

Black Jack.

By Etta W. Pierce.

My path, following the line of shore, curved close to the salt works. The tall windmills that worked the pumps by which the water was raised frowned down on me like giant sentinels. I could see the troughs that led the brine to the vats or cisterns, where by-and-by the sun would dry it into great white cakes, and I could hear the groaning arms of the mills, as they swung round in the teeth of a stiff breeze; but though I strained both eyes and ears, no sight nor sound of 'Lisha rewarded me. I had meant to wave my hand, or perhaps blow him a kiss, in token of my desire for reconciliation. I had also put on my Sunday gown, and tied my mop of yellow curls with a new ribbon, and, having dressed for 'Lisha's eyes, my heart swelled with disappointment.

Suddenly I heard a whistle among the vats, and looking again I espied the square figure and broad, smudgy face of Peter Marthe. He grinned.

"Afternoon, Drusie!" he called. "Looking for 'Lish?"

"That is no affair of yours," I answered, tartly. He only grinned. "Lish ain't here to-day," he said, thrusting his tongue into his cheek. "He's gone across the cape — to see the gurls on 'tother side, maybe."

Now it was about this same Peter Marthe that Elisha and I had quarrelled, and I had no fondness for Peter.

Under my feet, from a little cavity scooped in the sand, a white gull rose from her spotted eggs and soared oceanward with a shriek. As I turned to look after the bird I stumbled and nearly fell over a man who was lying full length in the coarse beach grass directly across my path.

He was grizzled and old, with a skin

like brown leather. His black cavernous eyes were set under beetling brows. He wore gold rings in his ears, and a red handkerchief knotted, sailor fashion, about his hairy throat. His clothes were of coarse, black wool, roughly patched, as though by his own hands, and a broad canvas belt clasped his middle.

"Stand up, little maid!" he said, in a guttural voice, as I made shift to regain my feet. "My eyes be growing dim—I didn't see ye bearing down on me. Look yander — what is that?" pointing with a crooked, grimy finger to a surf line on the sea.

"That's the bar," I answered, "where the great wreck was."

"What wreck?" said he.

"Bellamy's pirate ship," I answered. "Oh, ho! And how did Bellamy git wrecked out there, little maid?"

"Why, everybody on the cape knows the story," I answered; "a brave man did it—my grandfather, sir."

"I'm a stranger in these parts," said the sailor; "spin the yarn."

"My grandfather was master of a sloop, sir, and as he was returning from the West Indies with a cargo of sugar and rum, Bellamy captured him almost in sight of land and put his crew in 'irons. But because grand'ther knew the coast he was left on his own vessel, with some of the pirates to guard him, and commanded to pilot Bellamy into harbor. My grand'ther suspected that the freebooter meant to plunder Provincetown instead of clearing his ship, as was his pretence, and he determined to bring him to grief. It was a stormy, pitch-black night, with high seas running. The sloop led the way; lanterns were hung in her shrouds, and the pirate followed the

lights. Bellamy had taken rum from the sloop, and his crew fell to drinking

"Ay, ay! that they did!" broke in my listener; "every many jack o' 'em! There were punch-ons of old Santa Cruz—it was a grand carouse!"

The interruption startled me, but as he immediately subsided I went on:

"The pirates kept my grand'ther at the helm, and he brought Bellamy's ship so near shore that she struck on the bar there, and every soul aboard her perished, save one. The sloop, being smaller, struck nearer the beach. When they saw what he had done, the pirates rushed on my grand'ther with cutlasses and pistols; but he leaped into the sea, and being a strong swimmer got safely ashore. The freebooters that were on the sloop followed, and were afterward seized by the cape folks, brought to trial and hanged."

The strange sailor moved uneasily in the coarse, salt grass.

"A jolly grand'ther ye had, my little maid! Ay out there the old ship lies nodding toward the bar, 'as good a craft as ever weighed anchor. Bellamy and his crew—(awd! they were wild dogs!—paid with their lives for that last carouse. For many a year they've been a-brilling in—"

He named a place that good folks shudder to think of. I edged away from him—took to my heels and fled.

Half a mile up the beach, in a low, brown house, thatched with rough shingles, I lived with my grandmother. As I lifted the latch of our raftered kitchen I found her spreading the table for supper.

"Oh, granny, I have had a great fright!" I cried, and I told her about the man on the beach.

"So," she said, taking the old Delft teacups from our corner cupboard, "Black Jack has come back to the cape again!"

"Who is Black Jack, granny?"

"Why, the sole survivor of Bellamy's crew, to be sure—the one pirate of them

all that escaped from the ship when she struck on the bar. It is said he came ashore on a piece of wreckage and took to the woods. For years after he lived in hiding; but when the folks who remember the wreck were mostly dead, and the story of Bellamy had grown old, he began to venture among men again, and to be seen on different parts of the cape. About once a year he comes to this shore, and goes to some spot where the pirates long ago buried money, and there he gets a supply of his needs. Nobody has ever meddled with him, and he meddles with nobody."

"Have none of the cape folks ever tried to find the pirates' money, granny?"

"I never heard of but one man," said granny, shooting out her lip contemptuously — "Peter Marthe. Bless you! Peter has hunted this shore over ever since he was a boy, digging in every odd corner for Bellamy's treasure."

"I can believe anything of Peter Marthe," I said; and granny and I sat down to supper.

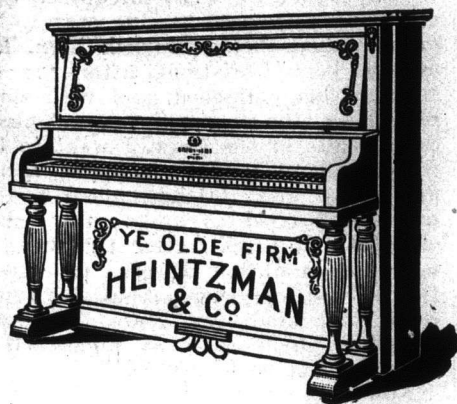
She was a pious woman, and grace was always long at our table. Hardly was she done with it when a rap echoed on our house door, and Black Jack stepped into the kitchen. As my grandmother rose to meet him he pulled off his old cap humbly.

"I made bold to follow the little maid," he said; "I've had neither bite nor sup since yesterday, mistress, and, being an old man, my legs are sinking."

"Sit down," said my grandmother, "and welcome." And she motioned me to put another plate on the table. Much against my will, I obeyed. Black Jack drew up to our board, which was spread with rye and Indian bread, a fish from the sea and a jug of foaming milk. At my grandmother's bidding, he fell on the food like a starving man. His eyes roved round the room for a space, and then he, leaned toward my grandmother and whispered:

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