother out here."

"But he was a convict."

"She helped him to escape."

"I see it all," cried Humphrey, eagerly; "and he became the pirate—and you became the pirate—the buccaneer, Commodore Junk."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Humphrey. "And the sister—your sister, man—the handsome, dark-eyed girl whom my cousin—Oh, hang, Cousin James! What a scoundrel he could be!"

It was the sturdy, outspoken exclamation of an honest English gentleman, and as the buccaneer heard it, Humphrey felt his hand seized in a firm grip, to be held for a few moments and then dropped.

"But he's dead," continued Humphrey. "Let him rest. But tell me—the sister—Oh!"

A long look of apology and pity followed this ejaculation, as Humphrey recalled the scene in the temple, and the passionate words of adjuration and prayer. It was as if a veil which hid his companion's character from him had been suddenly torn aside, and a look of sympathy beamed from his eyes as he stretched out his hand in a frank, manly fashion.

"I beg your pardon," he cried, softly. "I did not know all this. I am sorry I have been so abrupt in what I said."

"I have nothing to forgive," said the buccaneer, warmly, and his swarthy cheeks glowed as Humphrey gazed earnestly in his eyes.

"And for the sake of brave Old Devon and home you spared my life and treated me as you have?"

"Not for the sake of brave Old Devon," said the buccaneer, gravely, "but for your own. Now Captain Humphrey Armstrong, can we be friends?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Humphrey, eagerly, as he stretched out his hand. "No!"

"I have my duty to do to my king and those I've left at home. I am your prisoner; do with me as you please, for, as a gentleman, I tell you that what you ask is impossible. We are enemies, and I must escape. When I do escape my task begins again—to root out your nest of hornets. So for heaven's sake, for the sake of what is past the day I escape provide for your own safety; for my duty I must do."

"Then you refuse me your friendship?"

"Yes. I am your enemy, sworn to do a certain duty; but I shall escape when the time has come. I can say no more."

CHAPTER XV.

Humphrey Armstrong sat gazing through the opening of his prison at the dark forest vistas and dreamed of England and its verdant fields and gold-cupped meadows.

The whole business connected with the Dell came back to him, and with it the figure of the handsome rustic fisher girl standing as it were vividly before him, and with her his cousin, the cause of all the suffering.

"How strange it is," he thought again, "that I should be brought into contact with her brother like this! Poor fellow! more sinned against than sinning; and as for her—"

"Poor girl!"

There was a slight sound as of some one breathing hard, and the buccaneer stood before him.

He smiled gravely, and held out his hand; but Humphrey did not take it, and they remained gazing at each other for some few minutes in silence.

"Have you thought better of my proposals, Captain Armstrong?" said the buccaneer at last. "Are we to be friends?"

"It is impossible, sir," replied Humphrey, quietly. "After what has passed I grieve to have to reject your advances."

"I can wait," said the buccaneer, patiently. "The time will come."

Humphrey shook his head.

"Is there anything you want?"

"Yes," said Humphrey, sharply. "Liberty."

"Take it. It is in my hand."

"Liberty chained to you, sir! No. There place me under no further obligations. I will not fight against you; but pray understand that what you ask can never be."

"I can wait," said the buccaneer again, quietly, as he let his eyes rest for a few moments upon his prisoner's face, and then left the room.

entered. The man looked troubled, and stood listening, then he stole to the curtain and went down the corridor, to stay away for quite a quarter of an hour before he returned.

"He's gone, sir, safe enough. Faix, captain, dear, I fail as if I ought to be hung."

"Hung, Dinny?"

"Yes, sir, for treachery to as good a friend as I ever had."

"What do you mean, Dinny?" cried Humphrey, eagerly.

"Manc, sor! Why, that all the gramin in the world, from Caesar down to Pater Donovan, have had their wake side. I've got mine, and I'm a fallen man."

"Speak out plainly," cried Humphrey, flushing.

"That's just what I'm doing, sor," said Dinny, with a soft smile. "It's nature, sor. She was bad enough, and this you helped her. Oh, there's no fighting agen it! It used to be so in Ireland. She says to the little birds in the spring—choose your partners, darlin', she says, and they chose 'em; and she said the same to human man, and he chooses his."

"Oh, Dinny, if you hadn't quite such a long tongue!" cried Humphrey.

"Faix, it's a regular serpent, sor, for length, and just as desaviny; but as I was saying, what Nature says in old Ireland in the spring she says out here in this haste of a country, where there's nuyther spring, summer, autumn, nor winter—nothing but a sort of moshpoh of sunshine and howling thunder storms."

"And will you really help me to escape?"

"Whisht, sor! What are ye thinking about? Spaking aloud in a country where the parrots can talk like Christians and the threes is full of ugly chaps, who sit and watch ye and say nothing, but howld tight wid their tails, and thin ye and whispier their saycrets to one another."

"You'll help me?"

"Yes, sir, if ye'll go down on your beaded knees and take an oath."

"Oath! What oath?"

"Niver to betray or take part in any thing agen Commodore Junk, the threast, bravest boy that iver stepped."

"You are right, Dinny. He is a brave man, and I swear that I will not betray or attack him, come what may. Get me my liberty and the liberty of my men, and I'll be content. Stop! I cannot go so far as that; there are my men. I swear I will not attack your captain without giving him due notice, that he may escape; but this nest of hornets must be burned out and my men freed."

"Ah, well, we won't haggle about trifles, sor. Swear this, sor: Ye'll behave to the captain like a gentleman."

"I swear I will."

"Bedad, then, I'm wid ye; and there's one more favor I'll be asking ye, sor."

"What is it?"

"Whin we get safe home ye'll come and give Mistress Greeneyes away."

"Yes, yes, Dinny. And now, tell me what will you do?"

"Sure, I'll have an oi on a boat, and see that there's some wather and bishkis and a gun in her; and thin, sor, I'll set light to the magazine, for it'll be a rare pleasure to blow up that owld gentleman as is always leering and grinning at me as much as to say, 'Och, Dinny, I know all about the widdy, and first time ye go to see her I'll tell Black Mazard, and then, 'ware, hawk!'"

"But when shall you do this?"

"First to-morrow it seems asy, sor."

"In the night?"

"Av course, sor."

"And how shall I know?"

"Hark at that, now! Faix, arn't I telling ye, sor, that I'll blow up the magazine? Sure, an ye do'n't pay so much attention to it when ye go to sleep that ye won't hear that?"

"Of course I shall hear it," said Humphrey, excitedly.

"Thin, that's the signal, sor; and when it goes fizz, be riddy and wait till I kin to ye, and thin good-by to the rover's life. Whisht!"

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A fortnight passed, during which the buccaneer visited his prisoner twice, as if to give him an opportunity to speak, but each time in company with Bart.

Both were very quiet and stern, and but few words were said. Everything was done to make the prisoner's condition more endurable, but the attentions now were irksome; and though Humphrey Armstrong lay listening for footsteps with the greatest anxiety, those which came down the corridor were not those he wished to hear.

"One of them might have managed to come and give me a word," he said, fretfully, as at last, weary of watching the scintillations of the fire-flies in a distant opening, he threw himself upon his couch to try and sleep, feeling that he would be wakeful all night, when all at once, just as he felt most troubled, his eyes closed, and he was deep in a dreamless sleep, lost to everything but the terrific roar which suddenly burst forth, following a vivid flash of lightning, and, as confused and half-stunned, Humphrey started up, all idea of the proposed escape seemed to have passed away, and he sat watching for the next flash, listening for the next peal, thinking that this was a most terrific storm.

No flash—no peal—but a confused buzz of voices and the distant pattering of feet, while a dense, dank odor of exploded gunpowder penetrated the forest, and entered the window close to which the prisoner sat.

"Dinny—the escape!" he cried, excitedly, as he sprang from his bed, for now a flash did come with almost blinding force; but it was a mental flash, which left him quivering with excitement, as he sprang to the curtained corridor and listened there.

A step! Dinny's, yes, he knew it well! It was coming along the great stone passage!

"Quick! we shall easily get away, for they'll all crowd about the captain, asking him what to do."

Dinny led on rapidly till they reached the turning in the direction of the old temple. Here they struck off to the left, and found, as they cleared the narrow forest path, that the odor of the exploded gunpowder was almost overpowering.

Not a hundred yards away voices were heard speaking rapidly, and directly after they were silent, and the captain's words rang out plainly as he gave orders to his people, though their import was not clear from the distance where the fugitives crept along by the edge of the ruins.

"Are you sure you are right?" whispered Humphrey.

"Bolght, sor; I niver was more so. Whisht! Are ye there?"

"Yes, yes," came from down by the side of a great wall. "Oh, Dinny, I was afraid you were killed!"

"Kilt! Nay, my darling, there's a selo o' life in me yet. Tak' bow o' me hand, one on each side and walk quick and shteady, and I'll have ye down by the sayshore, where the boat is waiting, before ye know where ye are."

They started off at a sharp walk, pausing at times to listen to the jargon of excited voices behind, but rapidly advancing, on the whole, toward their goal. (To be continued.)

PLOWING WITH ELEPHANTS.

Barnum's Reply to Farmer Who Asked if it Would Pay.

It may be said of P. T. Barnum that he was the Majordomo or Lord of Laughter and Fun, the protean Dispenser of Amusement. How well he became known through this function one curious incident certifies. Some years before he died, an obscure person in some remote part of Asia wrote a letter, which he dropped in the post-office near him, directed to "Mr. Barnum, America." The letter reached its destination without an hour's delay. The great showman unaffectedly enjoyed being known from the very beginning of his celebrity; and when he found his celebrity was a tremendous factor in his success, he did everything that he could think of to extend the exploitation of his name. This was not to nourish vain imaginations or because he felt exalted; it was to promote business.

Around his successive homes at Bridgeport, Conn., he was fond of putting something that suggested a show. Queerly marked cattle, the sacred cow, or an elephant, were frequently among the stock to be noticed in his fields. On one occasion he had an elephant engaged in plowing on the sloping hill where it could plainly be seen by the passengers on the New Haven and Hartford Railroad, an agricultural innovation that he knew would get notice of some sort in every newspaper in the country. It was even said that he received letters from farmers far and wide asking how much hay one elephant ate, and if it was more profitable to plow with an elephant than with horses or oxen. His replies were invariably frank, and were of this purport: If you have a large museum in New York, and a great railway sends trains full of passengers within eyesight of the performance, it will pay, and pay well; but if you have no such institution, then horses or oxen will prove more economical.—Century Magazine.

Had Discharged His Duty.

As an instance of President Hadley's aptness in meeting every situation or replying to every pertinent or impertinent question, the following story is told:

At a reception given for him by an old friend some 500 miles from New Haven, one individual with a better memory than tact asked him what he thought of the recent baseball game. As Yale had met with a disastrous defeat, the subject might be called unpleasant. Without hesitation President Hadley said:

"There was a boy living in a village whose uncle died. The next day a man driving along the road was surprised to find the boy working in a field. Thinking this did not show proper respect to the dead uncle, he called the lad to him and said: 'Johnny, didn't you know your uncle was dead?'"

"Johnny slowly approached and drawled out:

"Yes, I know it—I have cried."—New York Times.

Pawnbroker's Three Balls.

The three balls used as a sign by pawnbrokers were introduced into England by the merchants and money brokers from Lombardy, Italy, who settled in London in the middle ages, and they were used by them in remembrance of the feature in a coat of arms than which none was more familiar in their native province, that of the Medici family. These balls or disks in the Medici arms were variously explained, the more popular suggestion being that they were intended for pills in playing allusion to the name "Medici" (doctors). William Roscoe, however, in his "Life of Lorenzo de Medici" refers their origin to a more plausible source, an exploit of Averardo de Medici, a commander under Charlemagne. "This bold warrior slew the giant Mugello, whose club he bore as a trophy. This mace or club had three iron balls, which the family adopted as their device."

A Useless Device.

At a suburban auction of household goods an active and successful bidder was a Montgomery County farmer. His purchases were piled high in one corner of the room, and he was still eager when a thermometer was offered. There was no bidding from any quarter, and the auctioneer, reaching it out to the farmer, said:

"Here, give me a quarter for it and take it along!"

"No! Not for me!" said the farmer, backing away.

"Why, that's dirt cheap!" exclaimed the auctioneer. "Don't you want a thermometer?"

"Nup!" was the decided reply. "I had one a year or two ago, and fooled around it an' lost time without being able to regulate it at all. Why, I couldn't even open the darned thing!"

His Pleaint.

Brown—What was Jones kicking about? You'd think he never got what he wanted.

Smith—It's worse than that. He says he never gets even what he doesn't want.

The older every one grows, the more inclined he is to attribute a child's ill temper to a state of ill health.

Onions are a preventive and often-times a cure for malarial fever.

FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

Brightening Our Homes.

In the winter season a few choice plants in the sitting room windows add much good cheer to our homes. A nice arrangement is shown in the cut. It is well to have a variety of plants, some for flowers, others for foliage. These may be readily procured of any florist, or even ordered by mail or express.

Much satisfaction follows the planting of a few bulbs, such as hyacinths, tulips, lilies, crocus, etc. These come into bloom in a few weeks and are exceedingly pretty. There is a great array of foliage plants that may be readily secured, some also having bright and choice flowers. The latter include geraniums, fuchsias, primroses, etc. A palm, or two, fern, rubber plant, etc., add greatly to the ornamentation of a window filled with plants, or to the living room.

There are many styles of shelves that may be used. A plain, smooth board



is often handy. Above it, on either side, brackets may be screwed to the window casing, each containing arms with a flat, round top, for plants. A stand or table in a bay window, may often be used to advantage. Things of this kind are very common in city homes as well as in numberless cheerful farm homes. But there are, as a rule, none too many plants in our homes. As flowers bring refinement and elevating thoughts, let us have more of them.—Farm and Home.

Church Work and the Busy Woman.

What will become of church work when women become too busy to do it? This question has not yet come largely to the front, but it certainly will in time if things go on at their present pace. Men have long ago ceased to be able to attend to church work, except when they are regularly salaried to do it, or when zeal and leisure coexist. The church has looked to women for the unsalaried work that needs doing; and the women, glad of an outlet for their energies, have willingly given their best thought and their spare time to Sunday school teaching, missionary meetings, the making of altar-cloths and vestments, and the conduct of fairs, festivals, church suppers and so on. In the last generation the busiest women in each town were always to be found foremost in the churches. The women of 40 and over are still to-day in church work. But how about the young and busy women?

The Sunday schools begin to notice that she does not offer to teach. She is as tired, after her week's work, as a man, and needs rest on Sunday. She has no free weekday afternoons in which to attend missionary meetings. She is making her living, or else she has clubs and courses of reading to attend, or is heart and soul at work in a college settlement. In the church, moreover, she must work under the authority and supervision of the clergy; whereas on hospital boards or in charitable organizations she has all the authority and all the recognition. Naturally, she grows to prefer the latter. The busy woman is the picked woman, usually, and superior women have been the strength of church guilds and meetings hitherto. The church cannot afford to depend only upon the inferior woman, surely. Can this be the meaning of the salaries offered to Sunday school teachers in some of our cities? The whole question is an interesting one and may have some bearing upon the alleged present decline of church life in America.—Harper's Bazar.

Changing Views.

"I've pictured the mat that I'll marry," she said.

When reaching her seventeenth year; "There's only one kind that I ever will wed."

And he must a hero appear. This man must be able and handsome and brave—

Apollo and Mars all in one— And if I can't captivate such as I crave, Why, then, I assert, I'll have none."

"All men have their faults," she was heard to exclaim,

When reaching her twenty-fifth year; "Of course, I am looking for merit and fame.

But much may be lacking, I fear. I'd like to have dignity, courage and grace.

A man who is earnest and true. Who's strong for the battle and swift for the race—

But half of these virtues will do."

She cut it down in her thirtieth year; Her smiles were for all that she met, For she had decided, it seemed to be clear,

She wanted the man she could get. —Brooklyn Eagle.

The American Girl.

What makes the American girl a most attractive being is her self-confidence, amiability and good temper. Now, I am not a flatterer, and I must say that pretty women are as much in the minority in the United States as in any other country, writes Viscount de

Santo Thyro, in the Smart Set. Beauty, like gold, is scarce everywhere. You can find more gold in California than in Europe; but even in California you certainly find more dress than gold. So it is with women. In some places, or in some countries, the number of pretty women is greater than in others, and in this branch of natural production the United States is not behind-hand.

This, however, is only a foreigner's view of the subject. To tell the truth, I have never met an American girl of 20 who did not consider herself fascinating; this is self-confidence, and for a woman to believe she is beautiful is half way to real beauty. In the first place, a plain woman, who is aware of her plainness, is unattractive. Man is a selfish animal, and despite what novels say about sad women and the power of tears, unhappiness is as repellant to a healthy mind as disease to a healthy body. Then, the conscious plain woman gives up every thought of pleasing, and therefore she does nothing to make herself attractive. She does not dress in a becoming way, she does not smile, she does not try to be attractive. She becomes sour or dull, or both.—Detroit Free Press.

For the Young Mother.