

In Sheep's Clothing.



By Capt. Ormond Steele

CHAPTER XXXI

FACE TO FACE

Before calling on Doctor Hedges, Captain Fox had had a long and, to himself, satisfactory conversation with Uncle of the Montauks.

He had brought from the ship a brilliant collection of the plunder of a Spanish galleon, with a fine sword, a rifle, jeweled dagger, and several wonderful pistols, among them a revolver, as presents to the chief.

As the revolvers now in use were not invented for a century and a half after this, the last named present may seem out of place in the list, but the Portuguese had practical revolvers, very clumsy, of course, a century before the date of our story.

The chief and Fox parted with an understanding that they should meet on the morrow, when the day should be set for dispatching Ralph Denham.

Uncas was so delighted with his presents that he went at once to the inn, got a room, and changed his graceful costume for the gorgeous dress of a Spanish Major General, sword and all.

As the fishing hut where Captain Denham was at this time was only a mile or so from Sag Harbor, and was the property of Uncle, and provided with sleeping accommodations for one, he always went there when belated or anxious to be in town in the morning, instead of stopping at the inn. He had an Indian's objection to sleeping in houses that were not ventilated by removing the windows and doors.

After surveying himself as well as he could in the little chink of light which the room was furnished, Uncle pulled out his sword, making a short clatter behind him, and he bent his steps in the direction of the before mentioned hut, as Squire Condit would put it.

The first lit by Dinah and Untilla had nearly died out, though there was still a dull glow on the hearth that threw a pulsating, spectral light about the little apartment.

Through the open chinks and doorway Uncle saw this light, but it did not surprise him, for it was not unusual for one of the Montauks to stop there, on his way to or from return from Sag Harbor, to call on his friend.

Uncas walked boldly on, his sword making a clatter which to him had all the exciting melody of martial music.

Ralph Denham heard the noise, and concealing himself behind the door, which opened inwards, he looked out through the chinks.

The dull light flashed on the scarlet cloak and the gold cords, and it was not till Uncle came in to the open doorway that Ralph recognized him.

The chief on entering closed the door behind him by giving it a kick with his foot; then he walked up to the smoldering fire, placed the scattered brands together, and, by using his Major General's air as a master, started up a flame that lit up his Major General's uniform till it looked to be on fire, and breaking out in little tongues of flame all over.

Without turning round, Uncle, who now felt particularly important and warlike, said aloud:

"When I am the friend of a white man he knows it, and when I am a foe he knows it. Better for Ralph Denham he had never been born."

"Ralph Denham is dead!" said a deep, sepulchral voice, directly behind the chief.

Uncas was superstitious in his every fiber. Physically there lived no braver man, but in the presence of a danger he could not understand or believed to be supernatural, he was the veriest coward that ever lived.

On turning round, which he did with great rapidity, he saw standing with his back to the door, and the light falling on his pale face and blazing eyes, the erect and resolute form of Ralph Denham.

The chief gasped and staggered back, as far as the contracted walls of the hut permitted. His eyes and every feature denoted the most craven fear, for with the best of reasons he supposed that Ralph Denham was dead, and that this was his specter.

Ralph saw his advantage, and with that promptness and presence of mind for which he was distinguished, he called out, without changing his position, one hand in his breast, holding a pistol, the other behind him similarly employed.

"The dress you wear is the price of my blood; lay down that sword."

With trembling hands the chief unbuckled the belt, and threw the sword on the floor.

"Take off that uniform, it is stained with my blood," said Ralph with the same blood-curdling manner.

Wishing in his heart that he had remained back at the inn, the frightened chief promptly obeyed what he firmly believed to be the ghost of his victim, and stood in voice of a specter indeed.

"Now, lie down on that bed, and turn your face away," commanded Ralph.

The chief with some evidences of reluctance obeyed, for he now felt convinced that the specter was going to pick up the sword and slay him there, or, he might prefer to punish him with the jewel-hilted dagger.

This impression was made a certainty in the chief's mind when he heard the ghost picking up the belt.

"I do not fear to die," said the chief. "The Montauks do not turn their backs on death, but you are a spirit and can kill me at any time. Before I die let me get word to my sister and the people."

"My doing that depends on the answer you give me. Will you reply to me truthfully?" asked Ralph.

"If I reply, I can do it in no other way."

"I can tell if you deceive me."

"That power is given only to spirits."

"Will Uncle, chief of the Mohawks, answer me?"

"I will."

"Do not look at me. Close your eyes that you may the better hear my words."

The chief obeyed him.

Ralph's object was to get the chief to confirm the really improbable story of Untilla and Dinah, and, at the same time to learn all that Uncle knew about the motives and conduct of Captain Fox.

With a skill that would have excited the admiration of Squire Condit, and which he would have been certain to attribute to his own example, Ralph Denham pried his questions and the chief answered without hesitation, corroborating Untilla and Dinah, and proving to the Captain, beyond all doubt, that the commander of the Wanderer was indeed the infamous Captain Kidd.

"So far all had gone well; but it was

two women, with wonderful skill and rapidity, fastened the ropes about this unrighteous Samson.

With the captain's assistance they lifted the chief to the cot and arranged the scarlet uniform under his head and shoulders.

Not knowing when she might be called on to exercise her skill, Dinah always went provided with herbs and surgical appliances. With much skill she dressed the chief's wounded hand, whitened in an ironical way that he mustn't move about much, and then telling him that she would call professionally in the morning, she wished him refreshing sleep and pleasant dreams, and turning to Untilla and Ralph asked them if they were ready to leave.

While Dinah was dressing the wounded man's hand, Untilla gave Ralph the disguise which the Squire had given him to assume, and, at the same time gave a careful report of what had happened at Squire Condit's.

"They were about to leave the hut, when Dinah stopped suddenly and said:

"If she preferred me to you, was that my fault?"

Uncas did not answer.

"You have become the partner of a bad man, the worst man that lives to-day; and in the world where brave spirits dwell the soul of your ancestor, the mighty Wyandanch, cannot rest for the misdeeds of his descendant."

"Did he tell you?"

This was asked with the utmost solemnity; but the sense of honor was so strong in Ralph Denham that he was impressed with the oddity and grossness of the question to the many important things pressing on his attention. He laughed, but checked himself so suddenly as to increase the specter-like effect of his talk.

"Now, Uncle, you can live to a ripe old age if you promise to do as I say. Will you agree?"

After a few seconds' hesitation, the chief replied:

"I will."

"Good; then you must promise never to see this Capt. Fox again."

"I so promise."

"You must pledge yourself and the warriors of your tribe to help the officers of the Sea Hawk should they call on me?"

"I also promise that."

"And lastly you must give up all thoughts of Lea Hedges, and wish in your heart Ralph Denham was alive."

"I will never speak to Lea Hedges again; but don't ask me the other thing," said the chief, still consistent in his hate.

Ralph now felt that the had come to discover himself; he imagined that the chief would be delighted to find that this was not a ghost, so he leaned over the cot and said:

"Open your eyes, Uncle, and look at me."

The chief promptly obeyed.

"Do I look like a dead man?"

"I know you are dead."

"I am not. Tell your sister and Dinah to come from the vault, and here I am in the flesh."

Ralph Denham erring on the side of his own generosity made a mistake. So far Uncle was certain that he had been talking to a specter, but the moment he felt the hot breath on his cheek; realized that his hated rival was before him in the flesh; that his sister and his people had betrayed him; that all his murderous purposes were known, the frightened, fainting devil in his heart leaped into life and heated his blood like molten lava.

Hissing out an oath which he had learned from the whites, he bounded like a tiger from the cot, threw his long, strong arms about Ralph Denham, who, unprepared for the furious onset, was borne to the floor.

"You came to me dead, and I'll make you dead!" cried the chief, the foam flying from his lips as if he were a wild animal.

Ralph Denham in his usual health was matched in strength against the Montauk, the contest would be long in doubt, but would finally be decided in favor of the white man, who had the best training. Therefore, in pointing out the probability that, for once, our demand for good artistic work may exceed the available supply, we hope to attract the serious attention not only of young men about to engage in their life's work, but also of the directors of our educational institutions, and of liberal citizens anxious to work for the public good. The establishment of a department of gardening art in connection with one of our universities or great technical schools would be both a novel and an extremely useful way of investing money for the benefit of the American people. It might best be established, perhaps, in Boston or Cambridge, owing to the neighborhood of the Arnold Arboretum, and to the fact that a more intelligent popular interest in such matters can be noted here than elsewhere in America—doubtless because of the influence of Mr. Olmstead and Professor Sargent, and of the late H. H. Richardson, who was the first among our architects practically to recognize the inestimable advantage of a brotherly accord between his profession and that of the landscape architect. But in any place where facilities for acquiring at least the rudiments of architectural, engineering and botanical knowledge already exist, a school of landscape design would be of very great public benefit.

—The Number of Languages.

The least learned are aware that there are many languages in the world, but the actual number is probably beyond the dreams of ordinary people. The geographer Balbi enumerated 860, which are entitled to be considered as distinct languages, and 5,000 which may be regarded as dialects.

But this contest did not promise to be prolonged. Ralph's weakness alarmed him. By a fierce effort and superior skill, he threw the Indian back, and fasingen his left hand in the red swollen throat he succeeded in getting on his feet.

Expert in the use of his fist, about which the Indian knew no more than a woman, Ralph tried hard to tell his opponent by a strong blow, when he would have time to draw one of his pistols, and to use it if need be.

But the Indian eluded him, caught him in his mighty arms, and again bore him to the earth.

With a quick clutch the Indian snatched the jewel-hilted dagger from the belt at his side, and he was in the act of raising it above his victim, when a tongue of flame darted from one of the chinks between the logs; the crack of a pistol rang out, and from the shattered hand, the dagger dropped to the earth at large.

It is said there are little islands, lying close together in the South Sea, the inhabitants of which do not understand each other.

Of the 860 distinct languages enumerated by Balbi, 53 belong to Europe, 114 to Africa, 123 to Asia, 417 to America, 117 to Oceania—by which term he distinguishes the vast number of islands stretching between Hindostan and South America.

—Hard Cider a Fiendish Tipple.

The man who sells cider doesn't have to get a government license or purchase revenue stamps; all he needs is a keg of the fluid and a diploma and he is ready to scatter desolation and pave the avenues to drinkards' graves at the rate of 5 cents a drink. The cider that is sold is sometimes sweet and innocent, but generally it is "hard" as a door-knob and a small quantity of it will cause a man to imagine himself a lion tamer in a striped uniform and lead him to slope with his grandmother. There is no liquor in the entire category which will compare a sphere peculiarly its own; its lasting qualities are wonderful. If you get intoxicated on it in early manhood you may sober up in old age, but the chances are that you won't. The headache that follows its use is enough to make the heathen rage and the wicker imagine vain things. Something should be done to contract the powers of the dealer in hard cider. In his cheerful, offhand way he is setting traps for the feet of the young and pitfalls for the unwary. It might be possible to urge him to soften his cider without hurting his sales.

Ralph again raised his pistols and asked:

"What is the order of Untilla?"

"I command that Uncle, no longer chief of the Montauks, lie down on the hunting ground of my father."

"You have the order; obey or fire," said Ralph.

A glance told the chief that this was no idle threat, so he shot out another oath and obeyed.

"Now, dot's moah like sinse," cracked Dinah, who, divining Untilla's purpose, groped under the bed and drew there, from a bundle of rope and an old net, the ruin of a fishing seine.

Ralph Denham watched, while the

two women, with wonderful skill and rapidity, fastened the ropes about this unrighteous Samson.

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Hissing out an oath which he had learned from the whites, he bounded like a tiger from the cot, threw his long, strong arms about Ralph Denham, who, unprepared for the furious onset, was borne to the floor.

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