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Monrovia, January 23rd 1852

JOB PRINTING neatly and promptly executed at the office, at moderate prices.

LIBERIA HERALD

August 1st, 1851

LIBERIA HERALD

THE FAIR MAID OF CADIZ.

A TALE OF SPAIN.

BY E. CURTISS HIFE, U. S. N.

No. a breeze ruffled the surface of the slumbering sea, and our trim brig lay like a wearied seabird, resting her snowy wings, as Ned Rivers and myself were seated forward upon the windlass conversing of days gone by. I had just left the main-hatch, having been relieved by one of my lieutenants, and not feeling disposed to sleep, determined to while away the remainder of the watch in a discourse with my friend.

"Tell me, Ned," said I, "the tale you promised me some time since about the fair maid of Cadiz, whom you rescued from the bandit, and for which deed you received the reward."

"O, yes, I believe I *did* promise to spin you that yarn sometime," replied he, after musing for some moments in silence. "Well, I suppose I may as well tell you to-night as at any time; so here goes.

"The ship to which I was attached sailed for England a few days after the event, and you may be well assured that I felt a severe heartache when the white walls of Cadiz faded in the eastern horizon, and I found myself once more far out on the wide, wide sea. Still I kept my own counsel, and did not impart the cause of my grief to any living person, for a midshipman has but little sympathy among the rabble rout on board a ship of war. The truth is, I had learned to feel something more than friendship for the fair creature I had rescued from the bandit, and resolved if I should ever succeed in reaching England I would procure my discharge from His Majesty's service, and hasten back to Cadiz, the place where I had left my heart.

"After a fine run of twelve days, our gallant ship dropped her anchor at Portsmouth harbor, and five days later, through the interest of the captain, I obtained my discharge, and was a freeman again. But I did not, like too many of my class, spend my hard-earned gains in riotous dissipation; but after a visit of a few weeks to my mother, who resided at Leamington, I engaged a passage to Cadiz in one of the regular packets, and in the evening of a lovely day in August, beheld the white scarps of my native Albion fading away; for the first time in my life, strange as it may appear, without regret. You will not wonder, my friend, when I inform you how eager I was to reach Cadiz, and to again behold the lovely creature who claimed my every thought.

"Well, after a fine run of ten or twelve days, I was again rejoiced with a glimpse of those white walls beside the sea, which a short time before I had left so reluctantly. As we sailed up the bay, how eagerly my gaze was bent upon every well known object, and how I longed to again set my foot upon the crowded mole of the city.

"It was not until dark that the packet dropped her anchor, as the wind was light, and during the afternoon we had made but little progress. But, when at length the mud-hook was fairly on the bottom, I hailed the captain, and requested a boat to convey me on shore.

"'Hollo, you must be in a hurry, I should judge by your actions,' said the skipper. 'Now tell me, isn't there a lady somewhere that attracts you?'

"'I cannot answer that question,' said I, 'but will you set me ashore?'

"'Certainly, if you wish it; I am just about to leave the ship myself—so get ready.'

"In a few moments one of the quarter boats was lowered down, and hauled to the gangway, and jumping into her, the men shoved off, and I was quickly landed on the pier of the city.

"I had but just reached the shore when the clanging of a hundred bells told that a fire had broken out, and was raging at the most uncontrollable fury; crowds were hurrying, eager to arrive at the scene of the conflagration, and impelled by a natural curiosity, I followed the dense mass of human beings crushing forward, and soon found myself in the main plaza of the city.

"At this point the devouring element was raging with the most unrivalled fury. A large palace-like building was completely wrapped in flames, and twenty or thirty engines were playing upon it, but apparently without any effect. Soon the word was passed that a young lady was in one of the upper rooms, and must inevitably perish if not immediately rescued.

"'Will no one volunteer to save the girl?' inquired a venerable-looking old man, coming forward, and crying out at the top of his voice, 'five thousand pesos to the man who shall rescue my daughter!'

"Still no one offered to run the fearful risk. The danger was too great, and the Spaniards are proverbially careful not to put themselves in harm's way when it can be avoided. A ladder had been raised to the roof, and in order to save her, it was necessary for some one to ascend it to just abreast of the window of the room in which the lady was imprisoned by the flames, which was something like sixty feet from the ground, and then to jump from one of the rounds of the ladder, a distance of at least six feet into the apartment, where by means of a rope he must lower her down to the pavement, trusting to good luck and circumstances to make good his own retreat. You will see at once that it was a most perilous task, and it is not to be wondered at, out of all that immense assembly, not one could be found to attempt it.

"Just at this crisis, the young lady herself appeared at the window, and although pale as death, her bearing was firm and undaunted, and seen as she was at the centre of the window, her features lit up by the devouring flames that were leaping and crackling on every side, she resembled some beautiful Madonna with dishevelled hair floating loosely over her naked shoulders, framed in the wall of the burning palace. One look at those peerless features sufficed for me; I could not be mistaken. It was the same lovely creature I had rescued from the bandit! Just at this moment the old man, her father, who had gazed with agonizing looks upon his child, without the power of assisting her, again called out:

"'Will *no one* venture to ascend the ladder and save my child? Must I see her perish before my eyes? Were I not so old, you would soon see how I would fly to her rescue! Ten thousand pesos to the *man* who shall deliver my daughter from the flames!'

"'Look here, old gentleman,' said I, coming forward from among the crowd, 'I don't want your *money*, because I've enough of my own; but tell me, if I succeed in rescuing your daughter, shall I have her for my wife?'

"'Hem!' answered the old man, drily, and casting his eyes upon a tall military officer near by, who did not offer to move a peg in the matter himself, but who scowled upon me from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, 'I don't know about *that*, young man. Who *are* you?'

"'That matters not, sir—if I save your daughter, will you give her to me for my bride?'

"Again the old man cast his eyes upon the officer, as if hoping that *he* would bestir himself in the matter; but he did not; he only regarded me with a snake-like glance, and with a look that seemed to say, 'I should like to slit your windpipe, old fellow.' Finding, now very, that there was no hope in *that* quarter, the father of the girl turned to me steadily for a moment, as one in a trance. It was quickly broken, however, by a scream from the young lady, followed by the crash of a portion of the roof, which fell to the pavement with a terrible velocity.

"'Jump, jump, my lad! Quick, be quick, and save her, and she is yours!'

"I did not wait for further inducements. Tearing off my coat, I seized a rope from the hands of one of the firemen, and rushed to the window where stood the lady implorING my succor. The window was at least sixty feet from the ground, and when at length I came almost to it, I found I should have to jump at least six feet to reach it. It was a fearful leap, for, were I to fail but one inch short of my mark, instead of succeeding in grasping something, I well knew that I should be dashed a helpless mass upon the pavement below. However, thought I, 'nothing venture, nothing have,' so here goes! With a desperate swing I threw myself forward, and just caught in the edge of the window sill, and there, at that fearful height I hung suspended until the young lady seized upon me, and hauled me into the apartment. The rope which had been given me at the foot of the ladder, I had coiled around my neck like a lasso, and was now in a situation to render effectual assistance to the idol of my heart.

"No sooner did she behold my face, than she recognized me as her former deliverer, and began to pour forth her thanks and gratitude, unmindful of the perils by which she was surrounded. But I cut her short, pointed to the blazing roof above her head, and assured her that no time must now be lost. Making fast the rope around her waist, I lowered her in safety to the pavement, where she was received in the arms of her delighted father, who bore her off amid the cheers of the vast multitude, which rose like the moans of the ocean upon some lonely and dreary coast.

"Having succeeded in saving the young lady the next thing to be done was to save myself. This was no very easy matter, to be sure, but you know a sailor will always find a way to do anything that anybody can do. After revolving for a moment in my own mind the best method to pursue, I at length made fast one end of my rope to a pillar of the apartment, and clambering out of the window, I lowered myself to the pavement, which I had but little more than reached when the roof and the entire walls of the building tumbled in with a horrid crash, reminding me of what must have been my fate had I delayed my departure another instant.

"With the destruction of that noble edifice the fire was completely checked, and the engines continuing to play upon the blazing ruins, soon put an end to the confusion and dismay.

"No sooner had I reached the ground, than I looked around among the crowd in order to find the lady I had saved, but she was nowhere to be seen. Some of the bystanders assured me that I had got my labor for my pains, that the old man never intended to ratify his promise, but only made it from motives of policy, and that now he had taken his departure, no one knew where, and I should have hard work to find my promised bride. And then the rude mob laughed as if they thought I had been a fool to risk my life to preserve that of an entire stranger. However, 'let those laugh who win,' thought, I, for I knew well where to hunt for the lady, and so taking my way to the hotel, I threw myself into bed, and dozed the remainder of the night away.

"Early the next morning I was on my way to the little cottage in the suburbs of the city, where dwelt the lady of my love. I was not long in reaching the well-known spot, where so startling an adventure once befel me, and knocking at the door, I was kindly received by the father, mother, and daughter, the latter of whom had informed her parents of my having *twice* rescued her, and they were of course very grateful to me, and willing to gratify the wishes of my heart, and also those of the girl herself, who loved me tenderly for the service I had rendered her.

"'But,' said the old gentleman, 'you must not expect to obtain her without opposition. The military officer whom you saw with me last night, and who recoiled from the perils of saving her life, claims her hand, and has a promise of long standing from me to give my consent to the marriage. Now, although I revoke the promise, you must expect trouble with him, and so you had better be prepared for it.' Last night he attended my daughter to a party given at the palace of the Marquis Fontirov, but when the building took fire, while she was in the dressing-room in the sixth story, and retreat was cut off to the rooms below, he had not courage enough to dare anything for her rescue; and had it not been for your efforts, she would have perished. But look, there he comes now. Beware of him!

"I looked out of the window and saw him coming up the gravel walk towards the cottage, and at once I became convinced that he meditated mischief. He was dressed in the full uniform of a captain of the Spanish army, and a frown as black as midnight was on his brow. As he entered the apartment, he called out:

"'Sir, what is this *low fellow* doing here?'

"'He is not a low fellow, Captain Cortez,' replied the old man, firmly, 'but a brave and honorable gentleman, who has twice saved the life of my daughter.'

"'I care not,' cried the officer, sternly; 'of his bravery I have no desire to address your daughter, who is my promised bride, he must first fight me;' at the same time taking a pair of duelling pistols from his pocket, and laying them upon the table.

"'Very well, sir,' replied I, 'if *that* is your game, come on! We'll settle this little business on the green here.'

"The parents remonstrated, the daughter clung around me, and bathed me with her tears; but it was all in vain. We rushed out on the green; *one, two, three*—we both fired—and my rival fell dead! A bullet had passed directly through his heart, while I was unharmed!"

"And what then occurred?"

"O, the affair was hushed up, the captain was buried with military honors, and six weeks after I was wedded to the young belle of Cadiz, and took possession of a large estate given me by her father, where I passed the days in unalloyed happiness."

"And what else?"

"O, I'll tell you some other time. A breeze is springing up, so I must cut short my yarn."

"Brace round the yards! In with the topmast stud'n-sails!" cried the little mate, with his sharp, shrill voice, and so Ned Rivers, my noble watchmate, and myself separated to other duties, and the little brig sped merrily onward over the deep blue sea.

Some constables in Maine, hunting for rum, entered a house and found a woman rocking a cradle, and singing "Hush a-by-baby." Not finding "the critter," one of them, more cunning than the rest, made a dash at the baby-clothes, exclaiming, "Sweet little baby—how much it looks like its father!" And sure enough, so it did—for, lo! and behold, the little offspring turned out to be a *keg of rum* with a night cap on.

☞ Parson Brownlow says that every candidate for the Presidency, has an especial friend in Congress who can vouch for his orthodoxy on all subjects likely to come into the canvass; and who is authorized to give any pledge in his behalf suited to any latitude, North or South, East or West, for California or Canada, Hungary or France, Heaven or Hell, and which is to be as binding as if it came from his own lips!—Especially is it understood that he is not to be a candidate for re-election.

Beware of Kissing.—The Cumberland Union says we hear a case talked off as being before the Baltimore Conference, in session in this place, which should render those preaching for the ministry shy of kissing—a young lady. A young man—Goodfellow by name, we believe—was objected to on this score, but as it appeared

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XII. Newspapers
B. Liberia Herald

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