

# Literature.

## NAUGHTY ALICE.

The old days of smuggling went out with Protection, and the once capital of fence had diminished into one of comparatively little importance.

But it was not so in our grandfathers' days, and in many a sea-coast ale-house, and by many a farmhouse's side, tales are told of deadly encounters, daring deeds, and crafty schemes in which the old Free-traders, as they were called, and the Custom-house officers, were the chief actors.

To one of these old stories we now in our readers. To begin with, the time was one when secession was had closed against us the Continental markets making foreign goods exceedingly rare and costly in this country, and it was one of these smuggling was "felony" without benefit of clergy. The police was the Hampshire coast, nearly midway between Southampton and Christ Church, a very quiet one, well known to the runners of illicit cargoes.

"What! what!" said a low voice through the sweet-briar hedge which inclosed a neat white cottage on the confines of the New Forest, as a fair girl with a basket on her arm came tripping along the road which led to the village. "What! Alice! John Barker came ashore last night. He has landed all his cargo, and he's going to sup with father to-night to settle his accounts, and to tell him how he can 'run' the brandy when the Sassy Sally comes in."

"Barker may sup where he pleases for me," said Alice, in an accent of coquettish pique that was more than half assumed, "and I beg, Mary, that you will not mention my name to him."

"Pooh! nonsense," laughed Mary, "why, Barker has been all at one and a pair of ears for somebody or other (you know best who it is), and I have got them to take care of him, and must not be made to long against him for dancing with Mary Davis. If Barker loved me—"

"I dare say he does," retorted Alice; "I believe I'll love all the girls in the village in turn, from Miss Wilnot, at the great house, to humpbacked Sven, the knife-grinder's daughter, not to mention all the sweethearts he may have got over the sea."

"Now you know you don't believe one word of what you're saying!" exclaimed Mary.

"Not you know you don't, Alice!" said a subdued but many voice; and the angry beauty started, and blushed, and smiled, and frowned, and all at once she was turned in the direction whence the sounds came, and saw John Barker.

He was a fine young fellow, with that peculiarly independent swagger and careless foppishness characteristic of the class of men to which he belonged; his bright and merry eyes, and his singularly fine teeth, gave an air of animation to his countenance, while his manly look and sun-burnt brow completed the picture of a very good specimen of the half-breed, half-marine breed.

The two girls looked for a moment confused and flustered, but Alice instantly resumed her pretty pout, and Mary's bluish gave way to a smile as she glanced at her companion.

"And so you are going to send me on a cruise through the village—oh, Alice!" said the intruder, "and part of the time in an ill-built craft that would disgrace a Jack-Frenchman? Well, well! may I say I've taken in tow, why, as sure as my name's Jack—and I think you won't dispute that—I wouldn't trust a cargo in any one of them, though I knew I was sure to run it the instant I got into port, without one grip from the sharks. No, give me a bit of British oak and I'll stand by to the last; but I wouldn't venture my neck in a leaky old tub that was full of tea and brandy, and I was made her skipper and owner the instant I stepped aboard."

"Aye, it is all mighty fine talking," said the girl.

"Come, come," said the smuggler, "remember I've been afloat since I was at the fair with Mary Davis; and you were angry enough, in all conscience, when we parted, and I thought of your last look when we were in a squall off Cuxhaven, and—no you need not be in a fuss. I'm not going to swindle and hang me if I don't think the storm was the pleasantest of the two."

"I dare say you did," assented his sweetheart.

"Well, all I can say is, and I'll be hanged if it isn't the truth. I've never thought of Mary Davis since I went out of port, except once, when I was going ashore in the boat, and happened to catch sight as I passed under the bow of the craft, of the red nose on her figure-head; and I've called her the Mary Davis ever since."

"For shame, Barker!" laughed both the girls at once.

"But where are you bound now, Alice?" said the other, "and how close beside Mary?" You know I shall be off again as soon as the Fly-Night is revivified."

"Ah, yours is the life, John," said Alice, more kindly than she had yet spoken.

"Why, as to that—but come in, girls, come in. I want to show you part of my cargo," and taking Alice's basket from her arm, he half-dragged her into the cottage.

When they entered the large, square, stone-floored room, which served alike for kitchen and parlor, the light-hearted smuggler drew from a chest, which stood in one corner, the foreign shawl mentioned by Mary. With the usual thoughtless profusion of a sailor, Barker had looked rather to the coat than to the consistency of his present; and the blue eyes of the smiling Alice quivered with delight as he threw it over her shoulders.

"I wonder what Mary Davis will say to this?" burst instantaneously from her lips, and that the hand that shook out the reefs in it wouldn't set a rag of canvas for her, if he saw her standing before a fair wind under bare poles—that's what she'll say, if she speaks the truth."

"Poor Mary Davis! I'm sure her cheeks must burn," said Mary, simply.

"Do you know that I've got a new lover, John Barker?" smiled Alice, as she glanced at the smuggler. "Aye, and one that's steady and sober and well-to-do in the world; none of your fly-by-night salt water, here to-day and gone to-morrow people. Mary will tell you that I may be made a great lady of, if I've the will to be one."

"For the first time the bright eye of Barker clouded, but only for an instant; he soon assumed his good humor and laughingly demanded the name and calling of his new rival."

"Old John Jarvis, the Revenue officer!" exclaimed the girls simultaneously, with a loud burst of merriment, in which the young smuggler joined. "He has been at my father's three times this last week," continued Alice. "The first time he set down on the hair trunk under the clock on seven cases of cigars. The second time he took a place on my mother's easy chair, and leaned back against three pieces of Lyons silk and twelve lengths of Valenciennes lace, and the third time he stood talking about the oven door when it was full of brandy and tobacco."

Another burst of laughter terminated the speech. Smiling Barker became grave, very grave, as though some thought had struck him, and he asked anxiously: "Have you bid the land-shark clear out of port, Alice, or hasn't he shown his colors yet?"

"I've been careful not to let him speak out," replied the smuggler, "for father had the house full of goods, and we've been afraid of affronting him, or else—"

"Then all's right," said Barker, rubbing his hands joyously. "All's right; and we save every keg to let him hear that. Why, what has Master Jarvis done for Alice got to do with the Sassy Sally?" asked Mary.

Barker looked provokingly mysterious. Just at this moment the heavy tread of Mary's father was heard in the little garden, and in a moment after he entered the cottage.

"We must keep a sharp lookout, Barker," said the old smuggler, "as he has closed the door; the Sassy Sally is off the point, and she's shown her signal. She's a square-rigged ship, and has mounted a yellow ribbon; but it's her safe enough."

"Let her come," replied the young man with a smile; "we're ready for her."

"Why, I'm not so sure of that; there's that old shark Jarvis looking about, and I believe that fellow was rigged they mounted eyes all round him."

"Never mind; if he's as many eyes as a seventy-four has teeth, we can close all his port-holes," said Barker, confidently.

"You're a fine fellow, Jack; and I'm afraid you're on the wrong tack there—"

"Well, well, give her a fair breeze, and I'll shake out my mainsail," was the confident reply. "When d'ye think she'll bring it?"

"Some time to-night; but there's such a moon that we might as well expect to run the stuff by candlelight!"

"Bear a hand with the supper, Mary," said Barker, "we must be all hands on deck by the second watch; and while Mary is serving out the mess, you come home with me, Alice, and hang out a smarter pennant. You won't be five minutes rigging, and we shall be back in time."

The old man only smiled as the lovers left the cottage, and his daughter hasten to the kitchen, and accordingly Mary moved modestly about the apartment making the necessary preparation. In a short time Alice and Barker returned, and there was a regular sparkle in the eye of the girl, and a quiet humor in that of her companion which did not fail to awaken the curiosity of the young ladies.

A glance from Alice toward the father of Mary succeeded in suppressing the question which was rising to her lips, and in haste and almost silence they partook of the homely, but substantial, fare which was spread on the cottage table.

During the meal Mary, with true feminine quickness, did not fail to remark that short as the absence of her friend had been, she had nevertheless found time to rearrange the long, bright curls which clustered round her forehead and to put on a clean apron and neckerchief.

As soon as the supper was over the two men rose and left the cottage, Barker, as he did so, giving a significant glance at Alice, and saying, half playfully and half emphatically:

"Remember, leave the bolt undrawn and listen for the three knocks."

Alice nodded a smiling answer, and the girls were left alone.

As she heard her companion, as soon as she heard the garden wicket fall back, "in half an hour we shall have a visitor. I could not invite him to my own house, for as I have no one with me but my sick mother, who can not come out of her room, it would not have been womanly; particularly as he is a lover."

"A lover, Alice?"

"Yes, Mary," said the girl, looking down and affecting to blush. "The truth must be told, a lover: no other than Mr. John Jarvis. He is a King's officer, you know, and it may be the means of saving my father many a bale of goods."

"You must be joking, Alice," said Mary, in a tone which proved she was not the full as ignorant as she was supposed; "you never would behave so ill to John Barker."

"Well, Mary," replied her companion, "I'll promise never to bring him here again unless he won't be angry with me this once."

And so saying to Mary's astonishment, without waiting for a reply, she opened the door in the rear of the house, and after looking up at the moon for a couple of seconds, closed the door after her, and sat down beside the fire.

In less than half an hour a knock at the door announced the arrival of Jarvis, and Alice uttered a "Come in!" in her most courteous tones; he entered with a sumper of self-gratulation on his lips, and turned his black-luster eyes on Alice.

In sooth, however quick those eyes might be in discovering a smuggler, it was evident they were not brilliant enough to win a lady's heart. He was a corpulent, elderly man, with red woolen night cap and top-boots; conscious of his importance as a King's officer, and no whit moved by the subject of his personal attractions. Mary was lost in amazement at the half-kind, half-coquettish manner in which her prudent friend and companion at once encouraged and repelled the attentions of the enamored officer. Now she saw a blush gather on her brow, and now a smile, half-pious, half-mischievous, settle on her face. Twice Jarvis rose to go; and in truth, Mary thought it was time, for he was getting very late, and she heartily wished the corpulent suppressor of contraband trade to get home; but to her amazement and positive displeasure Alice pressed him to stay "a little—only a little longer," so earnestly and so tenderly, that he must have been much less of the lover than he really was had he not complied.

Mary, who had been silent and gloomy, began to feel uneasy; she knew that her friend was in the way of her return at that late hour and that which was still with them, and that she was anxious to learn how affairs were going on out of doors, and it was impossible for her to obtain any information while the revenue officer was in the house.

She had just made up her mind to whisper to Jarvis that she could not suffer him to remain longer, and she was more strongly urged to this resolution by seeing the coquettish manner in which Alice was evading a reply to his question whether she would receive him as her suitor, hesitating to consent to his smiles and yet delaying to comply in words, when she fancied she heard some one stealthily enter the house by the door opening on the garden.

She sprang to her feet with a startled look. A fear of the consequences which might result to her father and his associates from the presence of Jarvis made her heart close to bark.

She leaned slightly forward to listen more attentively, every nerve and feeling alive to the fearfulness of the situation, when three distinct knocks fell upon the door, as if given by a heavy hand. Ere she could guess the meaning of these singular and unexpected sounds, Alice started from her seat, and folding her hands demurely across her chest, dropped an elaborate courtesy to her bewildered lover, and said with a stifled laugh:

"You may go home now, Mr. Jarvis, and exchange your red night-cap for a white one; for the Sassy Sally has 'run' her cargo."

To attempt an adequate description of the main Jarvis was vain indeed! He threw himself back in his chair in a paroxysm of mortification and disappointment, he looked over the low stool from which Mary had just risen, and with clenched hands, and with eyes which, far from being angry, were full of sympathy and pity, he gazed at the smuggler. Particular, Nary, I am not sure the rosy-lipped, fair-haired Alice did not come in for a share of the maledictions which he so liberally dealt forth.

Meanwhile the girls stood close together, enjoying with suppressed merriment, his violent and ungovernable passion. After a few minutes' rant in storming at his own ingratitude, and at the craftiness of his ill-luck and at Alice's craftiness he started from his seat and rushed out of the cottage. As the baffled revenue officer disappeared through the door John Barker sprang into the room by the other, and running up to Alice bestowed on her a hearty kiss, he exclaimed, "Bravely done, bravely done, my Lily-browed shipmate! by—jingo! it was worth all the trouble and risk to get a glimpse of the land-shark when he found that he had let a victual cart pass him by, and had been timing in the wake of an empty hulk."

"Bravely done, indeed," said Mary; "but why was I not let into the secret?"

"Because," smiled Alice, "you would have looked too happy and conscious, or else you would have got frightened and run away. Besides, Mary," she blushed crimson, you hate deceit, and one hypocrite was enough. Barker had seen Jarvis walking in front of his cottage, and he knew that I was sure to meet him, and that he would be sure on his side to let me know, so I let him hear that for an hour with me. I was afraid of hurrying mother, as she's not too well, and so I told him to come here, and now you know all."

"And so do I," said the old smuggler, as he entered with a broad grin on his face, "for Jack put me on the right track as we were down on the craft. You're a brave girl, Alice, and deserve to have a free trader for your husband and the sooner the better. Only let me know when you and Jack are to set sail together, and I'll give you a wedding-gout of whichever of the bales you like best that we've landed from the Sassy Sally."

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A man can never succeed at pocket-picking until he gets his hand in."

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