

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "NIOBE"

'Tis something in a sordid age, When nations, dealing with each other, Lake Jews at bargains more engage Than as a brother with a brother, To still record a noble deed, Wrought by a soul of truth and honor, Who, in an alien country's need, Resents an insult put upon her.

Defenceless the "Virginus" lay, A hopeless prize in Cull'an waters, While o'er that tranquil azure bay The musket volley told of slaughters; Rife in the ranks of men in chains, By brutal hands in horrid manner, And, trampled under bloody stains, And mocked at, lay our starry banner.

"Look that no further crime appears, Ye murderers without love or pity, Or round about your craven ears I'll knock the fragments of your city! If poor Columbia spares no ship When slaughter-stained her flag is reel- ing Albion can lend her lion's grip For liberty and human feeling!" But four guns had the "Niobe," But skulked beneath her frowning lee The brutes, like whelps in pain; And laughed at their repinings, At Butcher Buriel's whinnings; Sir Lambton Loraine.

Forget we not his name to raise, Although the war cloud hath departed, But sound afar his meed of praise From a fair nation, grateful-hearted; Sound it afar o'er land and wave, From frozen peaks and Arctic highlands To where the corsair billows rave On silver shores of tropic-islands! All hail, then, to the "Niobe," The British good ship "Niobe," That shielded us from Spain! Hail to the crew that manned her, Hail to her brave commander, Sir Lambton Loraine! -New York Weekly.

ELECT STORY.

Valentine's Day.

NOWHERE under the sun did the wind make such a noise blowing as at Harvest Hill; though what it was ever given that title for is hard to imagine. The few acres of land dignified by this name were apparently untillable, and gave the impression of never having been cultivated. Oh! how the winds moaned and shrieked among the bare branches; and how mercilessly it beat against the window-panes; and what ghastly shadows the moonlight brought out; and what a weird, forlorn, abandoned old place it was altogether!

In a room, low and smoky, with books lining the shelves around the walls, and books piled up on the table, and thrown helters-skelter all over the floor, before a blazing, crackling fire, sat a man, deeply buried in thought.

His face was stern and careworn; his eyes, large, dark and luminous, with a far-away look in their depths, showing plainly that he had very little in common with the noisy, bustling world around him.

Thirteen years! he muttered. Thirteen years of isolation, of exile, self imposed, and doubly hard to bear, because so near the scene of all my misery. It's a cold morning, Phebe, he continued, aloud, to an intelligent, tidy old servant, who entered the room with an armful of wood.

It's that, indeed, Mr. Charles, she answered; the coldest and loneliest day that ever dawned on Harvest Hill. The loneliest. Phebe! repeated the gentleman. Why that?

And isn't it just about the time, Mr. Charles, that, thirteen years ago, the trouble came to you, that made it necessary to leave our friends and acquaintances, and come to the miserable, out-of-the-way, and so far as we can judge by the looks, God-forsaken hole, that somebody was so tasty as to name Harvest Hill? I can stand it very well when the sun shines; but the noise of the wind and the sleet together almost drives me out of my senses.

Phebe, said the man, drawing his chair nearer to the kneeling figure, and laying his hand on her, shoulder, I have been a brute to allow you to stay and wait upon me all these years. You must go back to your friend, I think I have stood this kind of torment long enough; so we'll just come to the conclusion to break up housekeeping, dissolve partnership, and I will go abroad. But, Phebe, my own conscience assures me that, notwithstanding my selfish desire to have one friend by my side, I have repeatedly used every means I could to induce you to leave me.

You think, then, you will cross the ocean? said Phebe, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron. This pesky smoke! she muttered, in an irritated voice, aside, as the tears would fall in spite of all her efforts to restrain them. I believe it'll be the means of choking me to death some of these days. I suppose, Mr. Charles, the ship that takes you over there will be big enough to take me, too. I didn't hold you in my arms when you was a blessed baby, and live with you all these years, to be set afloat now. It's a pretty fist you'd make without Phebe, ain't it, though?

But, look here, my dear old nurse—There ain't no lous about it, interrupted the woman. I've neither chick nor child, father nor mother, sister nor brother—to get it down to a fine point, you are about all I have got in this world, Mr. Charles; and, unless you run away from me, Phebe will stick till one or t'other is invited to walk up stairs. Goodness knows, I hope my turn will come first; for, what I should ever do without you is more than I can tell. Lord! Mr. Charles, how that wind does groan, though!

Yes, said her companion, it's a wild, tempestuous day, and I don't wonder it makes you lonesome, Phebe. Do you know that it will be thirteen years to-morrow since you and I came to this bleak old place?

Ah! right well! was the quick answer. And you might as well have been buried, for all the world knows about you all these long years. Yes to-morrow will be St. Valentine's day, she added softly.

Why do you mention it? he asked, while his face grew dark and red. To think that any woman could have duped me as she did, and then to have perpetrated herself so! You never knew what it was all about, did you, Phebe?

No, answered Phebe, I didn't, Mr. Charles; but I've always been certain that she wasn't to blame. Phebe, you don't know what you are talking about! interrupted her companion, angrily.

Mebbe I don't, she answered; but I've just as good a right to my opinion as the rest of the world, I guess.

Phebe, in the three years we were engaged, during which time I was only waiting for her consent to our marriage she was constantly writing love-letters to another man; and this, she sent to him thirteen years ago to-morrow, drawing from a small ivory case in his breast pocket a carefully folded piece of paper which I have kept here ever since, to sustain me in my purpose whenever I feel myself growing irresolute. This is the valentine she sent him. Ah! my friend, this is no ordinary valentine. There is no foolish sentimentality about this—no talk of hearts and doves and Cupid's darts. But do you know this hair, Phebe—say, do you know this hair? and Charles Sheridan passed over the piece of paper, containing a lock of hair as bright as burnished gold. Oh! I wish the sun were only shining that I might show you how it lights up. You'd know it then well enough. Give it me, Phebe, and let me hide it away again. The sight of it makes a fool of me, as Phebe, evidently in a brown study, carefully examined it.

Let's see, she answered, thoughtfully, holding the golden lock aloft. It's thirteen years to-morrow, you say, since the bonnie Ellen Archer sent this lock of hair to a man she'd no business to; and you have been lugging it round in your pocket ever since?

I have told you what I kept it for, Phebe, answered Mr. Sheridan.

Is her own name signed to that valentine? inquired Phebe.

Her own name, by her own hand—that I can stake my life on.

What did she say when you accused her of it?

She called upon her God to witness that she never wrote a line to Geoffrey Miller in her life.

And you believed that she was lying? I had proof positive—testimony irrefutable—against her in my possession at that moment.

Well, I don't know anything about how much proof you had agin her; but this much I do know—that for the last thirteen years you have been carrying round another woman's hair in your pocket, and that Ellen Archer told the truth when she said she never wrote a word to that man in her life, said Phebe, with decided emphasis. I've always known there was a mistake somewhere, and that my boy, Charles Sheridan, would live to find it out; but I never thought that he could a' gone off half cracked in this kind of a style. I wonder what's the reason that all these long years you've been let to keep your mouth shut on the subject?

Had I held to my determination to have kept it closed forever, I should have been the gainer, said Mr. Sheridan rising, and walking excitedly up and down the apartment. You haven't the least idea what you are talking about, Phebe!

To be sure, it may be after the ones most interested are straightened out themselves; but, so far as I've seen, every body has to be managed their own way—that is to say, according to what's best for 'em; and it's altogether likely that the Lord concluded solitude was the best thing for you, and I shouldn't be surprised if he was about right. I've noticed that he pretty generally is. You've done some studying, and writ some good books that you'd never a' done if you hadn't been pushed to it by having everything pushed away from you that you wanted.

Phebe, you are enough to drive a man mad! exclaimed her companion. I tell you that I know—that I have the proofs. I tell you Geoffrey Miller gave me a full account of—of—her conduct, showed me the letters, and I saw him admitted to her house the evening before St. Valentine's day, thirteen years to-night! Phebe, what do you take me for—a fool?

A comical smile flitted across Phebe's face, as she calmly surveyed the gentleman by her side.

Well, now, said she, that's hardly a fair question. You know that I ain't any to high an opinion of men generally; but I must confess that the man who would believe what another man is mean enough to tell him about any woman under the sun—to say nothing about the woman he is calkerlating to marry—has got something lacking in his constitution that very likely would need as much as thirteen years to manufacture. That's what I think about your case, Mr. Charles. But I shan't get my dishes washed to-day, if I don't hurry up. And Phebe gave the fire another poke, threw on a couple more logs, and left the occupant of the library to his own r-flections.

Suppose, he murmured, suppose Phebe should be right? But how weak I am to allow an ignorant woman to unsettle me. I know! and with these words he drew the library table towards him, and commenced the work of the day.

There must have been a very uncomfortable sensation about the region of the breast pocket, for, after several ineffectual attempts to obtain relief by placing his hand there, he suddenly drew out the ivory case containing the lock of hair, and consigned it to the depths of the table drawer. When dinner time came Mr. Sheridan walked out to his excellent-cooked meal, to find there only William, the boy who waited upon Phebe.

Where's Phebe? was the gentleman's first question. Gone to town, sir, wa—the immediate answer. Sure John harnessed up, and they rode off about an hour ago in a deuce of a hurry.

Did she tell you when she would return? was the next query. Return, it is, sir? She told me to tell the master, when he sat down to his dinner, that's she be back St. Valentine's day, if the Lord spared her life, and sue that's to-morrow, sir.

Charles Sheridan's appetite wasn't much to speak of that day. There was a queer something in his throat that made it impossible for him to swallow. What could have possessed Phebe to take her self off in this unaccountable manner? her first visit to the city since they had left it, thirteen years ago? Had it any connection with their conversation of the morning?

There was nothing to do but wait, and this the gentleman did with an exceedingly bad grace. He had kept very still for thirteen long years. What had he done, he asked himself to be harassed in such a style after burying his dead? Why might he not go on with his life-work in his own way?

I want to see Miss Ellen Archer," said Phebe to the servant, who stood looking at her in amazement, as, with dragged skirts, and limp looking water-proof, she presented herself at an aristocratic residence.

"Who shall I say wants to see her, ma'am? inquired he. Phebe Hunt, said she, shortly. She'll know who it is.

A moment or two after, a sweet-faced, lovely woman, apparently about thirty years of age, met Phebe with outstretched hands.

O Phebe! she said, softly, what news do you bring me, after all these years? No one is dead, I hope?

I bring you news, Miss Archer, that there is a fool living up at Harvest Hill—a natural born fool, and I've come (you see, I never knew what the thing meant till to-day—I've kept the run of you pretty well, though, and was glad to see you didn't get married, to see if there wasn't some way of clearing up things.

I have had a way for eleven long years, Phebe, sobbed the lady; but I did not know whether Charles Sheridan was alive or dead, in this country or another, married or single, so what could I do? Geoffrey Miller died two years after you went away, and on his death bed confessed the wrong he had done me. I have it all in his own hand-writing sworn to before witnesses.

And whose hair was that? inquired Phebe.

His sister's in California. I tell you what to do. Miss Archer, said Phebe, her honest eyes darkling with delight. Send that document to Mr. Charles for his valentine to-morrow.

So it was arranged, and on the 14th of February at twelve o'clock precisely, Phebe Hunt walked into the Harvest Hill mansion.

You look as if you'd missed me," was her first greeting to (the very pale face that met her on the threshold.

Missed you, Phebe? How came you to go away without speaking to me about it? You have worried me exceedingly.

Have I? said Phebe, with a laugh, throwing her wrappings on the nearest chair. And now, Mr. Charles Sheridan I've got a valentine for you; and without more ado, she handed him the sealed package.

That envelope was opened by trembling fingers, with a face as blanched as the face of the dead.

Great God! he exclaimed, as his quick eye took in the whole story. Can there be any forgiveness for me in this world?

Yes, replied Phebe, if you'll behave your-self like a sensible man, and happiness, too. Fix up, now, and take the other horses, and start for town, and present her with her valentine as soon as you can. After waiting thirteen years, wouldn't be at all surprising if the lady was in a little of a hurry.

And to you, Phebe, I am indebted for all this? exclaimed the gentleman, who would have gone on in the same strain had he not been interrupted by that practical woman with—

Save all that kind of balderdash for her. She'll relish it, or my name's not Phebe Hunt. If everything's all right, telegraph me, and I'll put an end to this shanty, and come to town.

Two days after Phebe received the following: "I'm a happy man once more. I have taken a furnished house in— street. Sha'l be married next Tuesday, Hurry here.

Men are all fools! cried Phebe, with a shrug of her fat shoulders. Take my advice now—this to the furniture—if you ever get into a scrape, tell a woman, and if she can't haul you out, you're stuck for life.

Don't you think husband, that you are apt to believe everything you hear? No madam, not when you talk.

NOTICES.

THE STAR

-AND-

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