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CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

"Confound the boy! what does he mean? Does he think I'm going to be a father to him, and not be obeyed as a father? Does he think I'm going to give him my money to spend in business, and take only ingratitude in return? What can the young dog be thinking of? Plague take the youngster! What business has he to go and fall in love with a poor piece of trash! I'll—I'll fix him! I'll—but here comes the rascal, the spinner of my counsels!"

And as Captain Jerry Pleman thus spoke he sank into a great stuffed chair, and looked daggars; and twice he stamped his dumpy foot vehemently to keep up his stern posture. He was a round bellied, jolly-faced, red checked bachelor, just five and forty. Most of his life he had spent at sea, and had lately settled down ashore with an immense fortune, for the purpose of enjoying the rest of his days "after his own heart," as he expressed it. His pate was just bald enough to carry his face high up over the brow, but yet he had a goodly quantity of dark curls clustering about his short, fat neck. The only near relative he had in the lower world was Jack Kendall, an only child of his only sister. Jerry Pleman had loved his sister fondly, and when she died—she was a widow then—she left a prayer upon the record that her brother would care for her orphan boy. And Uncle Jerry had done it faithfully. For ten years he had provided for his nephew, keeping him at one of the best schools for a while, and then paying his way through college. But now that he had settled down for a home, he had Jack to come and live with him.

"Ah, you are here, are you?" growled the uncle, looking up with a very daggars like expression.

Jack Kendall was twenty-three, somewhat taller than his uncle, but with the same family look. He was a handsome, good-natured, generous, affectionate fellow, and loved his uncle Jerry with his whole soul.

"Yes, uncle, I'm here," he replied, taking a seat "and I know you are glad to see me."

"Aye, I am glad, for I have something to say to you," the bachelor resumed; looking some more daggars. "Have you seen that baggage again?"

"Baggage, uncle."

"Baggage, sir. I said baggage. Have you seen her?"

"Her, uncle? Baggage? Her? Why—what do you mean?"

"You know very well what I mean. I mean that piece of poverty—that hanger on—that—that baggage—that—that gal!"

"Oh, you mean Lizzy Brown. The girl that—"

"Thinks to catch you, and catch my money!" interrupted Uncle Jerry, emphatically.

"It is hardly fair to say that, uncle, seeing that I made all the advances myself."

"Nonsense! Don't you suppose I know? I say she set the trap for ye! But I won't have it. If I am to be father to ye, you must obey me. Now I've got a choice. I want ye to marry with Susan Garland."

"But she's a widow, uncle."

"So much the better. She'll know how to make a home for ye."

"And she's older than I by a dozen years."

"Just five years. She is only twenty-eight. It's all the better for that."

"But I can't love her."

"Can't love her?" cried the uncle looking an immense number of very sharp pointed daggars. "Can't love Susan Garland! Can't love the woman who was the wife of the most faithful friend I ever had! Let me tell you, sir, that when the old general was cast upon the rocks of Harnegat, Bill Garland saved my life, and lost his own! He died in these arms, sir; and the last words he ever said to me were—'Be kind to my poor Susan!'—and I will be kind to her."

The captain added, wiping a big tear from his cheek "I'll give her a husband—a graceless husband, perhaps—but with money enough to keep her above want. You shall marry her, sir."

"But suppose I should refuse?"

"Refuse! refuse your own uncle! You dare not do it, sir! I'll turn you out of doors in an instant! I'd see you starve before I'd give you another penny! I'd take away all I ever did give you."

"Ah, you couldn't do that, uncle. The education I have gained under your noble generous patronage, is a mine of wealth of which you cannot rob me; and I would not to-day exchange it for all the wealth you ever possessed. I can live by my own wits."

"Ah! You threaten me, do you? You mean to rebel, do you? You mean to disobey me outright!"

"You do not understand me, uncle—You surely would not force me to belie my heart. If you could know Lizzy Brown;—"

"Lizzy Fiddlesticks! I don't want to know her. I know Susan Garland, and that's enough. I've had my plan fixed ever since I came home. I promised Bill I'd take care of her, and I must do it; and how can I do it if you don't let me have her for a niece?"

"Why not have her for a wife?" asked Jack quietly.

"Wife!—me! Why, you young rascal; what do you mean? Me—marry! Zounds! Do you think I'm crazy? I'm old enough to be her father!"

Only seventeen years, uncle. Just enough to give you character as a husband."

Silence, villain! Would you have me make a fool of myself just as I am settling down for comfort and quiet? Don't you never dare to lisp such a thing again! I shall go and see Susan to-morrow, and I shall tell her that you will have her. That's enough! I won't hear any more! By the big fish, but I'll keep my promise!"

Jack knew that 'twould be useless to say more at present, so he held his peace.—William Garland had been his uncle's first mate during his last two voyages, and the captain had not only liked him much, but he also thought much of Susan; having stopped at her home while her husband was living. When Captain Jerry came home with the care of the widow upon his shoulders, he had hit upon the happy expedient of making her his niece, by marriage, and thus having the right to care for her without exciting scandal. Jack knew how his uncle had cherished the plan, and he feared it would be hard to thwart him. The old fellow was as stubborn as he was kind hearted, and where he felt that he had authority he would not yield.

Finally Jack retired to ponder upon the subject, and before dark he resolved to see the widow in advance of his uncle; and he went that very evening.

Susan Garland was a pretty woman, with a plump form, and a dimpled, cheerful face, over which sweet genial smiles were continually playing when she was happy. She had been alone two years. She welcomed Jack kindly, and after some common place remarks, the young man came to the point. He related the conversation which had passed between himself and uncle that afternoon, and expressed the hope that she would help him.

"Surely, you would not wish to take me from the being I love," she said.

"Of course not," the widow replied, with an earnest smile. "I should be decidedly opposed to any such thing. I know Lizzy well, and I know, too, she will make you a good wife. You may depend on my assistance, for I can tell your uncle, that I won't, and that will be the end of it."

They chatted awhile longer, and then Jack took his leave.

"He'll be here to-morrow forenoon," the young man said, as he reached the door-stone.

"I shall be ready for him," was the reply; and a funny light twinkled in the widow's eye as she said so.

"About eleven o'clock on the following day, Uncle Jerry called upon the widow.—She had left off her weeds, and now appeared as fresh and fair as a maid of sixteen. She welcomed the captain with one of her sweetest smiles, and finally took a seat close by him. By a dexterous turn she got him engaged in relating wonderful stories of his adventures at sea, and thus an hour slipped away. Of course he must now stop to dinner.

"Oh, no, I must go home to dinner," said he. "But before I go, I have a little business matter to touch upon."

"Then you must wait, sir," pronounced the widow, decisively. "It is my dinner hour, and I must prepare it. Wait and eat with me, and then I'll listen."

An! with this Susan drew out her table, spread the snow white cloth, and soon had the dishes in their places. Then she went away to the kitchen, and presently the neat spluttering, and a brisk culinary racket going on generally.

"Egad," the old fellow muttered to himself, "she's a splendid craft. What a clean build. If I had come across such a woman years ago, I believe I should have made a fool of myself."

In due time the dinner made its appearance, and the captain was invited to partake. "Now make yourself at home," the widow said, with a charming smile; "for I look upon you as one of the dearest friends I have."

"Egad! if she aint a beauty!" Uncle Jerry said this to himself as he moved up to the table.

The lamb-chops were done as the captain had never seen them done before. So juicy, so rich, so delicately spiced—and so splendidly cooked. And the little et ceteras and the pies, and the cake and the rich, golden coffee. But above all he was entranced by the bright smiles and the sparkling wit of his fair hostess.

"Zounds!" he muttered, while she was gone away with the dishes, "ain't she charming!"

Finally the widow came and sat down by the captain's side upon the sofa. Her dimpled cheeks were all a glow; her bright eyes sparkled with a beaming lustre, and over her white shoulder flowed a wavy, curling tress, which trembled over and anon, as though there were some strange emotion in the bosom beneath it.

"Now, sir," she said, "I'm ready to listen."

"Well—well," Uncle Jerry managed to say, after a prodigious effort at clearing his throat, "you must pardon me if I come right to the point."

"Of course."

"Then here it is—you know I promised

Bill—that is—Bill Garland—my old mate; or I should say, my young mate—that I would look after you—care for you. You know that."

"Yes, sir," returned Susan, with a grateful look. "I know that; and I have blessed you many times for your kindness to poor me. Alas! I don't know what I should have done, but for your generous bounty."

"Tut, tut—don't talk so. How could I help being good to you?"

"Ah, but everybody don't have hearts like yours."

The captain rather liked the compliment; and then it came from an agreeable source, too. So he did not dispute. But he made another prodigious effort to clear his throat, and then said—

"I have tried to be good to you, Susan; and I hope I have been; but I can't do all I want to do for you at present. I am coming right to the point now." (Another clearing of the throat.) "You know you are a widow."

She did know it.

"And you know you are yet young and very beautiful."

"Oh, no! Not beautiful; and surely not very young."

"But you are not old, and—you are beautiful.—Now this won't do. Scandal will reach you. I—ahem—am not so old myself; but that shaft of scandal might reach me too."

"You old!" uttered Susan, looking up reprovingly and yet admiringly. "Why, you are right in the very prime of manhood. A man at your age, and with your genial, happy disposition, has just reached his full dawn of life at five and forty."

Uncle Jerry rather liked this, so he did not contradict as he had at first a will to do.

"Then of course, he returned, applying the compliment to his own purpose, "it is still the more necessary that there should be a now and nearer relation between us. I love you too well to have a single breath of suspicion rest upon you. Should you object to such a relation?"

The widow's long lashes drooped, and the dark tress upon her bosom trembled more perceptibly.

"If it is your wish, sir, I should have no objection to make," she said.

"And you'll come and live with me?"

"Yes."

"And we'll be as happy as kings."

"Oh, I should be very, very happy," she whispered; and as she did so, her head rested upon the captain's shoulder, and the bright tress fell upon his hand, with several tear-drops glittering amid its curls.

"What a time we'll have!" Uncle Jerry cried, winding his right arm about her plump form, and drawing her more closely to him. "When you are Jack's wife, well—"

"Jack!" repeated Susan, breaking from his embrace, and starting to her feet. "Jack's wife!" she uttered, dashing the tears from her eyes.

"Why, bless me, yes."

"And have you meant for me to marry him?"

"Lord bless me! who should I mean?"

"And you suppose I would marry with a mere boy! Are there not girls enough for the youngsters? Sir, you mistake me—you mistake my heart you mistake my love, if you think I could give my heart to your nephew."

"But, Susan! Here! stop! Bless me!"

Susan did not stop, and Uncle Jerry found himself alone. He said, "Bless my soul!" forty-three times, and then left the house. All the way home he muttered to himself, and when he met Jack—the supper table, he was moody and silent. When he went up to his chamber he commenced to mutter again; and he kept on muttering and pondering until he fell asleep. Finally he began to dream. He dreamed that Susan Garland became his wife, and he held her to his bosom, and wondered that he could ever have thoughts of such a foolish thing as allowing Jack to have her. But while he held her thus, who should appear in the nuptial chamber but Bill Garland, pale and cold, with sea-weed for hair, and dank, green, ocean, moss for raiment! And the calaverous presence said—"Give me my wife!" The dreamer awoke with a sharp cry of fear, and found the sunlight streaming into his room. He arose and sat down by the window, and finally he said in a deep, fervent tone—

"Thank God, Bill Garland hasn't come back!"

For three whole days Uncle Jerry was like a newly converted sinner. He could not eat, he could not read, he could not sleep, and the burden of his remarks to Jack was—

"Clear out, you rascal!"

welcomed him with a warm greeting, and finally at his particular request sat down by his side upon the sofa, just as she sat before.

"Susan," said he—he spoke bluntly, for his courage and determination had been duly brought up to the sticking point before he started, "you said the other day, that you should be very, very happy to come and live with me. Did you mean that you would be willing to become my wife?"

There were a dozen tresses upon that white shoulder now, and they shook like aspens.

"That's a curious question, sir," she replied.

"But tell me plainly, did you mean that?"

"If I mistook your meaning, sir, you have no right to question mine."

"But Lord bless me! suppose I should ask you to be my wife? Answer me that."

"You never did ask me, sir."

"Then by the ear of old Neptune, I ask you now. Susan Garland will you be my wife?"

"Jerry Pleman—I will!"

"What!" cried the captain, starting back, and gazing into her blushing, tear-wet face—

"do you mean that you can love an old man like me—that you can love me always?"

"You are not old; and as for loving you, I have loved you for a long while; and if you take me for a wife, I'll love and bless you to my dying hour!"

"Then come here! Come here, Susan! Come right here; and if I ever cease to love you, and cherish you, and be true to you, may—may—that seaweed ghost come back!"

About ten minutes after this Uncle Jerry made the following sensible remark:

"Why, bless my soul! we are acting like two fools!"

The widow only smiled and said—

"Two very happy ones, ain't we?"

And Jerry said—

"Bless my soul—we are!"

On the following day, Jack happened to pass near the widow's house, and he dropped in. In a few moments he was the happiest fellow imaginable.

"But," said Susan, earnestly, "don't misunderstand me. I have loved your uncle—and loved him well and truly, and I believe he loved me, but dared not say so. Had it not been thus, I could not have done this. I would have helped you all the same by simply and flatly refusing you; but I could not have toyed or trifled with him. He is a good man, Jack—a good man."

"So he is," replied Jack. And then he went home.

The youth found his uncle in the library, with a book in his hand—said book being bottom-end up. He sat down and peeped wickily out of the corners of his eyes, while a very ill-mannered smile kept playing around the corners of his mouth.

"What are you winking and blinking, and squinting and grinning at, you young dog?" asked the old captain, with tremendous ferocity.

"I was thinking of a story I once read," returned Jack, quietly.

"A story, eh. What is it, you scape-grace?"

"I'll tell you uncle," said the nephew, with the smile and the twinkle more wicked than ever. "It was a very funny thing—it is the funniest thing I ever heard of. A man once went to set a trap in which to catch a very respectable and honorable young friend of his. He had got the trap all nicely set as he supposed, when—what do you think?"

"What, what, you graceless rascal?"

"Why, uncle, when the thing was all fixed, there was the funniest thing happened you ever heard of. Instead of catching his respectable, high-minded young friend, the old fellow got nabbed himself, in fact—he got caught in his own trap! Wasn't it—"

THE PRISONS OF CANTON, CHINA.

The detailed advices from China, by the recent foreign arrival, do not contain any additional news relative to the progress of the military or diplomatic operation, but they throw a strong flood of light on the character of the Chinese rule—at least under Governor Yeh. A more atrocious system of rule or a more brutal ruler could scarcely be found in any country or any age of the world. It seems that in the space of two years this savage mandarin caused no fewer than 70,000 persons (rebels, or supposed rebels) to be executed in the Acedama of Canton, and that the mode of execution rivals in barbarity that of the most degraded savages. The prisons of Canton, too, seem to be infinitely worse than even the worst of Naples, and the treatment of the prisoners indescribably horrible.

JAILS OF CANTON.

Lord Elgin and the commissioners having made a tour of inspection to the jails of Canton, the results of their experience have been set forth in the China Mail as follows:

Each of these establishments contains several different prisons, and the description of one of these will serve for the whole: It was entered by an open court-yard about fifteen yards long by six broad. This court-yard is paved with granite slabs, and tolerably clean and airy, thanks to the rain wind and sun to which it is exposed; on each side of the yard are three compartments or dens, each about five yards long by four broad, and separated from each other and from the court-yard by double rows of posts, similar to those used in barricading, the doors of the common Chinese houses in Hong Kong, the posts of one row fitting between the posts of the other row, leaving space barely for a man to pass his hand through. The doors of five of these six rooms were open; all the prisoners in these five dens thus having access to the open yard. Inside are boards and tressels, on which the prisoners lie, the floor being, as far as could be judged from the filth with which it was covered, as nature formed it—of earth; the height of the rooms is ample enough, and, on the whole, the prisoners were far better than expected, and if properly kept, would leave no cause for complaints.

On entering, the warning voice of the turnkey drove the poor wretches into their dens, but a tap on the hand soon silenced this officious personage, and the friendly voice of a foreigner telling them in Chinese to come out soon brought about seventy living creatures on their knees before such messengers of humanity as had never before stood in that horrid place. The sight of these poor creatures was dreadful; their forms diseased and emaciated—their eyes gazing in astonishment with the vacant stare of lunatics—their filthy rags dropping from them—their hair unshorn and uncombed, long and horribly stiff, black and abundant, in awful contrast with their pale and ghastly features; there they knelt, trembling with cold, weakened by starvation, and in some cases apparently callous even to the event—so strange and wonderful as it must have been to them—which was then taking place, of an inquiry into their condition by foreign occupants of the city. All the horrors of an English prison, poorhouse and lunatic asylum were here accumulated, without a single one of the redeeming features which mark those establishments in our own more civilized country. The prisoners were ordered to stand up, and then questioned, while some of the visitors went into the cells to examine them. Many of the poor wretches were actually too weak to come out of their dens to thank their deliverers, (foreigners, officers, and soldiers,) in the court-yard of the prison. Lengthened suffering, incarceration, and starvation had produced that callousness which, with excessive weakness, prevented them from coming to see a sight they had never before witnessed. They were told to go outside, and managed to raise their scrawny figures, and stagger along in front of their foreign visitors.

One poor child, a boy of 13 years of age, was also a prisoner in this horrible place. He was told to get up; but, with an empty idiotic smile on his face, he merely raised his eyes and shuffled a few inches along the board on which he was sitting; he was a prisoner for rebellion! The poor creature had not strength enough to stand; his limbs were frightful to look at—literally he was a living skeleton, and two of the ablest prisoners carried him out. The five dens were emptied, and while Mr. Parkes was talking with their late inmates, the other foreigners looked into the sixth den, the door of which was closed.

It is difficult to realize the horrible nature of the contents of that room. As the door opened, a piteous, lamentable cry arose from about twenty human beings, not one of whom could stand. Death's grip was hard on many of them; there was one poor fellow lying crumpled on the ground in a corner, his ribs actually protruding—he was dead!

"Yes, the living, the dying, the bleeding, the starving, the sick, the diseased, and the dead were all congregated in this one hole. These poor creatures, who were howling from pain and hunger, might and were it not for this visit, would soon have followed their dead comrades who still soared

their wretched charnel house to where alone they could look for release from their suffering—the grave. One of their number could speak English pretty fluently, and from him it was ascertained that the whole of them had been beaten. Not one of them could walk, and it was dreadful to see the agony they suffered in trying to draw their bleeding forms into the open air. Some had been beaten on the thighs, others on the feet and ankles; and they were all ironed, notwithstanding that they were not able to stand even, much less to escape.

THE FIELD OF BLOOD OF CANTON.

Threaded our way under the guidance of some experienced friend, we came to a carpenter's shop, fronting the entrance to a small potter's field. It is not a road in an area of an irregular shape, resembling most an oblong. A row of cottages open into it on one side; there is a wall on the other. The ground is covered with half-baked pottery; there are two wooden crosses formed of un-larked wood standing in an angle, with a shred of rotting rope hanging from one of them. There is nothing to fix the attention in this small enclosure, except that you stumble against a human skull now and then as you walk along it. This is the Acedama, the field of blood, the execution ground of Canton. The upper part of the carpenter's shop is the place where nearly all the European residents have, at the price of a dollar each witnessed the wholesale massacres of which Europe has heard with a hesitating skepticism. It was within this yard that that monster Yeh has within two years destroyed the life of seventy thousand fellow beings.

These crosses are the instrument to which those victims were tied who were condemned to the special torture of being sliced to death. Upon one of these the wife of a rebel general was placed, and by Yeh's order her flesh was cut from her body.

After the battle at Whampoa the rebel leader escaped but his wife fell into the hands of Yeh—that was how he treated his prisoner. Her breasts were first cut off, then her forehead was slashed and the skin torn down over the face, then the fleshy parts of the body were sliced away. There are Englishmen yet alive who saw this done, but at what period of the butchery sensation ceased and death came to this poor innocent woman none can tell. The fragment of rope which now hangs to one of the crosses was used to bind a woman who was cut up for murdering her husband. The sickening details of the massacre perpetrated on this spot have been related to me by those who have seen them, and who takes shame to themselves while they confess that after witnessing one execution by cutting on the cross, the rapidity and dexterity with which the mere beheading was done, deprived the execution of a hundred men of half its horror. The criminals were brought down in gangs, if they could walk, or brought down in chairs and shot out into the yard. The executioners then arranged them in rows, giving them a blow behind which forced out the head and neck, and laid them convenient for the blow. Then came the warrant of death. It is a banner as soon as it waved in sight, without verbal order given, the work began. There was a rapid succession of dull crunching sounds—chop, chop, chop, chop. No second blow was ever dealt, for the dexterous man slayers are educated to their work. Until they can with their heavy swords slice a great bulbous vegetable as thin as we slice a cucumber they are not eligible for their office. Three seconds a head suffice! In one minute five executioners clear off 100 lives. It takes rather longer for the assistant to cram the bodies into rough coffins especially as you might see them cramming two into one shell, that they might embezzle the spare wooden box. The heads were carried off in boxes; the saturated earth was of value as manure.

"Wall, Jefferson, I guess you are tolerable late nor you used to was," said an engine driver on a Yankee railway, who has been waiting at a junction a good while for the train that just arrived under the charge of Jefferson.

"Wall, replied Jefferson, wiping his perspiring face with a handful of cotton waste, "I reckon we are behind a considerable scarce, but that don't trouble me, no how; it's getting along here any time astonishes me a several—it does."

"Been a smash?" inquired the first speaker, chewing slowly.

"I expect not," returned Jefferson, but well nigh one. Why ye see down away it was darned hot, very, and the rails was all expanding so much that the way was not only drawn out dreadful, but, what was worse, had not room to stretch quite, and was all so raised and humped up, it's just been as worse as if I had come the whole entire road over two tall rows of lamination emelsa' back!"

"Wall, I calo'late that was 'noying a few,' returned the listener, but one day bringing up my engine it was hot, I reckon the rails was feverish a chalk or two that time! I put full steam up, shut safety valves; stacked brado off, right away and we walked ahead! We did. But only just in time, for we looked back and saw the rails crawling about like live snakes, and running over the banks to cut themselves in the water!"

Jefferson went off to oil his engine.

From the Lark's House Magazine.

BEAUTIFUL NARRATIVE.

We think we have nowhere seen a more simple, touching and beautiful narrative, showing forth the power of truth, than this which follows. It is from the pen of S. H. Hammond, the author of "Country Margins," and a most pleasant and genial writer:

I witnessed a short time ago, in one of our higher Courts, a beautiful illustration of the simplicity and power of truth. A little girl nine years of age was offered as a witness against a prisoner who was on trial for felony committed in her father's house.

"Now, Emily," said the counsel for the prisoner, upon her being offered as a witness, "I desire to know if you understand the nature of an oath?"

"I don't know what you mean," the simple answer.

"There, your Honor," said the counsel, addressing the Court, "is any thing further necessary to demonstrate the validity of my objections? This witness should be rejected. She does not comprehend the nature of an oath."

"Let us see," said the Judge. "Come here my daughter." Assured by the kind tone and manner of the Judge, the child stepped towards him, (and looked confidently up in his face, with a calm, clear eye) and in a manner so artless and frank that it went straight to the heart. "Did you ever take an oath?" inquired the Judge. The little girl stepped back with a look of horror, and the red blood mounted in a blush all over her face and neck, as she answered.

"No, sir," she thought he intended to inquire if she had ever blasphemed.

"I do not mean that," said the Judge, who saw her mistake. "I mean were you ever a witness before?"

"No, sir, I never was in Court before," was the answer.

He handed her the Bible open. "Do you know that book, my daughter?"

She looked at it and answered, "Yes, sir, it is the Bible."

"Do you ever read it?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, every evening."

"Can you tell me what the Bible is?" inquired the Judge.

"It is the word of the great God," she answered.

"Well, place your hand upon this Bible, and listen to what I say, and be repeated slowly and solemnly the oath usually administered to witnesses."

"Now," said the Judge, "you have been sworn as a witness—will you tell me what will befall you if you do not tell the truth."

"I shall be shut up in the State prison," answered the child.

"Anything else," asked the Judge.

"I shall not go to Heaven," she replied.

"How do you know this?" asked the Judge again.

The child took the Bible, and turning rapidly to the chapter containing the commandments, pointed to the injunction—

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." "I learned that," she said, "before I could read."

"Has any one talked to you about being a witness in