

"It must have been an instrument of this sort, Cap., that that blamed demon, Bonal, gave to the imprisoned nun to file their letters off with!" he said showing a thin file of tempered steel.

"That!" said Cap., "and at here! let me see it!" and she examined it with the deepest interest.

"I wonder what they force looks with?" she inquired.

"Why, this, and this, and this!" said Old Hurricane, producing a burglar's pick, saw and chisel. Cap. took them and scrutinized them so attentively that Old Hurricane burst out into a loud laugh, exclaiming:—

"You'll dream of those breakers to-night, Cap. I!" and taking the tools he put them all back in the little canvas bag, and put the bag up on a high shelf of the parlor closet.

The next morning, while Cap. was arranging flowers on the parlor mantelpiece, Old Hurricane burst in upon her with his hands full of letters and newspapers, and his heart full of exaltation—throwing up his hat and cutting an alarming caper for a man of his age, he exclaimed:—

"Hurrah, Cap. I! Hurrah! Peace is at last proclaimed and our victorious troops are on their way home! It's all in the newspapers! and here are letters from Herbert, dated from New Orleans! Here are letters for you, and here are some for me! I have not opened them yet!"

"Hurrah, uncle! Hurrah!" cried Cap., tossing up her flowers and rushing into his arms! "Don't squeeze me into an apoplexy, you little bear," said Old Hurricane, turning purple in the face, from the savage hug of Cap.'s joyful arms. "Come along and sit down with me, at this table, and let us see what the letters have brought us."

They took their seats opposite each other, at a small table, and Old Hurricane threw the whole mail between them, and began to pick out the letters.

"That's for you Cap. This is for me," he said, pitching out two in the handwriting of Herbert Greyson.

Cap. opened hers, and commenced reading. It was in fact Herbert's first downright, practical proposal of marriage, in which he begged that their union might take place as soon as he should return, and that as he had written to his uncle by the same mail, upon another subject, which he did not wish to mix up with his own marriage, he would, upon a proper opportunity, let her uncle know of their plans.

"Upon my word, he takes my consent very coolly as a matter of course, and even forces upon me the disagreeable duty of asking myself on my own uncle! Whoever heard of such proceedings! If he were not coming home from the wars, I declare I should get angry; but I won't get upon my dignity with Herbert—dear, darling, sweet Herbert—if it were any body else, shouldn't they know the difference between their little lady and Tom Trotter? However, as it's Herbert, here goes! Now, I suppose the best way to ask myself of uncle, for Herbert, will be just to hand him over this letter. The dear knows it isn't so over-and-above affectionate that I should hesitate. Uncle," said Cap., pulling Old Hurricane's coat-sleeve.

"Don't bother me, Cap.," exclaimed Major Warfield, who sat there holding a large, closely-written document in his hand, with his great round eyes strained from their sockets, as they passed along the lines with devouring interest.

"Well, I do declare! I do believe he has received a proposal of marriage himself," cried Cap., shooting much nearer the truth than she knew.

Old Hurricane did not hear her. Starting up with the document in his hand, he rushed from the room, and went and shut himself up in his own study.

"I vow, some widow has offered to marry him," said Cap. to herself.

Old Hurricane did not come to dinner not to supper. But after supper, when Capitola's wonder was at its climax, and while she was sitting by the little wood fire that the chilly evening required, Old Hurricane came in, looking very unlike himself, in an humble, confused, deprecating, yet happy manner, like one who has at once a mortifying confession to make, and a happy secret to tell.

"Cap.," he said, trying to repress a smile, and growing purple in the face.

"Oh, yes! you've come to tell me, I suppose, that you're going to put a stop-and-in-law over my head, only you don't know how to announce it," answered Capitola, little knowing how closely she had come to the truth; when to her unbounded astonishment, Old Hurricane answered:—

"What! my dear, that's just it!"

"What! my dear, that's just it!" cried Cap., breaking into her new-boy's slang from mere consternation.

"Yes, my dear, it is perfectly true!" replied the old man, growing furiously red, and rubbing his face.

"Oh! oh! oh! Hold me! I'm not!" cried Cap., falling back in her chair in an inextinguishable fit of laughter, that shook her whole frame. She laughed until the tears ran down her cheeks. She wiped her eyes and looked at Old Hurricane, and every time she saw his confused and happy face, she burst into a fresh paroxysm that seemed to threaten her life or her reason.

"Who is the happy?"—Oh! I can't speak! Oh, I'm killed entirely!" she cried, breaking off in the midst of her question, and falling into fresh convulsions.

"It's no new love, Cap. It's my wife!" said Old Hurricane, wiping his face.

She set both upright, gazing at him with her eyes fixed as if in death.

"Cap.," said Old Hurricane, growing more and more confused, "I've been a married man more years than I like to think of! Cap., I've—I've a wife and grown-up son!—Why do you sit there staring at me you little demon? Why don't you say something to encourage me, you little wretch!"

"Go on!" said Cap., without removing her eyes.

"Cap., I was—a jealous—passionate—Demmy! confound it isn't in my line! A diabolical villain made me believe that my poor little wife wasn't good!"

"There! I know you'd lay it on somebody else. Men always do that!" said Cap., to herself.

"He was mortally wounded in Mexico. He made a confession, and confided it to Herbert, who has just sent me an attested copy. It was hood's name of Marah Rooke." Old Hurricane made a gulp, and his voice broke down.

Cap. understood all now, as well as if she had known it as long as Old Hurricane had. She comprehended his extreme agitation upon a year evening, years ago, when Herbert Greyson had mentioned Marah Rooke's name, and his later and more lasting disturbance upon accidentally meeting Marah at the Orphan's Court.

This revelation filled her with strange and contradictory emotions. She was glad; she was angry with him; she was sorry for him! she was divided between diverse impulses, to hug and kiss him; to cry over him, and to seize him and give him a good shaking! And between them she did nothing at all.

Old Hurricane was again the first to speak.

"What was that you wished to say to me, Cap., when I ran away from you this morning?"

"Why, uncle, that Herbert wants to follow your example, and—and—"

"I thought as much. Getting married at his age! a boy of twenty-five!" said the veteran in contempt.

"Taking a wife at your age, uncle, an infant of sixty-six!"

"Bother, Cap. I! Let me see the fellow's letter to you!"

Cap. handed it to him and the old man read it.

"If I were to object, you'd get married all the same! Demmy! You're both of you. Do as you please!"

"Thank you, sir," said Cap., deprecatingly.

"And now, Cap., one thing is to be noticed. Herbert says, both in your letter and in mine, that they were to start to return the day after these letters were posted. These letters have been delayed in the mail. Consequently we may expect our hero here every day. But Cap., my

dear, you must receive them. For to-morrow morning, please the Lord, I shall set out for Staunton and Willow Heights, and go and kneel down at the feet of my wife, and ask her pardon on my knees!"

Cap. was no longer divided between the wish to pull Old Hurricane's gray beard and to cry over him. She threw herself at once into his arms and exclaimed:—

"Oh uncle! God bless you! God bless you! God bless you! It has come very late in life, but you may be happy with her through all the ages of eternity!"

Old Hurricane was deeply moved by the sympathy of his little madcap, and pressed her to his bosom, saying:—

"Cap., my dear, if you had not set your heart upon Herbert, I would marry you to my son Travers, and you two should inherit all that I have in the world! But never mind, Cap., you have an inheritance of your own! Cap., my dear, did it ever occur to you that you might have had a father and a mother?"

"Yes! often! But I used to think you were my father, and that my mother was dead."

"I wish to the Lord that I had been your father, Cap., and that Marah Rooke had been your mother! But Cap., your father was a better man than I, and your mother was a good woman as Marah. And Cap., my dear, you are the sole heiress of the Hidden House estate, and all its enormous wealth! What do you think of that now? What do you think of that, you beggar?" cried Old Hurricane.

A shriek pierced the air, and Capitola starting up, stood before Old Hurricane, crying in an impassioned voice:—

"Uncle! Uncle! I don't mock me! I don't overwhelm me! I do not care for wealth or power; but tell me of my parents, who possessing both, cast off their unfortunate child—a girl, too! to meet the sufferings and perils of such a life as mine had been if I had not met you."

"Cap., my dear, hush! your parents were no more to blame for their seeming abandonment of you, than I was to blame for the desertion of my poor wife. We are all the victims of one villain who has now gone to his account, Capitola. I mean Gabriel Le Noir. Sit down my dear, and I will read the copy of his whole confession, and afterwards, in addition tell you all I know upon the subject!"

Capitola resumed her seat, and Major Warfield read the confession of Gabriel Le Noir, and afterwards continued the subject by relating the events of that memorable Hollow Eve when he was called out in a snow-storm to take the dying deposition of the nurse who had been abducted with the infant Capitola.

And at the end of his narrative, Cap. knew as much of her own history as the reader has known all along.

"And I have a mother! and I shall even see her soon! you told me she was coming home with the party—did you not, Uncle," said Capitola.

"Yes, my child. Only think of it! I saved the daughter from the streets of New York, and my own saved the mother from her prison at the madhouse! And now, my dear Cap. I must bid you good night and go to bed, for I intend to rise to-morrow morning long before daylight, to ride to Tip-Top to meet the Staunton stage," said the old man, kissing Capitola.

Just as he was about to leave the room, he was arrested by a loud ringing and knocking at the door.

Wool was heard running along the front hall to answer the summons.

"Cap., I shouldn't wonder much if that was our party. I wish it may be, for I should like to welcome them before I leave home to fetch my wife," said Old Hurricane, in a voice of agitation.

And while they were still eagerly listening, the door was thrown open by Wool, who announced:—

"Marah Herbert, which I mean to say, Major Herbert Greyson; and Herbert entered and was greeted by the two hands of Old Hurricane, who exclaimed:—

"Ah, Herbert, my lad! I have got your letters. It is all right, Herbert, or going to be so. You shall marry Cap. when you like. And I am going

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