

A SISTER'S VENGEANCE

By GEORGE MANVILLE FENN

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

The man was stunned, and lay perfectly inert as Humphrey and his companion struggled to their feet, panting with exertion, and listening for the return of the party who had gone on.

But they had not heard the noise of the struggle, the muffled thud of the path had shut it out, and their voices now came muffled and soft, as if from a distance.

Then Humphrey felt his hand gripped firmly.

"This way," he said.

"What! Are you going to take me back to prison?" said Humphrey, mockingly.

"Did you wish to go straight to death?"

"I'm going straight to liberty!" cried Humphrey.

"This way, then," whispered his companion, and without a word Humphrey allowed himself to be led back along the dark arcade, listening to the heavy panting of his guide, who seemed to be breathing heavily, as if in pain.

For some time no word was spoken. Then, as he became aware of his companion's purpose, Humphrey stopped short.

"You are leading me back to that cursed prison," he said, fiercely. "Loose my hand!"

"I am leading you to the only place where you will be safe," was whispered back. "Have I not suffered enough, man? Do you think I wish to die with the knowledge that these dogs will seize and rend you?"

"Read me?"

"Yes, they have risen. That wretch, whom I have spared so long in my weak folly, is at their head. Humphrey Armstrong, believe me, I am trying to have your life!"

"Then why not make for the shore? A boat! Give me a boat and let me go!"

"Half the men who were faithful to me are dead, treacherously burned to death in their quarters. I cannot explain; but the doorway was blocked by those fiends. The landing place is guarded by a portion of his blood-thirsty gang. To go to the shore is to seek your death. Will you not trust me now?"

"It is to keep me here!" he cried fiercely.

"To keep you here when I would gladly say go! Trust me. Give me time to think. I was coming to save you when we met. Will you not believe?"

"Yes," cried Humphrey, hoarsely. "I will trust you!"

"Ha!"

That was all. His hand was gripped more tightly; and, as he yielded it to his companion, he felt himself led with unerring decision in and out among the moldering ruins of the edge of the clearing to the side of the old amphitheater, a faint metallic clink from time to time indicating that a sword was being struck upon the stones to make sure of the way.

"You are going back there?" said Humphrey.

"Yes," came back, hoarsely. "Do not speak. We may be heard."

Humphrey was conscious that his guide had led him to the altar and sunk upon it with a moan; but she still tightly clung to his hand.

There they remained in silence as if listening for pursuit; and the deep, hoarse breathing of both sounded painfully loud in the utter darkness.

Humphrey essayed to speak again and again, but he felt that he could not trust himself to utter words.

It was his companion who broke the painful silence as she still clung to his hand.

"I ought to have acted sooner," she said, bitterly. "I might have known it, but in my cruel selfishness I could not let you go. Do not blame me—I do not reproach me. It was my madness; and now the punishment has come."

"I do not understand you," he said, huskily.

"You do," she said, gently. "But it is no time to think of this. Listen! These men will search every spot to find and slay me—and you; but you shall escape. Now listen: Below this old place there is a rock chamber, known only to me and Bart—who lies wounded yonder and helpless; but he will not betray the secret, even if he thinks that you are there. You will go to the end of your couch, press heavily with your shoulder against the corner, forcing it in this direction, and then the great stone will move upon a pivot. There is a way down."

"You need not tell me," said Humphrey at this point. "I know."

"Thank Heaven!" she ejaculated. "Keep in hiding there till the wretches are off their guard; and then cautiously make your way by night down to the landing place, and by some means seize a boat. There will be no guard kept when I am gone."

"And my people—my poor fellows?"

"Gone," she said, quietly. "They seized a boat and escaped long ago. All has been confusion here since—since I have been mad," she added, piteously.

"Escaped?"

"Yes; and you will escape. And in the future, when you are away—and happy—don't curse me—think of me as a poor woman, driven by fate to what I am—but who saw and loved you, Humphrey Armstrong, as woman has seldom loved before."

"Oh, hush!" he said, huskily. "For Heaven's sake, don't speak like that!"

"No," she said, gently. "I will not speak. It is nearly over now. You will forgive me?"

"Forgive you—yes!"

She uttered a low sigh, full of thankfulness, as she still clung to his hand.

"It is enough," she said. "Now, go! You know the way. Be cautious, be patient and bide your time; and then Heaven speed you safely home! He has forgiven me," she sighed to herself, and the pressure upon his hand seemed to increase.

"Well," she said, after a few moments' pause, "why do you stay?"

Her voice startled him in its intensity, for it seemed to echo through the place, and his hand had, as it had been for many minutes past, grasped hers with crushing force as the tide rose to its fullest height and bore him on.

"And you?" he said. "What will you do?"

"I?" she said, with a faint laugh. "I shall wait here until they come."

"Wait here?" cried Humphrey. "They will kill you!"

"Yes," she said, softly.

"Then why not share my flight. Come with me now while there is time. I will protect you and take you where you will. I cannot leave you like this!"

"Not leave me?" she said, with a sob.

"No. Do you think me such a cur that I could leave you to the mercy of these wretches?"

"It is too late," she said. "Go!"

"Go?"

"Yes, while there is time."

"But you can hide as well as I!" he cried, excitedly. "Come!"

"It is too late," she said, and he felt her hand tremble in his grasp.

"And leave you?" he cried. "I would sooner die!"

"Then you do love me?" she cried, wildly, as she half rose from the altar, but sank back.

"Love you!" he cried, passionately. "I have fought with it, I have battled with it till I have been nearly mad! Love you, Mary, my brave, true heroine! I love you with all my heart!"

She uttered a wild cry of joy as he threw himself upon his knees and clasped her to his heart, her two arms clung tightly round his neck, as she uttered a low moan of mingled joy and pain.

"Love you!" he whispered, as he raised his face, and his lips sought hers. "My darling! words will not tell me your love! Come, what is the world to us? You are my world, my own, my love! Come!"

She clung to him passionately for a few moments.

"At last!" she said softly, as if to herself. "The love of one true, noble man! Ah!"

A low, deep sigh escaped her, and then, as if renewed to a sense of her position, she thrust him back and listened.

"Hark!" as a low shout arose. "They are coming back—they will be here soon! Quick! lose no time! You must escape!"

"I could not live without you now!" he cried, passionately, as he held her to him more tightly still.

"They are coming. It is too late for me. Let me die in peace, knowing that you are saved."

He raised her in his arms and bore her to the great stone, and, as he laid her gently down, the noise of the coming gang could be heard.

There was not a moment to lose, and any slip in his instructions would have resulted in destruction; but as he pressed against the stone it easily revolved, and he stooped once more and raised the fainting woman in his arms, to bear her down into the tomb-like structure and place her at the foot of the broad stone stairs which led into the vault.

As he loosened her arms from about his neck and passed quickly up again, there were heavy steps in the long corridor, and lights flashed through the openings of the great curtain. So close were the men that Humphrey saw their faces as he stood on the upper step and dragged at the slab by two great hollows underneath, made apparently by the masons for morer's hands.

For the moment Humphrey, as he bent down there beneath the place on which he had so often slept or lain to think, felt certain that he must have been seen; but the muffled voices came close up, and there was no seizing of the great stone, no smiting upon its sides.

He held his breath as he stood bending down and listening for some indication of danger; but it seemed as if the men had coursed all over the place, searching in all directions, and were about to go, when, all at once, there was a shout close to the place where he had raised Mary from the altar.

The shout was followed by a muffled sound of many voices, and he listened, wondering what it meant. Some discovery had evidently been made, but what?

He shuddered and a chill of horror shot through him, for he knew directly after. It was blood.

CHAPTER XIX.

With the deathly silence which ensued as the heavy echoing steps of the searchers passed away, the men being completely at fault as to why certain drops of blood should be lying near the couch, Humphrey descended the steps once more.

"They are gone," he whispered, but there was no reply; and, feeling softly about his hand came in contact with Mary's arm, to find that she lay back in a corner of the vault, with a kerchief pressed tightly against her breast.

He hastily bandaged the wound, firmly binding the handkerchief which she held there with his own and the broad scarf he wore, and after placing her in a more comfortable position, began to search in the darkness for the food and water which was there.

The water was soon found—a deep, cool cistern in the middle of the floor.

The food lay close at hand, and with it a cup. With this he bore some of the cool, refreshing liquid to the wounded woman, holding some to her lips and bathing her brow, till she uttered a sigh and returned to consciousness.

"Don't leave me!" she said, feebly. "It is very dark!"

"But we are safe," he whispered. "They are gone."

"Yes," she sighed. "I heard them. How long is it to day?"

"It cannot be long now," he said, as he took her hand.

She sighed as she felt the unwonted tenderness and rested her head against his shoulder.

"No," she said softly. "It cannot be long now. It will come too soon!"

There was so much meaning in her voice that he felt a cold chill, as if the hand of death passed between to separate these two so strangely brought together.

"Are you in pain?" he said.

"Pain! No. Happy—so happy!" she whispered. "For you do love me?"

"Love you?" he cried.

"And she—at home?"

"That was not love," he said, wildly. "But now tell me about this place—shall we see the day when it comes?"

"You will," she said, softly. "I shall—perhaps."

"Perhaps! No, you shall!" he whispered, as he pressed his arm gently

around her, forgetting everything now of the past, save that this woman loved him, and that there was a future before them of hope and joy.

"Hold me like that," she whispered, with a sigh of content. "It is better so. It could never have been—only my wild dream—a woman's thirst for the love of one in whom she could believe. A woman's love!"

As the light grew stronger he saw that his companion seemed to have lost the old mien of a woman given by her attire; for coat and vest had been cast aside, and the loose shirt, open at the neck, had more the aspect of a robe. Her dark hair curled closely about her temples, and as Humphrey Armstrong gazed down at the face, with its parted lips and long lashes lying upon the creamy dark cheeks, his heart thrilled, for he felt that he had won the love of as handsome a woman as any upon whom his eyes had ever lighted.

He forgot the wound, the bandaging kerchief seeming in the semi-darkness like some scarf; and as he sat and gazed he bent down lower and softly touched the moist forehead with his lips.

Mary woke up with a frightened start and gazed at him wildly, but as consciousness came her look softened and she nestled to him.

"I did not mean to wake you," he said.

She started again and looked at him wildly, as if she fancied she had detected a chilliness in his manner; but his eyes undimmed her, and as he raised her hand to his lips, she let it rest there for a few moments, and then stole it round his neck.

"Tell me," he said gently, "your wound?"

"She shook her head softly.

"No," she whispered; "let it rest. Talk of yourself. You will wait here two days, and then steal out at night and make your way down to the shore. You know the way?"

"I'll do you will guide me," he said.

She looked at him keenly to see if he meant what he said, and then reading the sincerity of his words in his frank eyes, she shook her head again.

"No," she whispered. "You asked me of my wound. It is home, Humphrey Armstrong, this is to be my tomb!"

"What?" he cried. "Oh, no! no! no! You must live to bless me with your love!"

"Live to disgrace you with my love!"

"Mary!"

There was such a depth of love, such intensity in the tone in which he uttered her name, that she moaned aloud.

"Ah, you are in pain!" he cried.

"In pain for you," she whispered, "for you suffer for my sake. Hush! Do you hear?"

She clung to him tightly.

"No," he said, "there is nothing."

"Yes," she said, softly. "Steps. I can hear them—they are coming back."

Mary signed to him to listen; at that moment the stone slab moved gently a few inches, for some one had seated himself upon the edge.

"Now, my lad," cried a hoarse voice, "you know all about it, and I'm captain now. Where's that prisoner?"

"Sure and how could I know any way, Black Mizzard?"

"Captain Mizzard!" roared the first speaker.

"Oh, murd'! Put them pistols away, and I'll call ye captain, or admiral if ye like!"

"No fooling! Where is that prisoner?"

"Which one, sor?"

"No fooling, Paddy! Captain Armstrong!"

"Faix, an' he must have run away, skeart loike, whin he heard you were coming."

"You know where he is?"

"Faix, and that's true," said Dinny.

"Where is he, then? Tell me the truth, and I'll let you live this time. Tell me a lie, and I'll hang you."

"Och, don't, captain! Ye'd waken yer crew horribly if ye were to hang me."

"I'll hang you ye sure as you stand there, if you don't speak."

"Murd'! Don't now, captain, for I shouldn't be decently if ye did hang me. It isn't a way I've been accustomed to. Ah, moind! That pistol might go off."

"It will go off if you don't speak. He's hidden somewhere here, and you know where. Speak out!"

"Shake out! And is it shake out?" said Dinny, slowly, as with advanced blade Humphrey stood ready to plunge it into the breast of the first man who attempted to descend. "Oh, well, I'll shake out then."

AN EASY PROBLEM.

Peculiar Figuring of an Indolent Village Couple.

Hubbard Lawton, familiarly known as "Hub," was by common consent the most shiftless man in Pineville. He had been known to "saw and split" in a desultory way for a few of the summer visitors, but beyond that Hub and Lawton were strangers.

The most easy-going woman in the town was Lucy Harmon, who did a little dressmaking when the fit seized her; but as a rule she sat tranquilly on her front doorstep in summer, and in her front window during spring, autumn and winter, doing nothing whatever with great contentment of mind and body.

Hub required financial aid from his relatives every month, and it was understood that Lucy received contributions from her neighbors without any false pride. When it was announced by Hub that he and Lucy were soon to be married, a plain-spoken neighbor asked a pointed question.

"How are you and Lucy expecting to live?" she inquired. "Who's going to earn your bread and butter, Hub? Lucy's folks nor her neighbors won't feel any call to feed her when she's married to an able-bodied man."

"Why," said Hub, reproachfully, "I don't know what folks are thinking off! Half a dozen people have asked me that same question. I can almost support myself, and Lucy can almost support herself, and I should think anybody with a head for figures could see that when we five forces there'll be something left over for a rainy day."

Living on Microscopic Pay.

Millions of Hindus live, marry and rear families on an income which rarely exceeds 50 cents a week. They never eat meat and need hardly any clothing.

DOINGS OF WOMEN

In an Isolated Home.

The only woman in the world in charge of a lighthouse entirely surrounded by water lives in New York bay. She is Mrs. Katy Walker, and she has charge of Robbins Reef lighthouse, which rises out of the water five miles south of the Battery. For seventeen years she has been at this post. For three of these years her husband was keeper, but since his death she has had sole charge, and it is to her credit that the Robbins Reef lighthouse is one of the cleanest and best kept in the country.

For weeks at a time in winter Mrs. Walker never closes her eyes in sleep when night comes. Then it is that the windows inclosing the light can be kept free from frost only by constant cleansing. Night after night she remains at her post, and often in the day time when fog overhangs the bay she looks after the fog whistle or sets in motion the mechanism which keeps the fog bell ringing. The duties of the position are very exacting and wearisome, yet in all her years of service she has not received a reprimand nor had a complaint lodged against her.

A Girl's First Offer.

There are two extremes, into one of which a girl often falls on receiving her first offer. The worst and the most frequent of these is that of fancying herself in love, when, in reality, she doesn't care a fig for her lover. The other consists in a coquettish pride, which leads her, against the dictates of her judgment and the inclinations of her heart, to reject a suitor, however worthy.

When an honest man offers a woman his hand, with all accompaniments of heart and fortune—whether these be exalted or lowly—he pays her the highest compliment in his power.

Undeniably she is complimented, and she must be untrue to her womanhood does she not in some measure feel so, even though her suitor be beneath her regard; but the compliment will be valued very much in proportion to her estimation of the man.

Many a woman has blighted her own life and that of the man she loved by indulging in a passion for coquetry. Having charms of which she is fully conscious, she proudly measures her power and says to herself: "I am equal to great conquests, and shall I thus early be conquered? When I have had a surfeit of these delights, then—"

But the time referred to in the long futurity of the little word "then" seldom comes to the coquette. It will always be "then." The accepted time is never near when we have once let the opportunity pass. At 18 the coquette asks: "Who is he?" At 28, "Where is he?"—New York News.

Ireland's Vicereine.

The Countess of Dudley, the new Vicereine of Ireland, is the wife of Earl Dudley, recently appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Her husband will be practically a reigning sovereign. In Ireland she will at all times take precedence over every other woman, save Queen Alexandra herself, even the Princess of Wales, should she visit Ireland, being obliged to give place. NEW VICEREINE, to the Vicereine. The Countess is one of England's most noted beauties.

Little Hints.

To make a candle burn all night put finely powdered salt on the candle until it reaches the black part of the wick.

There is nothing equal to finely sifted coal ashes for brightening metals of all kinds—brass, tin, copper, nickel. Rub over with a damp cloth dipped in the ashes.

To remove mildew mix lemon juice with salt, powdered starch and soft soap. Apply with a brush and lay in the sun; or you may rub soap on the spots, scrape chalk on them, moisten and lay in the sun.

Soups and gravies are richer and better if the meat and vegetables are put into the saucepan first with a little butter and allowed to cook slowly for nearly half an hour before adding the water.

To clean rusty fire irons rub them well with sweet oil, leave them wet for a day or two and then rub them with unslaked lime. This will remove the rust and then the fire irons may be polished as usual.

Motives of economy as well as requirements are satisfied by keeping a scrupulously clean refrigerator or ice chest. One article that has been allowed to remain in the ice chest after it has lost its freshness will soon communicate the contamination to everything else in the box.

What One Woman Says About Colds.

For ten of the twelve years of her life my son suffered from influenza, which no amount of precaution could ward off, and which, with or without a doctor, was often weeks in making its

course, at the end of which time he was about ready for a fresh attack. At last I became convinced that an over-indulgence in sweets was one fertile cause, and many a box of candy—the gift of unwise friends—was suppressed, and the colds became less frequent. On his tenth birthday he began, upon rising in the morning, a series of cold sponge baths, followed by friction, with a coarse towel. That year his colds were limited to two.

When the second began to make its appearance we determined to try heroic measures, and for thirty-six hours he went without food with the exception of a cupful of hot water; and the juice of an orange taken on the morning of the first day's fast. The second morning he awoke without a vestige of cold, and a happier and more triumphant boy it would have been hard to find. As many of my friends and family have tried this with equal success I do not hesitate to recommend it.—Exchange.

Women Do Not Sleep Enough.

The thing that makes many of our women look cross, tired out, old and prematurely wrinkled is lack of sleep. All the twentieth century women—the professional woman, the shop girl, the domestic servant and the society belle—seem determined to defeat the efforts of nature's gentle restorer for the tired brain and body. The hustling life of this age leaves little time for repose even for the lady of leisure. That term is a mere nothing, for there is truly no leisure class in this country. Everyone is so busy that the demands of nature go unheeded.

But despite the fact that sleep is the great strength giver and that health and beauty as well as happiness depend upon it, women will persist in giving but from five to seven hours to it when ten is not too much to keep them strong and beautiful. All the powders and lotions in creation cannot so effectually do away with wrinkles as can sufficient sleep. If every woman would drop all these things for one year and make preparations to sleep as long in each twenty-four hours as nature required, it would be surprising what a change for the better would come over the feminine portion of humanity.

A Bachelor Girl's Reflections.

Many a man marries a girl because she is as "pretty as a picture" and then grows at the price of her picture hat.

Man was made from dust so that woman might sweep all before her.

The brilliancy of many a society leader depends largely upon her jewel box.

Men allow their wives pin money and then expect them to buy tiaras.

No man is really wise who retains a single ideal.

No man yet was so high up that his wife could not call him down.

Men select their wives much as women buy books—chiefly because of a pretty cover.

No man is a hero to his trained nurse.—Chicago Tribune.

Ireland's Vicereine.

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THE HOUSEHOLD

Honeycomb Pudding.

One-half cupful of butter, one-half cupful of sugar, one-half cupful of milk, one-half cupful of flour, one cupful of molasses, four eggs and one teaspoonful of soda; mix the sugar and flour together, add the molasses, warm the butter in the milk, then add the eggs, which must have been well beaten; lastly, put in one teaspoonful of soda, dissolved in a little hot water; stir well together and bake half an hour in buttered pudding dish. Serve hot, with sauce. To make the sauce, beat the whites of two eggs and one-half cupful of powdered sugar to a stiff froth; add a little wine or lemon juice.

Fillet of Chicken Broiled.

From the breast of a chicken cut the four fillets, which can be easily separated, and remove every particle of fat or skin. Dust lightly with salt. Butter a piece of heavy white letter paper and wrap it lightly about the meat. Lay on a broiler over a clear fire and move constantly over the heat. The paper will brown and gradually char, but before it takes fire—you must lift it from the fire just before this happens—you will find the fillet nicely cooked and much less dry than if cooked directly over the coals.—Good Housekeeping.