

A DART FOR LIFE; OR, A WOMAN'S MISTAKE.

BY RUFUS HALE. FROM N. Y. LEADER. "Well, one thing is certain," she said, "I will not take him with me in the dingy, as you proposed, when I go to the reef to look for coral."

"Tom, the little cabin-boy," "Better take Warlock." But Mary shuddered, saying she would rather not go at all than have that fierce native in the boat with her.

The visit to the reef, which was about a mile distant, had been opposed by Mrs. Wilkins on the day before, and thinking she would enjoy the trip, the captain offered no objection to her taking the cabin-boy with her.

As the young skipper had some work in store for his men on this day, he could not afford to send any of them with his wife except Warlock, who, not understanding English, could be better spared than one of his shipmates.

Still adhering to her resolution not to take him, Mary finally set out with the cabin-boy in the dingy, which had been lowered for her, and, ere long, she reached the reef.

Through his glass, the captain had now and then watched his wife, as the boy, with his hatchet, knicked off pieces of coral for her, when, all at once, without the slightest warning, a "cat-squall" struck the sea.

A mist, which had been gathering round the hills of the island, had been blown about the reef, now hiding Mary and Tom from the watcher's gaze, as the ship tore along before the blast, with the men aloft taking in sail.

Like all squalls of the kind, this one was of brief duration, and, ten minutes after it burst upon the vessel, it had died away, leaving a light breeze by which the ship, closer hauled, was headed up toward the reef.

The captain anxiously watched for his wife, but seeing no sign of her, he turned pale. "Ay," remarked the old sailor who had acted as spokesman to the skipper the night before, "The bad luck has commenced. This comes of our having a Jonah aboard!"

He looked, as he spoke, at Warlock, whose keen, glittering eyes were turned toward the reef. "You're right, Ben," answered the sailor when the old fellow addressed. "You can make sure that the capt'n will never see his wife nor the boy again, both, as I take it, havin' been drowned in the squall."

the oarsmen, the boat fairly seemed to fly. The captain, while urging his crew, turned his gaze alternately upon his wife and the shark. Mrs. Wilkins still clinging to the keel of the overturned dingy, was much exhausted, and must soon let go her hold.

"We will be too late!" groaned the captain. "Pull, boys, pull!" Never before did oarsmen so exert themselves; but the boat was still fully fifty yards from the poor woman, when the shark, now near enough to her to prepare for seizing its victim, was seen to make the terrible rotary movement for diving, in order to snap at her submerged limbs.

Then Warlock sprang to his feet. With quick eye measuring the distance between him and the shark, he raised his barbed weapon aloft. As he would have to dart over the woman to strike the monster behind her, this seemed to all a perilous feat to perform, especially at so long a range.

To the captain, it looked as if the deadly dart was pointing straight at his wife's head, and he called out: "No, no, Warlock! You will strike her! Down, man, down with that iron!"

But the wild New Zealander either did not understand, or would not heed the order. His harpoon, hurled with wonderful force, whistled on its way, and almost grazing Mary's hair, passed clear through the white, unturned belly of the shark, as the latter turned over.

Keeping nearly its full length from the surface, the monster felt crawling back staining the water with its blood, and then, with the almost supernatural vitality and perseverance of its species, with the iron protruding from its form, and the life-tide still flowing from it, the creature endeavored to dive to seize the coveted human prey.

The water bubbled and foamed as the shark, impeded by its wound and by the iron, strove to reach its intended victim; and the captain's heart almost stood still with the dread that the effort would be successful.

This seemed the more likely, as Mrs. Wilkins, now unable to hold on longer, let go of the dingy's keel, and sank under the surface, and disappeared in the foaming vortex of water about the struggling shark.

"Save her! Save my wife!" shouted the captain. But none of the men to whom he spoke were willing to sacrifice their lives—for such they thought would be the result of their swimming to attempt a rescue under the very jaws of the fiercest of ocean monsters.

In spite of his injured leg, the skipper would doubtless have plunged overboard and perished in his crippled efforts to save his fair partner, had not the New Zealander gently restrained him and then dived headlong to the bow. Keeping his eyes open, as he swam under water, he soon beheld the captain's wife within a few yards of the shark, which, with ready jaws, was edging its way toward her.

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