

THE EVENING NEWS.

Friday, December 1, 1871.

MY OLD UMBRELLA.

[CONCLUDED.]

The umbrella—I was sure it was mine, still remained elevated, so I could not see who was beneath it, but my poor heart beat a little excitedly, for I hoped it would be Mary.

We had nearly reached them when the windy fore-runner of the storm struck the boat, and the next moment it was overturned, and I saw two ladies and three men struggling in the water, one of them clutching tightly to the umbrella, whose strong ribs actually made a sort of balloon of it and buoyed her up, while the wind carried her away from the others.

"Wyndham!" shouted I, "you pick up the others, and I'll look after this one."

And tearing off my boots and coat, I sprang in to the water, and swam rapidly towards her, the wind at the same time carrying her toward me. She was terribly frightened, but seeing me, she seemed to take a little courage, and exclaimed, "Have me, sir! Oh, what shall I do?"

Without raising her questions, I grasped her under the arms, and told her to let go the umbrella and trust herself to me.

"Now," said I, "don't touch me, and we are all right."

And being an excellent swimmer, I paddled along with my feet, and pushed her in front of me with my arms, the umbrella in the meantime taking a journey into the air.

All this took less than two minutes; and I saw with pleasure that Wyndham had been equally prompt, and had rescued the other lady and two of the gentlemen, the other having swam ashore, and was now sailing toward us, the wind carrying him with fearful velocity.

"Haul down those sails," he cried to the two men, "or we'll pass them!"

The men were equal in promptitude, and the sails came down the mast, and flapped over the side, nearly upsetting the yacht, but at the same time impeding its speed, so that both the lady and I were easily pulled aboard. Of course, she fainted after the danger was over; and, of course, she proved to be Mary of the umbrella; and, of course again, I had the pleasure of making her acquaintance; which, of course, I did not fail to improve; and, of course, I fell more in love than ever.

Well, things were in this state for some weeks, and at last I thought that the time had come when I would know my destiny from her lips; so, telling Wyndham I was going away for a stroll to take a few sketches—things I knew he abominated—I just walked off to Mr. Graham's house—that was Mary's father—hoping to meet her alone.

Taking a shady wood path which led up to the rear of the house, I stalked along for some distance, thinking of what I was about to do, when happening to glance up, I caught on the rocks of the shore my inevitable cotton umbrella expanded in all its glory.

That umbrella haunted me then, and I peered evil from its appearance; but, nevertheless, I went forward, thinking of course that the wind and tide had driven it ashore—which they had, but not just there.

There it lay, wide open, its top toward me; and when I reached it I seized it by the projection of the stick and lifted it toward me.

By Jove when I think of the result I always wonder how I got through it at all; for, as I lifted the umbrella, what was behind and under it was revealed; and there, comfortably seated on the rock, was my Mary alone—looking good-looking young fellow. If I was astounded, they were about as much surprised. Mary blushed, and looked at me as if to reproach me for such an ungentlemanly action; while the young fellow looked as if he was about to eat me up, and muttered, "What d'ye mean, sir?"

"I beg pardon, Miss Graham," I stammered. "By seeing this umbrella, to which I have a slight claim, and not noticing its occupation by any one, of course I thought I was recovering a lost article of my own."

"Oh, then," said Miss Mary, "you are the gentleman who lent us the umbrella so kindly some months ago in London? Harry, this is Jane and my escort. Don't you remember?"

This familiarity may have been pleasing to Harry, but it by no means followed that it was to me; so, I remarked, as coolly as possible, "Miss Graham, I again beg your pardon for the interruption; and as the umbrella is pleasant for your use, allow me the pleasure of transferring the ownership to you."

"Gentlemen," she said, "allow me to introduce you to each other. Mr. Thornton, it is my cousin, Mr. Harry Graham, brother to the young lady who was with me that day. Harry, Mr. Thornton, the gentleman who saved my life the other day."

Did she not "accuse" cousin pretty freely? I thought she did, at least; and it made me take heart, and not more pleasantly; and in five minutes I had the pleasure of finding that though the young lady was on the best terms with Graham, it was only on account of the relationship between them.

To explain my appearance, I gave the same excuse as I did to Wyndham, and was forthwith put to work to make a sketch of the umbrella, with them beneath it; which, of course, I did, only wishing that Graham was in my place, and I in his.

After a while I noticed old Tim Hayes, the fisherman, launching his boat from the point, going off for an afternoon's fishing, and Graham seeing the same, it suddenly struck him that he had promised to go with the old man that afternoon; so, begging the young lady's leave, he placed her once more under my escort with the umbrella, and I need not tell you the result, for here comes Mary, and she would be angry if she knew that I had been divulging our love affairs, even to tell the story of our old blue cotton umbrella.

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