

South Norwalk Sentinel

MANHATTAN

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WHOLE NO. 310.

ONE THING LEARNED.

He was very, very old.
The feathers were all gone;
His heart was weak; his step was slow;
He quite forgot the sense of pain.

A few words this I'll tell you, and then
With my pen I'll sign off.
His voice is hoarse, his eyes are dim;
Speaking of many years ago.

Then when his children gathered round
With my pen I'll sign off.
His voice is hoarse, his eyes are dim;
Speaking of many years ago.

"How old is it?" he softly said.
"My birthday, children! Ninety-nine
Dear God, how now quickly time has sped!
Not but one hundred years since I saw
Fall the last sun-ray a golden orb."

To meet the glee his face was turned;
A hundred years of life, he said;

"Dear God, but one thing have I learned;
To love them; and but one thing earned;
The love," and smiling, he was dead.

THE CAPTIVE KING.

An Historical Romance.

BY MARCUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER.

It was a beautiful day toward the close of the 12th century. The scene was one of almost indescribable grandeur, a strong castle with its towering towers, its impregnable bastions, and its heavy masonry, situated on a rocky eminence, formed the background of the scene. Between this fortification and the point of observation was a wide and deep ravine, at the bottom of which leaped a wild stream that took its origin in among the clefts in the rocks of the neighboring mountains. The roar of the stream, as it rushed on its winding course, dashing itself against the black rocks that arose in its pathway, was changed to a gentle murmur as the sound struck the ear of the observer stationed upon the high ground on either side.

On the left of the foreground stood a strong stone mansion. It was built in the style of a castle similar to the dwellings of the rich of the period. The narrow openings in the walls, and the heavy iron-bound doors studded with heavy nails told plainly that it could be used as a small fortress, against which besiegers could make but little progress.

A well beaten road lay but a few yards before this massive mansion, but which as it wound in among the rocks down into the dark ravine toward this stupendous structure, the castle, changed into a narrow pathway, led by the humble peasant, or the hunter in his pursuit of the nimble chamois.

Towards the hour of noon of this day of which we speak, a poor blind minstrel, leaning upon his shodding harp and led by a faithful guide, was making along the road approaching the mansion above referred to. The dust that clung to th' targeted garments told of much travel, and their clothing bespoke of their poverty. When they had arrived near the rich man's dwelling, the blind harper said to his young guide.

"Where are we now, Carl?"

"We are not far from a grand old castle, with its towers and battlements," replied the youth. "And, there, now, if you but hal your sight, you might see two soldiers on the ramparts with their cross-bows."

"My feet are weary with our lengthy journey," sighed the harper. "Can we not rest awhile?"

"This way, here is a scene made out a seat," returned Carl, as he led his master to the resting place. "Oh, what a pity it is you cannot see the beautiful prospect," he continued, when they were seated. "Though so wild, it is as fine as any in Germany. I know this place well, sir," the little guide prattled on. "That little hamlet you see is my birth-place. It seems as though 'twas but yesterday since I left my father's humble home to earn my bread among strangers." A tear glistened in the youth's eye at the remembrance. "Here, just opposite us," he continued, "is a fine old mansion. I remember my father's oft repeated story about its owner, a good, loyal Englishman—a Baron, I believe, exiled from his native land by a stern king."

"An Englishman did you say?" asked the blind harper, as the bright glow of surprise at the mention of a man who came from his native land.

"Yes. And, master, as you feel so much pleasure at the mention of an Englishman, you may understand how my heart longs to seek out one little cottage yonder. May I leave you for a while?"

"Yes, Carl; you have been faithful to me. Do not hurry back, for I intend to stay here." Off bounded the youth and was soon lost to sight in amongst the rocks.

After a few moments, when the harper thought he was no longer observed, he removed the bandage from his face and looked about him with eyes as good as any human being was ever granted with.

"Carl is gone," he said, "and I may now use my sight. A man's indeed! There are towers, masts and battlements. They say it is strongly guarded and almost inaccessible. It seems to me in this wild and sequestered spot, such a pile could only have been planned to hide some mighty captive."

"Richard!—my hero, my friend! My best endeavor shall be used to free you from your chains. And should I fall, then let death visit poor broken-hearted Laurette, for life without three is a burden." This language and the tears that stole down the soft cheek betrayed that the speaker was not a poor blind harper, but a young and tender girl who had assumed this disguise to effect the escape of one dear to her, who was a prisoner in the castle.

While gazing on the formidable structure, Laurette—as she must be called—did not perceive the approach of a gentleman from the mansion opposite, until he was at her side.

"I should like to know what all this," said the gentleman, talking to himself while looking at a letter which he held in his hand. "The governor writes a military hand," he continued; "his letters edge out in a characteristic fashion like his own, for I can't make my way through it; I wish I had somebody to decipher it."

Then on looking up he observed Laurette sitting on the rustic seat. "Oh, how is a girl of an outlandish land, I think I may trust her. Youngster, can you read?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Well, then, read this," continued the blunt Englishman, handing the letter to Laurette, which she read as follows:

"Beautiful Laurette, my heart overflows with ecstasy and gratitude for the kind assurances you give me of eternal safety. If my attendance on the prisoner whom I must not quit, would cause me to go out during the day, I would hasten to throw myself at your feet. Contrive some means to inform the king of my safety, speak to your companion. Your services satisfied and eternally constant."

"Here's a d—d governor for you; Oh, if I had him in England!"

"What are you a Briton, then?" asked Laurette interrupting the angry old English Baron.

"I am; I am; and an enemy to slaves, of course, in love or out."

"Then I suppose, you are true and loyal to King Richard, the brave warrior?"

"Glorious King Richard! how I love him," exclaimed the Baron. "I fought under him at Palestine. What treachery to hold him captive."

"I, too, served him as a page, when we lay before Jerusalem. Kind sir, could you assist me to a place to sleep this night?"

"If you want refreshment, the poor and friendless are never driven from my door." Saying this in his usual abrupt manner he turned away and grumbled to himself about his daughter's love letter.

Laurette turned to view the strong castle again. A certain line in the letter which she had read, made a deep impression on her mind. "My attendance on the prisoner whom I must not quit." More light had entered her soul at these words than ever before, and she strained her eyes to try and catch a glimpse of those within the court-yard of the castle.

"Good sir, did not my father speak to you about a letter?" said a sweet voice close to Laurette.

"Are you the pretty Nanette?" answered Laurette, turning toward the speaker.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, your father knows the contents of that letter from Florestan, and he is very angry."

"What did you read it to him for? I was watching you."

"If I had not some one else would, but say, my pretty Nanette, who is the prisoner in the castle?"

"Oh, no one knows who he is," returned Nanette.

"Do you love Florestan?"

"Oh, so much!"

"Well, this night, if you love him truly you will see him, and feel his gentle caresses."

"Oh, joy! joy! But, kind sir, how know you this?"

"I must not tell," answered Laurette evitably.

"Good, my dear sir; my father will be looking for me, and I must not let him see me talking to you." And waving his little hand she bounded gleefully off into the house.

Laurette sighed, and turned around again to gaze upon those frightful and gloomy looking walls.

CHAPTER II.

THE ESCAPE.

King Richard 1st of England, on account of his bravery and undaunted courage, had obtained for himself the surname of Coeur de Lion, or the Lion Hearted, long before he succeeded his father to the throne of England. His fearless disposition and his love of war had prompted him soon after his accession to the throne, to lead England and with his Barons go and fight in the Holy Land. To drive the Moors from Jerusalem appeared to Richard to be the highest duty of a Christian, a monarch, and a warrior.

Philip, king of France, also joined him in this grand design; but Richard soon lost the friendship of Philip, by marrying a princess against the wishes of his friend.

During the war in the East, the affairs in England were very bad. John, Richard's brother, attempted to seize the throne, which caused great confusion throughout the land. This news reaching Richard's ears, he determined to return home. On his way he was made prisoner by the Duke of Austria, whom he had offended while in the Holy Land, and confined in this castle of Beaufort. In this strong fortification he passed many weary days, and the place of his confinement remained unknown for a long time.

Richard was allowed to pace the courtyard of his prison once or twice a day in company with the governor of the fortress. On this day, Richard, instead of walking in the sunlight, sat moaning in one of the corners.

"Another half hour passed and then the firm tread of some approaching was heard, and the men in concealment prepared themselves.

Florestan neared the gate where he was met by Laurette.

"Good evening," said she.

"Ah! 'tis you, my fair lad," returned Florestan, grasping the harper's hand.

"You Nanette bid me to stand and meet you that I might conduct you to her presence, Come!" This last word was spoken a little louder than the other, and scarcely had it been pronounced when, from the darkness sprang the six men, and before Florestan fully recovered from his surprise he was gaged and securely bound and carried out of the castle.

"Now," said Laurette to the captain of the soldiers, "get your men in line and let us be off."

"Sir, profit by the fresh air, for your health's sake," said Florestan, to him.

"Within an hour your guards must do their duty, and you will be again secluded from the day."

The king remained silent, as though he heard not the governor's voice; then looking up quickly, he said:

"Florestan!"

"Sir!"

"Your fortune is in your power."

"Sir, my honor is," said Florestan, to him.

"Within an hour your guards must do their duty, and you will be again secluded from the day."

The king remained silent, as though he heard not the governor's voice; then looking up quickly, he said:

"Florestan!"

"Sir!"

"Your fortune is in your power."

"Sir, my honor is," cried the king.

Contemptuously. "A base, perfidious—"

"Did I believe him to be such. I would not serve him," interrupted Florestan.

"But Florestan!"

"I cannot talk with you," and the governor turned away and sat for a while.

"Oh, God! Oh, mercy!" exclaimed King Richard when he was alone. "Shall I wear till death the chains of bondage? Subject to the will of a crafty Duke, kept here in solitude, while my men, ill-governed England decays?" He drew a small portrait from his breast, and resting it upon the pived wall, he said: "I have done all I can for my countrymen, and the world is still in darkness, and the people are still in ignorance."

"Richard!—my hero, my friend! My best endeavor shall be used to free you from your chains. And should I fall, then let death visit poor broken-hearted Laurette, for life without three is a burden."

This language and the tears that stole down the soft cheek betrayed that the speaker was not a poor blind harper, but a young and tender girl who had assumed this disguise to effect the escape of one dear to her, who was a prisoner in the castle.

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Then on looking up he observed Laurette sitting on the rustic seat. "Oh, how is a girl of an outlandish land, I think I may trust her. Youngster, can you read?"

"Conduct the king within the castle; there are spies about," said quickly, to one of the guards, and then turning to the others bade them seize the harper, and conduct him.

Laurette, who had placed the bandage with care and gratitude for the kind assurances you give me of eternal safety. If my attendance on the prisoner, whom I must not quit, would cause me to go out during the day, I would hasten to throw myself at your feet. Contrive some means to inform the king of my safety, speak to your companion.

"What is the governor?" she asked.

"I am he," answered Florestan, firmly.

"I have something of importance to communicate to you," continued the harper.

"Attempt no trifling, or pervert that instant."

"Are we alone, good sir?"

"We are," returned the governor, when the guards had obeyed his actions and retired.

"Then, sir, the lovely Nanette—"

"Speak lower," said Florestan quickly, while Laurette could hardly hold within herself the secret of the success of her plan.

"Pretty Nanette has read you letter and commanded me to tell you that come to her father's house at any hour you please this evening."

"At her father's house?"

"Yes; she says her father will not be at home."

"What can I do to reward you, my fine fellow?"

"Order the guards to turn me adrift out of this place, so as to avoid suspicion."

"Fleed a clever lad. Here, guard; seize him, and carry him to the outer gate, and listen, my last attempt no more to venture near those walls of iron." The latter part of his speech was uttered with a tremor, and Laurette could hardly control her voice.

"The hole in the basket."

"The hole in the basket."

"A native preacher in the South Seas once

said the following illustration:

"He said, 'I will relate an ancient story to show how the gods once punished the sin of

treachery.'

"When Richard returned to England, the manner of his escape remained a secret; but those brave men who fought for him on that night were magnificently rewarded on their return. The Baron, also, was pardoned, and allowed to end his days in his native land, and Laurette was cared for by the kindest hands and ever had a dear and affectionate friend in Richard, Cœur-de-Lion.

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