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Sold From Coast to Coast

The Eastern CAP Canada's National Headpiece

A QUEEN UNCROWNED

THE STORY IN THE LONE INN.

CHAPTER XIV.

"And I know she refused you, too—you and your coronet, Captain Disbrow, as she has many a bet—another man. Oh, our Jack's not to be had for a word, I can tell you! The man that gets her must do something more than pay her compliments, or give her flowers, or say sweet things by moonlight."

"What must he do? Take lance and shield, and ride forth, booted and spurred, like a second Don Quixote, in search of adventures, conquer a fiery dragon, or rescue some hapless prince from the enchanted castle of some gigantic ogre?" said Disbrow, between anger and sarcasm.

"Yes, sir—ex!" exclaimed Frank, defiantly. "If such things were to be done now, the man that would lay claim to her pretty little hand would have to prove his knighthood before he would kneel at her footstool. As it is, the man that comes after her will have to mind his P's and Q's before he gets her; for Jack De Vere is no common milk-and-water young lady, but worth half the women in the world—queens and princesses included—rolled into one."

"That is all, doubtless, very true," said Disbrow, with a curling lip; "but I fancy I know some one who—"

He paused abruptly, and bit his lip.

"Oh, you may go on. I know who you mean. You think she's in love with Jacinto—don't you?" said Frank, sarcastically.

"Really, Master Frank, you seem in a catching mood this morning," said Disbrow, facing around and fixing his dark eyes full upon him. "Supposing we drop this subject. Our friend, Miss Jacquetta, might not thank either of us for so free a use of her name."

Frank blushed at the rebuke, which he could not help feeling he deserved, and in a spirit of retaliation began humming: "A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go," as they left the room.

Disbrow smiled as he heard him, and letting his hand fall on his shoulder, said, cordially:

"Come, Master Frank, it is not worth while for you and I to dis-

agree, as this is the last morning I will ever trouble you. We must part friends, my dear boy."

"That we shall, Cousin Alfred!" exclaimed Frank, shaking earnestly the proffered hand; "and I do like you first-rate, and I wish you had got Jack. Now, then!"

"Thank you! but your wish comes rather too late; I am not likely to win such a prize in Love's lottery. Tell her, Frank," he said, with a look of strange earnestness in his dark, handsome eyes, "to forget all I may have said to offend her; and tell her that my best wishes go with her and whoever may be so fortunate as to win the heart and hand she refused me. Tell her this, Frank, my dear fellow, since I am not destined to see her again."

Frank wrung his hand silently, for his voice at that moment was not altogether under his command.

Both entered the breakfast parlor together, where Augusta, Jacinto, and Mr. De Vere sat waiting them.

Augusta sat the same figure of stone that she always was of late, but the change the past few days had wrought in her never struck Disbrow so forcibly as it did this morning. She had lost flesh and life, and color, she was the shadow of her former self. Her tall, stately form was wasted and thin, her cheeks hollow, her lofty brow deathlike in its blue-veined pallor; her lips were white; and her hands so pale and wasted that they looked almost transparent. The old story of the vampire sucking the lifeblood drop by drop, seemed realized in her case! and oh! the unspeakable depth of desolation and despair in those great, heavy, midnight eyes. And something worse than desolation and despair was in that haggard face, now—remorse, undying, devouring remorse—the worm that never sleeps, seemed gnawing her heart—had set his white, fearful seal on that corpse-like face.

She lifted her eyes slowly, as they entered; and meeting his gaze, so full of pity and compassion, the old haughty pride of the De Veres, that even her night of anguish could not

quench, sent a momentary fire leaping to her eyes, and a lefty look to the white face that repelled and cast off fiercely all commiseration.

Mr. De Vere put down the book he was reading, and came forward to greet him; and Jacinto, who sat caressing a beautiful little water spaniel—a pet of Jacquetta's—glanced up and met a look full of angry jealousy from the young Englishman's dark eyes that made him drop his own and flush to the temples.

Mr. De Vere apologized in a few words for Jacquetta's absence, and they all gathered around the breakfast table. The meal passed almost in silence, and sadly enough, too; for all were thinking it was the last the young guardsman would partake of beneath that roof; and until that moment they had not known how he had endeared himself to them. There would be a dreary gap when his tall, gallant form, and say, handsome young face was gone, that would not be easily filled in the family circle. Had Jacquetta been there, the oppressive silence would soon have been broken; but she was "over the hills and far away," long before this, and doubtless—as Disbrow thought—forgetful of his very existence.

"Which way do you go?" inquired Mr. De Vere, at length—making an effort at something like conversation.

"I will call at the Mermaid, and take passage from there in some schooner, as I wish to take sketches of the scenery as I go along, which, I understand, is very fine along the Hudson."

"None better," said Mr. De Vere. "I have sailed down the Rhine, as the song has it, but I have never seen anything to surpass this new country scenery. You ought to see these American forests in autumn, decked in their Joseph's coat of many colors. You would never forget it. It goes ahead of Old England completely in that point."

"I have always understood it was very fine," said Disbrow; "but, unhappily, I will not be able to see it. I hope to be shooting in Fontelle woods before that."

The door opened as he spoke, and a servant appeared with a startled face.

"Well, Reynolds?" said Mr. De Vere, looking up.

"Ere ere again, sir!" said Reynolds, excitedly, "and she won't go away, all we can do. She says she will see you, in spite of us all!"

"Who are you talking about—who is she? Don't be so incoherent, Reynolds."

"It's old Mother Howlet, sir, if you please—and there's a man along with her—and she won't go away."

Augusta uttered a faint exclamation, and sank back in her chair.

Mr. De Vere arose, his face flushed with anger.

"Mother Howlet! How dare she come here! Order her away, Reynolds, and say I will not see her."

"We have, sir, but she won't go. The man along with her has got a pistol, and he says he will shoot the first of us that tries to keep them out."

"Who is the fellow?"

"Don't know, sir. He's a short, thick-set man, with red hair and whiskers, and a savage face."

"Captain Nick Tempest," simultaneously exclaimed Jacinto, Disbrow, and Frank.

"The fellow who tried to shoot you that evening Jacinto was wounded?" asked Mr. De Vere.

"The same."

"Really," said Mr. De Vere, angrily, "Fontelle seems to be a rendezvous for desperadoes of late. Come, Reynolds, I will go with you to this worthy pair, and we will see if they cannot be got rid of."

"You had better be careful, my dear sir," said Disbrow, anxiously. "This Captain Tempest is a most sanguinary villain, and capable of any crime, I believe."

"Then he will find that Fontelle is not in the habit of sheltering sanguinary villains, nor its master of being bullied into listening to what they have to say."

And, preceded by Reynolds, Mr. De Vere left the room.

"What the dickens can bring those two here?" exclaimed the astonished Frank.

"That is a question I cannot take it upon myself to answer," said Disbrow; "for no good, you may safely swear. They must have the audacity of the old demon himself to come here. Are you ill, Miss Augusta? You look alarmed."

(To be continued.)

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