

A COQUETTE'S FAITH.

From New York Weekly: "I am glad I came when I did," said the captain. "But you should not have strayed so far from the vessel. I hope no other of my sailors have come so far away from the town."

The young man colored and hung his head. Then a smile wreathed his lips, disclosing teeth which were dazzling white and even. "I'm afraid I'm a sorry protector," said he, in a voice that was peculiarly coarse for one of such genteel physique. "Here I came for the sole purpose of being on hand to protect you in case you were attacked by the desperadoes, and instead here you come to my rescue."

"You had better get back to town as fast as you can," said Bernard.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the youth. "And you?"

"Never mind me," said the captain, with the dare devil, indifferent air of a man caring little what became of him.

A peculiar expression of pity passed over the face of the youth. More, a tear gleamed in his eye, as he turned away and walked toward the town.

"What is there about that young fellow which always effects me so strangely?" muttered the captain to himself, as he moved off, leaving the two desperadoes lying side by side, still senseless.

Then he returned to the town and made the vigilantes (police officers) acquainted with what had taken place.

Before nightfall a party of these men arrested the two robbers, who were brought before the authorities in the town. Captain Warren and William Marvel, the youth whom he had rescued, appeared against the prisoners. The latter were sent to the calaboose, sentenced to hard labor for a lifetime.

The name of Captain Warren became from that moment, a hateful one to the mountain robbers, who resolved to get him, if possible, in their clutches, and hang him upon some tree where his skeleton, high up on a topmost branch, might swing as a warning to others never to attempt to prosecute the band.

The captain, who neither feared for, nor in fact cared for his life, continued his hunting excursions.

On some days it was nightfall before he thought of returning.

One evening a terrific storm burst upon him, while on his way to the town. The heavens were obscured by black clouds, and the noise of the wind was like the roaring of the sea. The tall trees shook as if about to give way, their bows cracking with a din like the rattling of volleys of musketry. Meanwhile the rain came down in slanting lines, driving against the young man's face with a force which nearly stifled him.

The violence of the gale increased every moment, the streams and rivulets in the traveler's pathway swelling to torrents.

On came the latter, rushing along with a force which was near throwing the sailor off his feet. Finally the waters increased to such a degree that Bernard, to save himself from being overwhelmed by them, sought refuge in a deserted hut half-way up the mountain.

In the hut there was a pile of logs, behind which, at this moment, crouched a slender form, drenched and shivering with the wet.

It was William, the youth whom the captain had saved on a former occasion, and who, on this day, had also followed him, reaching, by a circuitous route, the hut before Bernard, who, he thought likely, owing to the direction of his steps, would there seek refuge.

In about an hour the storm abated, so that Bernard thought he would now be able to make his way back to the town.

During all this time William had remained crouched behind the pile of logs, evidently fearing the captain's displeasure should he make himself known.

Bernard had not proceeded far before he discovered that he could go no farther, the water filling the hollows and other spaces in the ground so as to prevent his progress.

He returned to the hut. William, who was obliged to crouch in some shrubbery to hide himself from the captain's view, thus remained until the young man had gained the hut, when he started to follow him.

He had not walked more than ten steps when he noticed a party of men approaching.

The moon having now emerged from behind a cloud, revealed enough of these personages for him to perceive that they were mountaineers.

They had long beards and high boots; some of them carried carbines slung to their backs, while others were provided with long knives.

The youth, who understood Spanish quite well, heard one of them say:

"I tell you he is here to-night, for I saw him at sundown start on his return, and I know he could not have gone far in the present condition of the roads."

"You would know him, if you saw him, again, I suppose?"

"I am not so sure of that. He was down among the trees, so that I could not see him very distinctly, but, as well as I could make out, he was a small, slender man."

"Enough. If we only overtake him, we may avenge our imprisonment comrades."

"Ay, we will hang him to the tallest tree that grows upon the hill."

"His vessel will never leave this port with him as her captain."

Thus spoke the robbers, and William knew well that their conversation referred to Captain Warren.

He hurried noiselessly along toward them, keeping in the shadow of the shrubbery, that they might not see him until he should come close upon them.

He had heard enough to show him that they had mistaken himself for the captain, and he seemed anxious to carry out the deception.

Finally he gained a point within a few feet of the robbers, when he suddenly arose, half turning, as if about beating a retreat.

The outlaws, with fierce cries, pounced upon him. They gathered round him, brandishing their knives, their fierce eyes gleaming like fire in the moonlight.

"You are our prisoner. Your name at once?"

"Captain Warren," answered the youth, pale but firm.

He folded his arms as he spoke, and stood with an unflinching air, although a close observer might have noticed a slight tremor of the limbs.

"Curses upon you!" howled a robber, advancing and pressing the point of his knife against the youth's heart.

"Away with him!" shouted another of the robbers. He was thereupon hurried off to the hills.

"Now, then, if you have prayers to say, say them at once!" shouted the leader of the band. "We intend to hang you upon this tree—pointing to a tree beneath which the group had halted.

The lurid light of a torch was now throwing a wild glare upon the scene. The savage mountain air, leaning upon red and club, looked like demons holding revel by the light of infernal fires.

William was dragged to the foot of the tree the moment he had said a short prayer.

"I have a request to make," said the youth, as he took a small note book from his pocket and tore off a leaf, "which is that you will let me write a few words, and that, after my death, you will send the note to my vessel."

This idea seemed to rather please the robbers than otherwise.

"We intended to send word to your rascally officers of your execution," said the leader of the band. "Nay that is not all. I have more than a mere statement of my death to make."

"You let us read the note after you write it?"

"Yes, on condition that you will not read it until after my death."

They surrounded him, uttering fierce cries, and making wild gestures. One of them had, meanwhile, procured a rope, which he now secured about William's neck.

The other end of the rope was then thrown over a high branch of the tree, to be seized by several of the band.

"Haul!" shouted the leader.

The men hauled, and William swung from the tree.

At the same moment, a strange rumbling noise was heard, a meteor-like flash was seen.

"An earthquake!" shouted the outlaws, in chorus.

The mountain rocked and swayed. The outlaws rushed from the spot, to seek refuge in the lower land, where there was not so much danger.

The shocks of the earthquake lasted a full hour. Rocks were dislodged and went rolling along with the din of thunder, crashing through the shrubbery and into the gurgling waters far below, while many trees were torn up from their roots, to be sent trembling down.

In the morning Bernard, who, undisturbed by the shocks, had remained all night in his hut, rose to depart for the town. Ruin greeted his sight on every hand. Finally he caught sight of a paper fast to a twig. He seized it and perused its contents, which were as follows:

"DEAREST BERNARD—He who followed you to sea as William Marvel was none other than Selina Hathaway. She meant not what she said on that night when she refused you, for she really loved you as her life. She meant to let you know who she was before the end of the voyage, but an event has happened to prevent her. She has died to save you! Long before these lines reach you, her spirit shall have fled. The mountaineers will have hung her on one of their trees."

SELINA HATHAWAY.

Bernard's astonishment may be imagined. He rushed wildly up the mountain in search of the remains of his lost Selina. He found her, but not dead. The earthquake had uprooted the tree to which she was hung, time to save her life. The false beam was plucked from her face, the dark stain rubbed from her skin.

Bernard recognized now the well-known features of Selina.

The sequel may be guessed. They safely reached the schooner, and Bernard at once sailed for home, never again to doubt the love and faith of his well-loved Selina who soon became his bride.

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