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DARING ACHIEVEMENT.

From People's Home Journal.

CHAPTER I.

BY EMERSON BENNETT.

Grayson took up a position where he could safely watch the outlaws, and remained there through the night.

He knew when the last one went to sleep; but, even then, he did not feel safe to make a nearer inspection.

Just before daylight he drew further away, and with the coming of light found a small cavity among the rocks, in which he concealed himself, and from which he could still watch the mouth of the cave.

He did not know, but he believed, that the kidnapped girl was a prisoner inside, and he determined to watch for any chance to ascertain the truth.

He had no food with him; but in his adventurous life he had sometimes gone from one to three days with only water to quench his thirst, and he felt he could do even more than this for the being he so dearly loved.

That day the bandits remained lounging about till near nightfall, and Charles was almost in despair of getting any further knowledge of Lolu, when he saw what appeared to be a messenger arrive in haste, apparently with some exciting news, which caused a quick commotion among the men, who soon seized their arms and hurried away, leaving only one of their number on guard.

Our excited lover eagerly watched the mouth of the cave as long as he could see it, and then ventured forth and crept up to it.

He found this one man, in the act of starting a fire, bent down over some sticks, and he crept up behind him and dealt him a stunning blow.

Then, before the fellow could recover, he whipped out a strong cord which he carried with him, and both gagged and bound him securely.

This done, he cautiously entered the cave a few feet, listened in the deep darkness, and then boldly pronounced the name:

"Lolu Brandon?"

"Oh, whose voice is that?" was the tremulous response, that caused the heart of her lover to beat tumultuously.

"Mine, Lolu—Charles Grayson's—and God be praised, I have found you!"

"Oh, God be praised!" was her gasping response.

He could not see her yet; but he struck a match and found her, with manacles on her wrists and chained to a rock; though she could stand up, walk a few steps, and lie down upon some straw, not unlike a dog in his kennel.

Then he struck another match and found and lighted another lamp, by which he saw that the cave ran far back in gloom, and was strewed with skins, wrap-up garments, and many articles of plunder.

Not to be lost no time in curiosity for he feared the bandits might return at any moment, and then it found here his own life would be sacrificed, whatever might become of her he came to save.

On a rude bench, he fortunately discovered a hammer and a pair of nippers and catching up these he flew to Lolu and eagerly set to work to free her.

In spite of all he could do, the chains and handcuffs resisted his force for a quarter of an hour, during which time great beads of perspiration rolled down his pallid, anguished face.

"Hark!" gasped the trembling maiden. "Oh, Father of Mercies, I hear the robbers coming back! Fly, Charles—fly, while you may!"

"And leave you darling?"

"If you cannot save me, save yourself, for God's sake! Or kill me, if you will, and save yourself!"

"You must come with me, dear Lolu, for I cannot live without you!"

He made a desperate wrench at the irons, and they snapped at last.

"Thank God!" came from both together.

"Come, love!" he said, seizing her hand.

He dashed out the light, and both together hurried from the cave.

The bandits were returning, and their voices were sounding up from down the gorge.

Our lovers took an opposite course, and breathlessly worked their way up the acclivity.

Soon they heard a low cry of surprise, followed by fierce words of anger.

"They have discovered your loss, darling, and may seek to follow us!" said Charles to Lolu. "Now, then, we must escape or die! Thank God for the night and darkness!"

They hurried up the hill, and then he laid a straight course for Eagle Pass, which they reached a little after midnight.

When Charles had placed Lolu in the arms of her overjoyed father, and mother, he claimed his reward.

"By your solemn promise, Mr. Brandon, Lolu is now mine, for I alone have restored her to your arms."

"Where did you get the ransom, my son, to be in advance of Hiram Stockwell, who to night set off with his gold to redeem her?"

"My own strong arm did it" was the proud reply. "I went alone to the lion's den and set her free. She owes her rescue to my devotion and not to paltry gold!"

When everything was made clear to the astonished father, he embraced Charles Grayson, declared he was worthy of his daughter, and that he should always be proud to call him son.

When the news of the young man's daring achievement spread through the village, the citizens gave him an ovation and crowned him for a hero.

Hiram Stockwell deposited his gold on Eagle Peak, where the bandits took it, and then told him, with mocking laughter and jeers, that the girl was free.

So he lost his money and his bride, and a large number laughed over the affair when they danced at the gay wedding of the true lovers.

THE END.

GUY HILLIARD'S SKELETON.

From People's Home Journal.

CHAPTER I.

BY EMMA GARDNER JONES.

Violet Heath was an only daughter, and a belle. Pretty, highly accomplished and very sprightly withal, she reigned supreme in Readsville the pleasant little country town where her father resided, queen of fashion, as well as queen of hearts. All the young

men admired her; and, as a natural consequence, all the female population envied and strove to imitate her. If she wore a blue hat, with a white feather, every girl in Readsville must have the same thing without regard to age or complexion. If she robed herself in white, white at once became the prevailing color. Still, it so turned out that, after all their trouble, the Readsville girls never succeeded in looking like Violet; she was purely original, with an air and style of her own that it was just impossible to imitate. Every one admitted that she was beautiful, yet it was a difficult matter to determine what constituted her chief charm. At one time, all the feminine critics declared it to be the effect produced by a blue watered silk; but just when this belief began to be credited, out sprang Violet in a corn colored moire antique, looking fairer than ever before. Whether her chief charm consisted in her fair, dimpled face, or deep blue eyes, looking like half-blown forget-me-nots bathed in dew; or in her curling, crinkling, golden tresses, or mischievous, rosy mouth; or in her half-tender, half-taunting air and manner, no one could say; but it was generally agreed upon that she was quite a beauty.

Violet was uniformly kind to her many suitors, making heads, deists, when necessary, so sweetly that the rejected ones felt almost as much favored as the accepted. And when Guy Hilliard came to take charge of the village school, although he was a young man of fine appearance and excellent character, it was a long while before the little village beauty vouchsafed to him the least sign of preference. But perseverance and patience, as they generally do, succeeded at last; and, in due course of time, one tender, moonlit eve, under a honey-suckle arbor, in the old squire's garden, the young man plead his cause in true lover-like fashion, and was transported into the third heaven of bliss by being accepted. The old squire made no objections; and, after a proper lapse of time, the young couple were united amid bewildering profusion of flowers and white flowers; and the poor, love-torn swains of Readsville were left to console themselves as they could.

Everybody was surprised to see what a loving, exemplary wife Violet made. She had been so gay as a girl, so full of mischief, so petted and flattered, that some of the Readsville wise-acres shook their heads and hinted that Guy Hilliard might repent his bargain; but, on the contrary, he rejoiced over it anew every day, regarding it as the best transaction of his life.

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