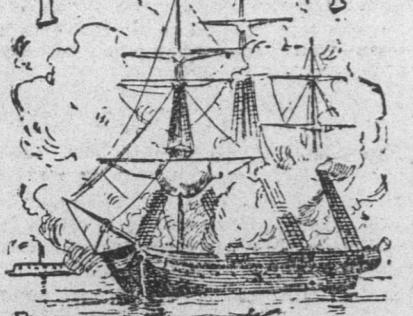


# In Sheep's Clothing.



By Capt. Ormond Steele

CHAPTER XX—Continued.

"Do you think, Captain, that that

body Kidd is coming up this way?"

"I am inclined to think he is."

"If he does will you fight him?"

"That's what I am here for," said Fox.

By this time they had reached the shore, where Frenaud was waiting with the boat, and Fox and his party started for the Wanderer.

The man who had been favored with the captain's replies at once became an oracle—the most important man in the town for the time, and a central figure about whom wondering groups gathered wherever he went.

The reason for Capt. Fox's return was now plain to the dullest comprehension. He had been sent from New York to meet and destroy Capt. Kidd, the monster pirate of the oceans. And it was the general belief that if Capt. Kidd had the temerity to come within sight of Capt. Fox's ship that the fate of the former would be sealed to a dead certainty.

Heretofore Ralph Denham had been the naval hero of Sag Harbor, but with an inconsistency and forgetfulness peculiar to the race at all times and in all conditions, they forgot the old idol in the glaring presence of this grand new one.

Captain Fox was the man, and some of the more sanguine residents, Doctor Hedges among them, believed that he would have kidd within the week, if he was within reach.

Squire Condit never did run with the crowd; he was eccentric, and he had the boldness to assert himself. As a deacon he could not conscientiously lay a wager, but he told Doctor Hedges:

"I'll give you a farm of two hundred acres, doctor, if this fellow Fox catches Kidd; that is, if Kidd is in these waters, if you'll give me one hundred acres of equally good land, if Ralph Denham catches him."

"I agree to that," said the doctor, eagerly.

Squire Condit was sorely perplexed. Like Lieut. Hedges and Lou Hedges, he was sure there was something wrong, and his wife and daughter were also sure, but neither one could say, even indefinitely, where that something wrong was.

Telling Den to show Colonel Graham to the cabin, Fox, on reaching the deck of the Wanderer, drw Frenaud to one side and said, in a low tone:

"That man Thrasher should be here by this time."

"You mean he should have reached the town, sir?"

"That is just what I do mean. Go ashore again; if he is there, bring him aboard; if he is not, wait till he arrives. You understand me?"

"I do, clearly."

"And you will still maintain a strict reticence with the people ashore, unless you can add to the impression that we are here to watch for Captain Kidd."

"All right, sir," replied Frenaud, turning away with much admiration for the adroitness with which Fox was turning this report to his own account.

Captain Fox was prevented from going down to talk to Colonel Graham by the arrival of a gift from the Sea Hawk, bearing Lieutenant Hedges, the officer in command.

The instant Fox saw the fine sturdy sailor, he advanced to him with extended hand, saying, after the cordial salutation was over:

"There will be plenty of work for both of us pretty soon, Lieutenant. Capt. Denham will be here in a few days with a supply ship for the Sea Hawk and Wanderer. In the meantime, how are you off for ammunition?"

"We have a fair supply, sir," replied the Lieutenant, handing Fox what the brave fellow supposed was his own captain's letter, instructing him to report to Fox.

Without looking at the letter, Fox said:

"Ah, yes, Capt. Denham's letter asking you to report to me. Well, we shall consider that done. Now, send me at once a list of all your arms, their condition, the amount and kind of ammunition, and the number of your crew, with a report on the general condition of the Sea Hawk. You see, Lieutenant, while I am not in actual command, it is very essential for me to know exactly what I am responsible for."

"That, Capt. Fox, is evidently right and proper," said Mr. Hedges, much impressed with the precaution and evidence of executive ability evinced by his superior. "Might I ask, sir, if there is a possibility of the Sea Hawk being ordered to any port very soon?"

"A possibility, but not a strong probability. My belief is, that Capt. Denham will be back before your ship goes to sea. But the chances are that the Wanderer may leave to-morrow or next day; it will depend on reports expected from New York. Should I go to sea I will borrow all your ammunition, as I am about out, and you can get a replacement from the supply ship that Capt. Denham will bring on."

"I shall do as you order in that matter," said Lieut. Hedges, saluting and turning away.

Capt. Fox watched the commanding officer of the Sea Hawk until the boat that carried him came alongside his own ship.

For looked pleased with himself and every one else, as he had good reason to be.

So far he had succeeded with his customary luck; and the future looked golden with a harvest of rare promise.

He was not the man to be carried away by success. So far he had shown much of the character of the abused animal whom he had assumed, but to cunning he now added a wonderful caution.

His immediate plan was to capture the Sea Hawk, and then with his men and the Sag Harbor men he could be induced to embark under the black flag.

But fearing that he might be detected before he could perfect his scheme, he arranged to have the Sea Hawk depleted of ammunition, so that she could make little or no resistance should it become necessary to appeal to his last resort—force.

By fair means or foul he should get Lea Hedges and Ellen Condit on board the Wanderer, with such other maidens as had struck the coarse fancies of his other officers, and then put to sea with two fleet vessels that would enable him to bound right and left without fear, and to destroy any force that might be sent against him.

He felt sure that Ralph Denham, in the power of the jealous Montauk chief, was as good as dead, yet be alive long enough to keep him in reserve as a

means of terrorizing Colonel Graham, or Lord Palton, should he refuse to accede to his additional terms.

So far, everything looked to the carrying out of this bold programme with success. The most difficult part of the work was already accomplished, and he was a strong believer in the proverb that what is well begun is half finished.

Feeling very much pleased with himself, as from his peculiar standpoint he had certainly a right to be, Captain Fox went down to the cabin, where sat Colonel Graham, looking anything but happy.

"You don't look well, Colonel," said Fox, with more familiarity of manner than he had ever before assumed to the man who now felt sure that in law, as well as in fact, he was Lord Palton.

"If he does will you fight him?"

"That's what I am here for," said Fox.

At once began preparations for the work she had set herself. About her thin neck she stung a number of peculiar shell-necklaces. About her head she wound tightly a white turban, and in this she put into place by a snake so naturally present that the eyes and tongue, in the center of her forehead, seemed flashing and darting.

About her lank arms she wound other snakes, and they looked to be held in place by their own contractions.

Over her shoulders she threw a scarlet mantle, decorated with tinsel stars, the moon in all its stages, and queer abracastical characters, all the more awful to the ignorant Indians for their representing nothing in particular.

This done, Dinah took a long staff, not the one she usually carried, but another that looked as much like a great serpent as the rods the Egyptians tried to pass off as Moses, and her toilet was completed.

She next sat down on a high stool in her cabin door, a slight to alarm the strongest if she appeared unexpectedly, and waited for the coming of Untilla.

In a few minutes a light, quick step was heard approaching, and then a shadow fell across the threshold.

Untilla stood there, but the old black woman, without looking up, said in a voice that seemed to come from some far-off place:

"Untilla de Montauk—"

"Yes, Dinah."

"You on me hez got to run a race wid death. We must git ahead of 'im, en drive 'im back from de grave."

"I am ready," said Untilla, eagerly; "let's be goin'."

The old crone started her staff, took from the floor near by a basket containing an earthen dish and sundry parcels of food, and then started off.

They bent their course to the west; the Indian girl walking with the light, springy step of a fawn, and Dinah with a vigor that was wonderful in one of her years.

Without an instant's hesitation or stop they hurried on, till the hill, with its base, rose before them.

They saw Old Somonk and his wife cooking before a little fire outside, and Young Somonk and two other Indians lying on the grass and smoking with an air of very contentment.

At sight of Untilla and Dinah the men sprang to their feet and Old Somonk and his wife stopped their work and looked up in surprise.

Without a moment's hesitation Dinah walked up to the fire, removed the pot boiling thereon and replaced it with her own.

Into this she put some water and several bunches of herbs, muttering to herself the while. Then she grasped her staff as a drum-ma-or does his baton, whirling it around her snake-crowned head, and began to dance about the fire, shouting out a wild song, of which the terrified listeners could not understand a word.

Stopping suddenly, she drew Untilla near to her, and facing the terrified Indians, she said aloud:

"De sprits of de dead command dat all leave but de sistah of de chief en Dinah, de sarvint of d. sprits. Go, Somonk, en yer family; go, ye Montauks watchin' g'nb; go to de village of de Montauks, en star day until we jine ye."

"With a wife?" echoed Graham.

"Certainly; I am old enough to marry, so are you. The face of the charming Indian princess—I admire the taste—has struck your fancy; the face of the daughter of the man that bled you so freely has impressed itself on my too susceptible heart. The father is willing, and the lady will be; but if she is n't, why, I'll play the part of Romulus and the Sabine—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Den, putting his head inside the cabin door, "but Mr. Frenaud wants to see you at once."

"Tell him to come here."

Frenaud came in looking very excited, and said:

"I have brought Thrasher on board, sir."

"That is right. Has Thrasher frightened you that you look so ashy?"

"No, Captain; but there has a post-riders just come through from New York with letters for Captain Denham. He swears that Denham never was in New York—"

"Hold!" thundered Fox. "Back to your boat, at once, man, and arrest this fellow, look him over, and bring him to me."

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Frenaud sprang into the boat, and the puzzled sailors rowed back with all speed for the town, over which the shadows of night were settling. And Fox went back to the cabin, but there was a cloud on his brow, and his confident manner was gone.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN DENHAM'S GHOST.

Uncs, chief of the Montauks, was to remain at Sag Harbor until he had had another meeting with Captain Fox.

It may be said, not in entire fairness, as much as in explanation of the Indian's conduct, that he believed in Captain Fox as a friend, as did Doctor Hedges, and that is saying a great deal for his credulity. Until recently he had kept his dislike for Captain Denham, a dislike born of his impetuosity for Lee Hedges, to himself.

But Fox had discovered his feelings, and with rare skill he had for binding men to him through their weaknesses, he availed himself of the passions of the Montauks.

He had a Montauk's desire to meet Captain Denham in combat, man to man, and blade to blade, foolishly living—as had been the custom of his barbarous ancestors—that the hand and heart of the lady in question would be at once given to the victor.

Captain Fox destroyed his thought, or rather supplanted it with another that was much safer, if not equally heroic.

The chief reasoned that if the great Captain Fox—the whites of Sag Harbor said he was great—could a wise asssassination, he would be back before your ship goes to sea. But the chances are that the Wanderer may leave to-morrow or next day; it will depend on reports expected from New York. Should I go to sea I will borrow all your ammunition, as I am about out, and you can get a replacement from the supply ship that Capt. Denham will bring on."

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