

### THE MERMAID AND THE OCTOPUS.

BY CHARLES P. RUSSELL.

There was a mermaid beneath the sea, By her pale kelp in a locked abyss— Yet in spite of the cruel old merman, she Put in her little white hands a slimy, grimy octopus! A green, unloving octopus!

The son of the ocean, cuttle-fish!

A quivering, shivering octopus!

He'd savage eyes, and dreadful strength In his horrid head that cocked up was— And tentacles, thirty feet in length, Struck with a lightning, scorpion!

This mighty, biting octopus!

This snapple, fury cuttle-fish!

The son of the ocean, cuttle-fish!

A quivering, shivering octopus!

There wriggled in an electric eel—

On the mermaid's lips he cracked a buss!

"Although the old man is dead, I'm up—

But you'd better look out for my octopus!"

He's a fruitful, spiny cuttle-fish!

A green, unloving cuttle-fish!

A quivering, shivering cuttle-fish!

Quoth she to her old, old mermaid,

"Although the old man is dead, I'm up—

But you'd better look out for my octopus!"

He's a fruitful, spiny cuttle-fish!

A green, unloving cuttle-fish!

The son of the ocean, cuttle-fish!

A quivering, shivering cuttle-fish!

She called, "Eyes, eyes, eyes, eyes!"

Down the ocean floor she wriggled a bus,

But it only wriggled her, sulky, away,

She might as well have wriggled the octopus!

A green, unloving cuttle-fish!

The son of the ocean, cuttle-fish!

A quivering, shivering cuttle-fish!

—*scratches for May.*

THE OLD INN.

"No, Ned, I will never give my consent to your marrying her. She is very inferior in every way, both by birth and social position. It shall not be said that a Feverish man married beneath him, if I can help it."

Old George Feverish was a retired banker, wealthy and most aristocratically bred. In his opinion, poverty was a crime unpardonable, and the poorer class were cared for less by him than even the dogs baying in their kennels were claimed.

That his one son Edward, the spoiled heir to all the banker's wealth and hereditary estates of Feverish Place, should stoop from his exalted position to select a wife from that circle so far below him, was an idea not to be tolerated for an instant.

Feverish determined to nip it in the bud, and the sooner the better. —Ned listened to his father's stern tones in respectful silence, but when he had heard the last, quietly, though firmly,

"I am not of an age, nor therefore, in this matter, fitly comparable, to him who my love loves me, I shall make her my wife, regardless of outside opinion."

The old man's brows gathered blackly for a moment, then he smiled.

"Young men are apt to change their tastes in so long a time as that," said he; "therefore I am content. But as you have been in the course of conduct as soon as you attain your majority, the one year that interests belongs to me, and I desire you to spend it in travel. You shall start as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made."

Ned bowed, and left the room.

Miss Allony was the daughter of the Allony of Wolfden—a queer, uncanny place, quite in keeping with its owner, a hideous hunchback, who, with his wizened wife, was the terror of the neighborhood.

How so horrid a couple could have produced such a graceful and altogether lovely and lovely a creature as Sybil was a question often asked, and pondered over not a little by those who saw the remarkable family. Not the slightest resemblance did the girl bear to her repudiated parents. She was small and slender, a true Springfield, with big, shiny, starry eyes, a smiling, glittering mass of ebony hair, that shone like a lamp.

—"Let us go back, gentlemen," said Ned. "I feel that a wise Providence has placed it in our power to unravel a dark crime. Let us return to the outer day and read this diary, which, perhaps, will give us the clew to this horrible mystery."

They returned to the inn, and in the stillness of their private parlor, Ormsby and Sybil read the mucky mucky journal. The first part was mostly jottings of incidents occurring in the life of a gentleman, and sketches of places visited and people seen; then there was a blank, after which came the startling words, "Walled up alive!"

"I am, Leonard Ashmore, Baronet of Ashmore, England, being of sound mind, and knowing that I am for ever buried from the outside world, and feel it my duty to keep a secret, he acquainted his father with the knowledge of affairs, fully expecting to receive from him, God-speed in his woing. The result was anything but pleasant; but, as it could not be helped, he swallowed his chagrin, determined, he wrote, to the end of the year to return and claim his bride.

So, with one last passionate parting with Sybil, Ned went away on his travels.

The first six months passed draggingly, and found him, with two brother tourists, exploring the picturesque scenes of Scotland. Along its winding streams, and granite-walled land-scapes Ned dreamt and while away the days that intervened between him and the appointed time of his return. But there was something in store.

One afternoon, in turning a sharp angle in the road, the young man came suddenly upon an old ruin, standing in bold relief upon a rock, at whose base flowed a turbid stream that emptied its waters in a deep, dark tarn in the glen below.

The building was long and low, with a slanting roof, over which two tall, narrow chimneys rose grimly upright like sentinels keeping guard over some desecrated field of carnage. The windows were short and wide, and the doors heavy and deeply set in massive frames, suggestive of strength and long-contained endurance. The casings and sills upon which once had been the deep coating of dark-green paint were now faded, and, though still in existence, gave an air of gloom and desolation more often seen in these modern days. Over entrance-way still hung a faded sign, which creaked and groaned dismally in every gust of wind, proclaiming that the queer old structure was once known as the "Allony Inn." The name aroused Ned's curiosity.

"By Jove! I'll make a sketch of this rock," said Dabbsgreen, who was a kind of amateur artist, and in putting on canvas the queerest of landscape, and all other odd bits of quaintness that came under his notice. "This must be that old concern our host was talking about that rumor says has a ghost. There's three of us. Suppose we explore the 'castle gray,'" continued Dabbsgreen, lightly.

"Agreed!" they cried.

And Ned turning the knob of the door, in an instant they were in the gloomy old interior, and gazing curiously at private property. The paper was peeling away from the walls, and hung in long strips that rattled mournfully; and the dust, the gathering of years, started up in thick clouds, as the audacious feet stalked d liberately through the long-creased rooms.

At the end of a corridor, up stairs, they came to a barred door. It yielded to their united efforts, and they entered a large bedchamber. In one corner stood a high-ost bedstead. A wash-stand occupied the space near the grained window; and a coat, worn and moth-eaten, covered the floor.

Dark red stains covered the sheets, yellow with age, and the pillows were

stiff and hard, and with that same red-color. Ned shuddered.

"Blood!" said Frank Ormsby, who was standing by the medical provision, and, therefore, was qualified to speak.

An inner door suggested more mystery; which, upon entering, proved to be a bedroom similar to the one they had just left. But there were no stains on the bedding; and, finding nothing, Ned followed his companions down the stairs, who now clamored for an investigation of the underground regions.

"There must be something in the cellar; I take my oath to it," Frank said, emphatically.

So the trap-door was lifted; but the intense darkness hid whatever was there, and they agreed to go back to their host's, and return the next day with torches and everything that they fancied they would need.

"I dinna ken where ye man find, my guid son, the daurin' octopus!" said the host.

"Aye, dinna ken where ye man find, my guid son, the daurin' cuttle-fish!"

"Aye, dinna ken where ye man find, my guid son, the cuttle-fish!"

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