



## Aubrey's Revenge.

### CHAPTER VI.

There was a little lifeboat suspended from the parapet above, which Kelpie had lowered more than once in fine weather, but to attempt such a task on a night like this was to throw away one's life.

But this little heroine did not stop to think of danger, but went flying up the narrow stairs, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes glowing like stars. The gale had subsided in a measure but the sea was still running high, and the clamor of the elements was terrible to hear.

Nevertheless, Kelpie did not hesitate an instant. Out she went, her head bare, her black hair streaming about her shoulders, and attempted the reckless task. How she accomplished it nobody ever knew, but she succeeded in lowering the little boat, and, after many ineffectual efforts in gaining the Phantom Rock just as a great wave swept over its sharp summit.

But the man who, spent, breathless, wounded, had been clinging to the rugged rock for three endless hours did not release his hold until Kelpie's voice sounded in his ears.

"Tom, is it you? I've come to save you. Don't give up!"

Give up! The strength of a giant thrilled through Tom's splendid muscles, and his sluggish blood leaped like rills of fire at the sound of the girl's voice. He forgot that he was covered with bruises from being battered against the cruel rocks; he forgot that he had clung there, discouraged and dying, crying out like a woman for help; he forgot everything only that the girl he adored had come to his rescue, and that her precious life was in danger.

"Give me the oars, Kelpie!" he cried, in a voice like a bugler, "and let me save you. Ah, heavens! what if your precious life were lost for my sake!"

Before the astonished girl could realize what was happening, or even get her breath, Tom Holland was in the boat, with the oars in his strong hands, and they were beating their way back through the riotous waves to New Castle Light.

It was a hard pull, but they made it. More than once the little boat went down under the seething foam, but she came up again like a cork; more than once Tom Holland clasped the girl who had risked her life for his in his shattered arms, determined that in death they should not be separated; but in the end, struggling, suffering, almost dying, he got the little boat safely back to the old tower.

"Safe at last," he said, as they set foot on the stone floor.

"Now, little woman," he added, with his old smile and the tender light in his brown eyes that had beamed for her alone through all the happy years of Kelpie's happy girlhood, "now, little woman, you must let me take you upstairs. You look as white as a poor little ghost."

His right arm had been shattered by his fall over the parapet; he was dizzy and sick with pain, but he took the spent and pasting girl in his arms and carrying her up to her grandfather's room, put her down on the

old leather lounge as tenderly as if she were an infant.

"Thank God you are safe, little woman!" he said, in a gasping whisper. Then, all in a moment his strength failed him, his iron will gave way, and he sank down in an unconscious heap at Kelpie's feet.

"Why, Tom, why, my poor, dear Tom, you should have let me row the boat!" she cried, bending over him. "You were not strong enough, after all you've suffered. Good Heaven! there's blood on your sleeve, and, oh, how pale you are! Tom, dear Tom, can't you speak to me? Merciful Heaven! I believe he's dead!"

The terrified girl had no time to say another word, or even to raise the poor fellow's head from the cold stone floor, for at that moment the relief bell began to ring a furious peal. Somebody in the watch room was pressing the electric button.

### CHAPTER VII.

Kelpie was kneeling beside the unconscious man, who lay prostrate upon the stone floor, but as the familiar sound of the relief bell fell on her ear, she sprang to her feet.

"Somebody's pressing the button in the watch room!" she exclaimed. "It must be Tulliver. He has come to his senses and will go up and put out the light."

"Poor Tom, it seems too bad to leave you lying here," she added, glancing down at the assistant keeper's white face, "but I must go. The light shan't be put out if I can help it."

With the speed of a swallow she darted out of the room and up the iron stairs.

The parrot followed her, hopping from step to step, and croaking dimly.

The bell had ceased ringing by the time Kelpie had reached the watch room; the pillows and blankets were scattered about at the foot of the stairs, and Tulliver was nowhere to be seen.

As the girl glanced about her inquiringly, a wild peal of exultant laughter came from overhead.

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! You're a clever little girl, my pretty little Kelpie, but you're no match for your humble servant, after all. I told you I'd put the light out unless you promised to marry me, and I'm bound to keep my word."

Kelpie looked upward and beheld her half-crazed lover standing on the lantern deck, the revolver, which, in her terror and excitement, she had left lying on the desk, clutched in his hand, and an expression of diabolical cunning on his dark face.

There are few girls who would not, in the face of such an emergency, have given up in despair and abandoned all thought of keeping the light from being extinguished. But Kelpie was one of a thousand, and, knowing what pride her grandfather took in his fine record as a light keeper, she had made up her mind to keep the light burning during his absence at all risks. She climbed the stairway with hurried steps, shouting, in a ringing voice, as she went up:

"Don't dare to tamper with that light, Tulliver. It will be the worse for you if you do."

"Ha! ha! ha! The worse for me, will it? I'd like to know who'll make it worse. You might have made that threat a while ago, when you had the six-shooter in your hand, but it's my turn now, d'ye see? Ha! who'll dare to come up here and prevent me from putting out the light. I'd like to know?"

"I will," answered Kelpie fearlessly, and up she went, three green parrot hopping after her.

Tulliver watched her with glitter-

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ing eyes, clutching the revolver in his right hand.

"You're a plucky little woman, by jinks!" he said, as she reached the topmost step. "Well, what are you going to do next?"

"Give me that revolver, Tulliver!" said Kelpie, confronting him. "Give it to me instantly, do you hear?"

The man broke forth into a peal of boisterous laughter and turned toward the great golden light.

"Wait till I put out the light," he answered.

Kelpie gained the lantern deck with an agile spring, and, as the determined man turned to execute his purpose, she threw her whole weight upon his wounded shoulder and pushed him backward. The sudden wrench gave him such acute pain that he sank to his knees with a hoarse cry, letting the revolver fall from his grasp.

Kelpie secured it in a twinkling and turned the glittering muzzle upon the desperate fellow as he struggled to his feet.

"Stand back!" she commanded. "Don't dare to come one step nearer, Tulliver. I'll fire if you do."

"Blaze away as soon as you please," he said, but his voice was hoarse with

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pain, and he swayed uncertainly from side to side.

It was quite evident that both strength and courage were failing him.

The quick-witted girl perceived her advantage and followed it up without an instant's delay.

"Stand back!" she repeated, advancing upon Tulliver with the revolver in her hand. "Stand back! I'll shoot you if you don't!"

But instead of retreating, the madman, mustering all his strength for a final effort, sprang upon her with the savage ferocity of a wild beast, and, although his wounded arm was almost powerless, he succeeded in wresting the revolver from her hand.

"Ho! ho!" he laughed exultantly. "Who'll shoot now? I've got the pistol, my dear, but I don't intend to use it. I'm going to throw it away."

Whereupon, before the half-dazed girl could lift a finger to prevent it, he rushed to the railing and threw the revolver far out into the sea.

"We won't pop away at each other," he said, with a reckless laugh. "I know of a better way. Come along, sweetheart. If you won't promise to marry me, we'll die together, which pleases me almost as well. Come along, my dear."

Seizing the terrified girl around the waist with a sudden strength born of insanity, he whirled her up and down and around and around in a mad waltz until her breath was quite gone.

"Our last waltz, sweetheart," he said, coming to a sudden standstill. "Suppose we try a quick-step next, out on the sea yonder? Won't it be great fun to have all those leaping whitecaps for our partners?"

His eyes glittered and a peal of horrible laughter broke from his lips as he seized the terrified girl and forced her out to the extreme end of the deck.

Kelpie struggled with all her might, but the man's arms closed about her like iron, and, lifting her up bodily, he made a wild leap toward the outside rail.

A coil of rope used in lowering the boats had been blown into a tangle by the fierce gale, and the door of a small storeroom in which the apparatus for keeping the lamps in order was stored stood open.

As Tulliver made his mad leap toward the rail with Kelpie, almost in a fainting condition, in his arms, by some mischance—or, shall we say, Providence—his foot caught in the tangled rope; he stumbled, slipped on the foam-washed deck, and, losing his hold on his victim, fell headlong through the open door and down a short flight of steps leading to the room below.

Kelpie was thrown with considerable force against the railing, but, impelled by a swift inspiration, she struggled to her feet, and, rushing to the door of the storeroom, shut it with a resounding clang and turned the iron key in the lock.

When Tulliver found himself a prisoner in the dark little closet, his rage knew no bounds. He threw himself against the door with desperate force, and cursed and entreated by turns.

"Let me out, for pity's sake! I'm smothering to death in this black hole. Kelpie, do you hear? Confound you! Unlock the door and let me out. I won't put out the light—I swear I won't, girlie, and I'll never ask you to marry me again. Let me out, Kelpie—that's a good girl. Come on, now! Quick! I've acted like a brute, and I can't expect you to forgive me, but you won't leave me to die in here like a rat in a hole. Open the door and let me out, Kelpie."

Kelpie stood by and listened with quivering lips and swift-coming tears. She had never trusted or cared for Tulliver, but they had been daily companions for a long time, and he had done her many a kind service.

"It seemed dreadful to keep the poor fellow down there," she said to herself, "but what can I do? There's no trusting Tulliver; his promises sound fair enough, but if I let him out he'll be sure to put out the light, and I can't risk having a blot on poor daddy's record. It would break his heart."

"No, Tulliver," she added, raising her voice. "I'm sorry, but I think I'd better keep you a prisoner till morning."

(To be continued.)

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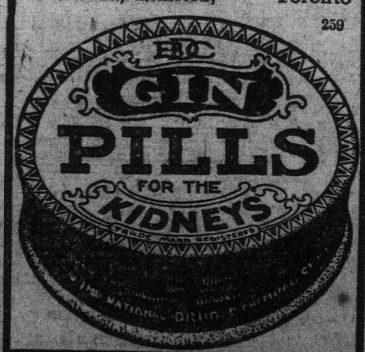
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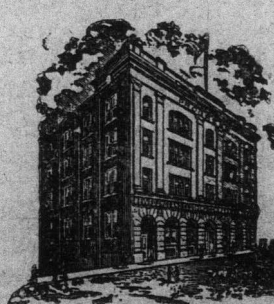
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