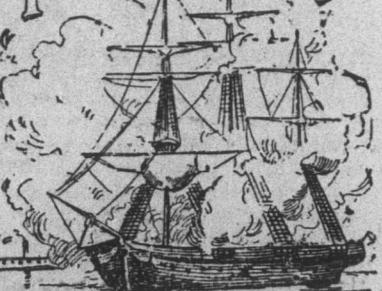


In Sheep's Clothing.



By Capt. Ormond Steele

CHAPTER XII.

Colonel Graham could not have been much over 50 years of age, but he ordinarily looked to be 60, and now that he was suffering from a very unnecessary loss of blood, added to great mental anxiety, he might have passed for 70 at least.

His sickness called out a great interest, and the people of the town and the officers of the Sea Hawk would have paid him every attention had he permitted it.

The visit was soon noised abroad, and created no little comment; but, as many of the humbler people, and some of the well-to-do also, had great faith in her curative skill, it was generally believed that Colonel Graham had summoned her to examine his case.

Unlike the majority of his race, Othello was reticent, and though he was pretty well subjected to the pumping process, he kept his own and his master's secrets; the latter had suddenly become very heavy, but, being naturally shrewd, he bore the burden with a dim notion that it would turn out sooner or later to his advantage.

His relationship to Dinah was not known outside themselves. The old woman called every man, white, black or red, "mam," and she was usually called "granny."

Graham could not afford to remain pent up in his room. It was essential that he should be off, yet evident to the doctor and even himself that he would not be able to make the journey overland to New York, for at least two weeks.

"I am very anxious," he said to Dr. Hedges, the day after Dinah's visit, "to utilize my forced stay here by learning something of the aborigines. I have seen, here in your streets, Uncas, the Montauk chief, and his rarely beautiful sister, Untilla; if they be fair specimens of the natives, they are people to be envied."

"They are hardly fair specimens," said the doctor, who was an authority on Indian matters. "They belong to the royal race, and are descended from the great Wyandanch, with whom our first settlers—my father was one of them—made a treaty for the lands now held by the whites. A trip into the land of the Montauks would do you good; and if you desire to make it, I will see that they give you due care and a proper escort."

"They are hospitable, then?"

"Yes; as all brave people are, no matter where you find them."

"I thank you for your offer, and will start at once," said Graham.

He was emphatically a man of action, and so well did he exert himself, that by the early afternoon of that day, he was sitting on a horse, while his servant, mounted on another, led an animal laden with their luggage.

The young chief, Uncas, being in town that day, was asked by Doctor Hedges to take charge of the colonel and his servant, and he did so with a readiness and grace that would have done credit to an accomplished courtier.

Uncas on foot, and with his long rifle thrown over his shoulder, strode ahead, and he would have kept on, without a halt, had not Colonel Graham stopped him at the colonel's house.

The colonel was not anxious to meet the Squire again, but on this occasion he could not avoid it, for that gentleman was standing in the road in front of his own house, and looked as if he wanted to be addressed.

Approaching the colonel, and laying his hand on the horse's mane, the Squire said:

"When you spoke to me last, you said there was something you wanted to get Ralph Denham to do, when you would answer a question I asked."

"I am aware of that," said the colonel, brightly.

"Well, I am ready."

"But the Captain is here?"

"I know he is not."

"Then it is impossible for you to fulfill your part of the condition, so with your permission we shall wait till he returns from New York."

"But you may not be here then."

"How do you know?"

"I know but little about your past or present, unfortunately, and that little, I guess, is not in your favor. You do not wish to speak now. Go on, we shall meet again before you leave, depend on that."

Squire Condit, with a flushed face, turned toward his house, and the colonel, followed by Othello, and preceded by the colonel's wife, rode off.

"'Bye, Good-bye!" said Mrs. Condit, who, with her daughter Ellen, Lea Hedges, Valentine Dayton and the old Lieutenant, was looking over the flower garden, now in a most charming bloom, "you look to be excited. Has anything wrong been done to you?"

Mrs. Condit had never seen Colonel Graham until his recent visit, and he, his husband, not caring to trouble her, or it may be with the belief that one can keep a secret better than two, had never told her his suspicion and dislike of this man, nor hinted that he had ever received money from him for Ralph's care.

Squire Condit had a religion and also a manly hatred of falsehood, but being something of a lawyer he was inclined to caution and diplomacy, and had the skill to parry a direct question without throwing much light on it.

"I have no sympathy with people whose curiosity takes them in among peaceful enough people if they are left alone. Some day one of these rich Englishmen will see the land of the Montauks—as did the spies of Joshua in the olden time—and they will conclude that it would make a fine estate and game preserve, and then they will send agents over here, and under some trumped-up treaty they will get the lands away from our red neighbors," said the Squire.

"Wasn't that the way grandfather did?" asked Ellen, laughing.

"No it wasn't. The treaty with the great Wyandanch was fair, and has not been violated by Montauk or white man. I read it so often when I was a boy that I knew it by heart, with all the old spelling. Let me see; it begins:

April the 29th, 1648.

"This present writing testifieth an agreement between the worship'll Theophilus Eaton, Esquire, Governor of the Colony New Haven, and the worship'll Edward Herkyn, Esquire, Governor of the Colony Connecticut, and their Assemblies on the one part, and Pocumtuck, Sachem of Munhausett, Wyandanch, Sachem of Mountauk, Monowiwo, of the other part."

Squire Condit would have gone clear through the agreement had not Valen Dayton interrupted with the exclamation:

"I declare, Squire, your memory is remarkable. Strange how those old Indian names get twisted round from the original."

"A pity it is. Now, I could give you some remarkable instances of the mutilation of native words; for instance, their Corahs—"

Miss Condit mercifully saved the young people from hearing the Squire airing his Indian vocabulary by leading him into the house, on the plea of wanting him to taste her new raspberry vinegar. And so, after all, the Squire was not pumped.

In the meantime Colonel Graham followed his guide, and when they had gone out of sight of the settlements the latter dropped back and said:

"Here we are in the land of the Montauks, to which I bid you welcome." "Thank you," replied Graham. "You have a boat here?" "How far does it extend to the eastward from here?"

"As far as the island extends."

"And you cultivate the soil?"

"The women do that," said the chief, proudly. "Of course, but you have flocks and herds?"

"Some, but the deer on the hills are our flocks, and the sword-fish in the sea are our herds."

"You must lead a happy, independent life. How far is your settlement from here?"

"We can reach it before the sun is there," replied the chief, pointing his rifle half way down the western sky.

They went on with more speed, and in the afternoon they came to a wooded elevation, from which they had a view to the eastward of a nearly treeless valley, in which were many houses of logs and bark, and behind which there stretched a great plain that looked like a lake.

He was pacing the deck, watching the failing canes of the Indians, and called out, "What is this?" "It is a species of wild grass, which grows with them on these hills, when Captain Fox, who had been issuing commands to the eastward from here?"

"Do the black woman, Dinah, live here?" asked Graham, as they descended to the valley.

"You mean the black priestess?"

"There is her house," said the chief, pointing to a cabin from the clay chimney of which the smoke was rising.

"Do you all like her?"

"Some do. I do not, though once I did like her," said the chief.

"And why did you change?"

"Because she was the friend of Ralph Denham."

"Then you do not like Denham?"

"I hate him, and should he return and meet me alone, blood will be spilled."

"Why do you hate him?"

Before replying, Uncas looked Graham full in the face, and was satisfied that he, too, had no liking for the sailor.

"My sister likes him as she does her tole."

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CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTAIN FOX AND HIS GUEST.

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