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PUNISHMENT OF A COQUETTE

A true story written and vouched for, BY NED BUNTLINE.

In more than one sketch of my naval life, and especially in that entitled "My First Lesson in Spanish," I have mentioned "Ned K.," the hero of the following story. He was the son of a very popular commodore in the service, who, upon his pay, reared a large family, but who was fortunate enough to get two sons into the Navy, and thereby to insure their support and education apart from his own expense. He had long since slipped his spirit-cables, and gone to that shoreless sea whence none return to report the soundings.

Ned had just returned from a long cruise on the coast of Africa, well bronzed by a tropical sun, and with plenty of money in his pocket, for that is one of those fortunate stations where an officer cannot with convenience spend all his pay and a little more.

With a three months' leave of absence before him, young and full of life, it was but natural that he should seek enjoyment to atone for his past hardship—and where else a sailor find so much pleasure as in that sex which he only sees at long intervals, and of whose company he is deprived, morally, for at least four-fifths of his time? Ned was not only good looking, but graceful, intelligent, and accomplished; therefore his *entrée* into the best society was at once accorded, and he became a very general favorite with the ladies; nor did he make enemies among the young men by this for his off-handed, generous way, took their hearts by storm and no one was so popular as he.

Among the lovely bells of Virginia—for in the city of N— he spent the first two or three weeks of his "leave"—was a Miss Elsie C., and she was well known to be as coquettish as she was beautiful. In truth, she was as near heartless as it was possible for a girl to be, who possessed much ambition and some romance in her nature.

Ned's male friends warned him of her character, when they saw how entirely he was yielding himself to her fascinations, but some of them coming near to an invitation to stand up at ten paces for targets, they concluded to let him have his rope, even though he hung himself.

Thus things went for a short time—Ned was with the lady, morning, noon, and night, almost—taking her to ride and sail, presenting her with jewelry and many a souvenir of foreign travel, until then kept safely in his cabinet of relics, and giving her, not the least of all—as he thought, his whole heart's devotion.

At last, encouraged by her smiles, and even words, and learning that she was to be one of a party making up for a visit to the "White Sulphur Springs" in the course of a few days, he determined to put an end to his suspense, and declaring his feelings, to propose that last desperate resort of a love-sick man—*matrimony!*

He did in the most eloquent and impassioned terms, quoting Byron's words of fire by way of conclusion:

"The cold in climate and cold in blood Their love can scarce deserve the name, But mine is like the lava flood Which burns in Etna's breast of flame."

She quietly listened until he had got through. Her silence, her non-withdrawing of her beam which he held, the hearing of her *ho-ho* which "told to Hope a flattering tale"—he dreamed she was his own. But when he paused—she woke him up. A peal of merry laughter broke from her rosy lips.

"Really, Mr K.," she cried, "you are an excellent actor—one could almost believe that you were in earnest!"

"Upon my soul, sweet Elsie, I am!" cried Ned, as he half devoured her hand with kisses.

"Miss C.—sir, if you please!" said she, drawing away her hand and regarding him with chilling dignity. "If I have been so imprudent as to encourage such familiarity, I regret it!" she added.

Ned was struck all aback. He had seen a white squall rise in five minutes, and strip a ship, which under a cloudless sky, had spread every thread of sail—he had sped in an hour from the fever heat of the Gulf-stream, to the almost icy coolness of the shoreward waters—he had noted many a change, but never one so sudden as this. He knew not what timber a coquette was made of. For a minute or more he was silent, then looking upon her cold and passive face, beautiful as a

glad face by Canova, and all as senseless, he asked in a low, firm tone:

"Am I to understand, Miss C., after all that has passed between us, after the very serious encouragement you have apparently given to me that you utterly discard me?"

"Most decidedly, yes, sir! It has come to a very pretty pass when a young lady cannot amuse herself with gentlemen for a few days, without having the horrors of matrimony thrust before her!"

Ned made no reply. He could not. The utter heartlessness of her words and manner choked him. He instantly left her presence muttering as he passed beyond her hearing:

"I'll make her pay for this, or be shot for a booby!"

He at once met his male friends and told the story of his discomfiture in his own ludicrous way, thus getting the start of her in spreading the news, and also mortifying her immensely by adding, that he only proposed in jest, knowing from her coquettish character that he could do it with safety. But wounded as he really was, at heart, this was only a priming to the satisfaction which he desired, as the sequel will exhibit.

Miss C.—was heartily rejoiced when the party made up for the "Springs" was ready to depart, for her expected triumph in her refusal of Ned, turned out rather to her mortification than otherwise. And she was pleased too, when she learned that although he had been urgently invited to go, he had refused to be one of the party.

Perhaps, *aye, certainly*, at no watering place in the Union is the society more select and more agreeable than that which resorts to the "White Sulphur" in the summer time. Unlike Saratoga and Newport, it is not redolent of codfish and mush rooms—not crowded with the parvenue aristocracy that has rolled up to the top of society on rum casks or mackerel barrels—the true old stock who look back generation, upon generation, over a line of pure and patriotic blood, who give to merit its due, and scorn the pride of wealth ill-gotten, is that which spends its quiet and happy summer there amid the grand old hills, the stately forests, the refreshing waters of that lovely region.

It was a pleasant evening, and very soon after the arrival of our party from N—. The sun had descended in its blue of purple and of gold, behind the blue crests of the western hills and timid twilight was gliding slowly up the path of day with the evening star set bright upon her pale brow. The riding parties, which had been gaily scouring over hill and dale had all come in; and now, to enjoy the balmy deliciousness of the hour, the many guests were gathered out upon the broad piazza, or were strolling to and fro on the flowery lawn in front of the hotel.

At this moment, as if to add, to the romance of the scene and the enchantment of the hour, a person, by his dress as well as by his dark but clear complexion, evidently a foreigner and from a sunny land, approached. His figure was elegant and well displayed tight-fitting breeches and jacket of velvet, which, though somewhat worn and tarnished by the dust of travel, yet, in its richness and embroidery, looked well on his somely person. A sedit cap, with a tassel of gold, sat jauntily upon a head which was enriched with a profusion of long curling black hair—a jetty moustache and softly silken beard covered the lower part of his face, and contrasted well with his pearl white teeth as seen when his red lips opened with a song. His black eyes were bright and piercing, his air, haughty and proud, and his guitar which he carried, and a staff and knap-sack betokened him to be one of those wandering Italian musicians with which the seaboard portions of our country is literally flooded.

As he approached the hotel, he paused in front of the piazza, and laying down his staff and knapsack, tuned his guitar, and after playing a prelude of surpassing sweetness, he sang in such a voice as few of that company had ever heard before, several songs in Italian, Spanish, and French. And while he sang, those upon the piazza gathered to its front and those who were walking clustered up around him, and all listened with breathless attention until he was through.

Then there was a clapping of fair hands; a waving of handkerchiefs, and most of the gentlemen hastened to offer the musician the reward which such itinerants usually expect for their services. But to their surprise, the musician refused all recompense, speaking, however, only in his native tongue, and taking up his knapsack he entered the office of the hotel.

Here after trying in Italian, Spanish and French he found a person who could understand the latter language and through him asked the landlord for a room, saying, that though a travelling musician, he was no beggar, but had money to pay his way. With some hesitation—for he was quite as aristocratic as many of his guests, the landlord assigned a room to the stranger, and at his request had supper sent up to him. Meantime among the guests, especially the ladies, curiosity, with its thousand and one conjectures, was busy.

"Who can he be? What can he be?" was the cry. "No common musician ever had an air so haughty, a look so noble. And such music, not a lady in the land, nor even yet a professor could draw such

harmony from the guitar—never was a voice so finely modulated, naturally so full of harmony and yet evidently so carefully cultivated. It was voted almost unanimously that he was a nobleman in disguise, who had *incog.* chosen to visit the beautiful scene of Virginia's sweetest vales and hills.

After the ladies had dressed for the evening "hop," they persuaded a committee of gentlemen, among whom were two or three who spoke French, to wait upon the stranger to invite him to the ball-room.

He received them with a grave courtesy, in a manner which at once told them that he was a gentleman by birth and breeding, but declined their invitation, declaring it to be his intention to rest for a few days only at the watering place, and then to pursue his journey to the far far west, where he said he meant to seek a home among the Indian tribes where truth dwelt and treachery was not! His tone like his words was misanthropic.

The committee returned to the ladies, and made report. Many a heart fluttered while its owner listened, for had not a picture of live romance suddenly sprang up in their midst. Nor did that romance decrease, when in the stillness of midnight after the guests had all retired, the voice of the stranger was heard upon the piazza—on which thrilled every listening ear as if it were a song from heaven. Was it by chance that the song, so low and plaintive, so full of melody was sung beneath the window of *Elsie C.*?—if accident which led the stranger there?

This she asked of herself while her cold heart, almost melted beneath the impassioned strain. It was long ere she slept, and when she did it was to dream of being wedded to an Italian prince who had wooed her in disguise.

The next morning every one was early up, in hopes to catch a glimpse of the stranger; and at the breakfast table the conversation was literally of *him* and "nothing else." Miss C.—took particular occasion to let all within her hearing know that it was beneath her window that the serenade was given.

The stranger ate breakfast in his room and was waited upon most obsequiously by one of the best servants in the house, for he had already given *golden reasons* for being as well, if not better served than any guests there. And after breakfast he sent for the landlord, with whom he held a long, and it would appear, a pleasant interview; for while he was in the room the "Major" sent down for twoiced-juleps, a thing he was seldom known to do, even with the most favored guests. And when, with an important air and a smiling face, he came forth, he was in a moment surrounded by a bevy of fair ones who cried:

"Oh, dear Major—you are in the secret! Do tell us who he is! Is he Count, Duke or Prince!"

"He is, ladies—" and the Major paused, while his gray eye twinkled merrily as it over ran the group, "he is—"

"What, dear Major, WHAT!" cried half a score of voices.

"A gentleman," said the Major in his usual quiet way, as he moved on.

In the course of an half hour after the landlord had left him, the stranger came forth from his room, the dust cleanly brushed from his well fitting clothes—his ruffled wrist-bands and neat collar as white as the driven snow. His guitar was left by he carried instead a neat port-folio. Was he an artist as well as a musician?

This was the question when he was seen walking slowly and thoughtfully along a path which led to the most romantic scenery in the neighborhood. And thereafter a sudden mania for taking a forenoon promenade infected all the belles. The hotel was deserted—ditto, the billiard room and bowling alleys.

When the stranger was next seen, he was seated high upon a rocky peak, with his port folio on his knee evidently engaged in drawing. Below him stood a group of ladies, perchance thinking that he might include them in his landscape.

A sudden gust of wind swept a paper from his port folio. Like a leaf torn from its native branch by the strong autumnal wind, it rose in the air, whirled and fluttered away, and finally fell near the group of ladies, who in a second made a rush for the precious prize.

"Oh, Elsie—Elsie, it is a likeness of yourself," cried the one who was first to grasp it.

"So it is," cried the rest as they examined it.

Let me see it!" said Elsie, and her blushes came and went like the hues of a dying dolphin as she spoke, and the beating of her heart could be plainly seen through the bodice of her dress.

And she not only saw it, but she kept it, and bore the merry jests of her companions upon the subject in the most philosophical manner, seeming to say: "Of course he couldn't help falling in love with me!"

The day passed on without anything of particular note occurring, but at the dinner table the landlord exhibited a splendid landscape drawing, representing the scene and the group of ladies as described in the foregoing paragraphs. It was so well done, and so true to nature, that it elicited warm comments from every one who saw it.

That evening the landlord without difficulty persuaded the stranger to visit the ball-room. As many of the ladies, including Elsie C.—understood French,

he was made quite at home among them, and they found that he was as much accomplished in dancing as he was in music and art. No gentleman of all their set was so easy and so graceful.

Elsie was a very fine dancer, and to her he paid very particular attention. Together they glided through the slow and graceful waltz, through the rapid and exhilarating polka, and many was the delicate and tender compliment which he looked and spoke during the evening.

If heart she had when she retired that night, she felt that she had given it to the elegant and gifted stranger. And more than one other lovely girl beneath that roof lay long awake, thinking of him, and asking the oft repeated question, "Who, or what is he?"

On the next morning after breakfast, the stranger, who still took his meals in his room, made his appearance in the shooting gallery—at that hour a favorite resort for the guests of both sexes. He quietly watched the shooting for some time, and then was invited to try his skill. The target at which they were shooting was as large as a Goshen cheese. He took a quarter eagle from his pocket and placed it on top of the target on its edge. He took a pistol, turned his back to the mark; then suddenly wheeled and fixed with the quickness of thought. His bullet struck the little piece of gold, and sent it flying to the other end of the gallery.

"Perhaps the Cavalier fence!" said the gentleman who had first acted as interpreter, and who, having been a favorite pupil of the celebrated *Roset*, prided himself upon his skill with the sword. The stranger bowed, and willingly consented to a trial. The foils were brought, positions taken, the salute *en parade* handsomely given, and the southern gentleman began with a favorite feint and lunge.

In a second his foil was thrown twenty feet behind him. And it was done with so little apparent effort that he seemed to have been disarmed by magic.

He picked up his weapon and again crossed with the stranger; now, however, standing upon the defensive. Quicker than lightning flashes from the bursting thunder cloud, now came thrust upon thrust, touching him at every point, carte over and under the arm, tierce, second, octave, until he scarcely knew what he was about, until at last, with a sudden wrench, his foil was thrown high up in air. As it descended, the stranger caught it, and politely presented it to him, not having yet received a single touch.

The Southerner acknowledged his master, and thenceforth the stranger was as popular with the gentlemen as with the ladies. That day by especial request, he dined at the table *d'hote*, and though no one knew his name, which he would not give without he had done so in confidence to the landlord, the table before and around him was crowded with glasses, for every one sought "the honor of a glass of wine" with him.

After dinner, riding parties were formed as usual, and the stranger, having procured a very spirited and almost untamable horse from the Major, who no one else dared to ride, sprang into the saddle. In vain did the wild steed try to unseat his fearless rider. Firm, cool, strong of arm, and as graceful as if he had been born and bred in the saddle, he forced the animal down to its paces, and soon had it as much under command as the best tamed animal on the ground.

And again as the gay party galloped through the shadowy avenues, over the green hill sides, and along by the margin of a bright and swift rushing stream, he sought the side of Elsie C., who was a graceful and daring rider. And again his loud voice rang in her ears, reminding her of something which she had heard before, yet she could not bring her memory to localize it.

Upon a smooth and level road which led for a couple of miles along a pretty valley, through which a murmuring stream meandered, a race was proposed, and at the word, the whole party, some twenty in number, started off at full speed—the ladies out of courtesy being allowed the advance. The horses were all of choice blood, and sped away like the wind. Of the ladies, Elsie was by far the best mounted, and her horse was only equalled by the wild fresh steed of the stranger.

As the latter reached her side, a low scream broke from her lips, for at that moment the light snaffle bit in her horse's mouth snapped in the centre, and the reins coming home in her hand, told her that she had lost all power over the animal. Keeping his horse close by the side of her ungovernable steed, the stranger still speaking in French, and as cool as if he were in the ball-room yet, told her to be calm and disengage her foot from the stirrup, and to clear her dress from the horn of the saddle. Danger, *aye, death itself*, was close before her, for only a few hundred yards in front, the road made a sudden elbow to the left on the brink of a fearful chasm, and turned up over a hill to avoid the dark ravine below.

Both saw the danger. She was as pale as snow—she, quiet and easy as he had been when entering by her side.— Bidding her yield herself entirely to him, and bracing his right foot firmly in the stirrup, he passed his right arm around her waist, and with a strength that to her seemed superhuman, lifted her from her saddle, and while he seated her

upon his right thigh, he drew his own bridle rein, and in a moment his own horse was brought fairly to his haunches as he checked its head long speed.

The rest of the party were far behind, but near enough to see this graceful and gallant deed, and to see the sudden turn of the road at its speed, pitch wildly over the ragged precipice, at the foot of which it fell mangled and dead.

"You have saved my life!" murmured Elsie, in tearful gratitude, as she pressed, and even kissed the stranger's hand.

"I have only done my duty!" he replied.

"And perhaps would have done as much for another?" sighed Elsie.

"Most certainly!" was his reply; still in the French language.

Elsie felt piqued at this answer, although she was confident that the stranger loved her, but she had no opportunity for further conversation with him at that time, as a seat was offered her in a carriage which was returning to the hotel, and she was rather too nervous to take saddle again, had another horse been at hand. The stranger's praise was now upon every tongue. His daring act, his grace, his surprising skill, was commented upon by every one—yet he seemed not to think that he had done anything extraordinary. More than one of the fair ladies in that bright cortege, would have gladly taken him to her heart and bosom forever, all unknown as he was; many an envious Elsie that she had been so fortunate as to receive such knightly service at his hands.

That evening, by general request, his guitar was brought down from his room, and instead of the usual hop in the ball-room, music in the parlor was the "order of the night." The stranger in the variety of his songs, and in many pieces at once difficult and beautiful which he played upon his guitar, exceeded all of his previous performances. All who heard him were in ecstasies, and none so much delighted as Elsie, who, entirely recovered from her fright, and dressed with uncommon taste, looked far more beautiful than she had before appeared to her friends. The stranger seemed to be touched even more than usual with her beauty, and she tried to exhibit every charm which she possessed to fasten him to her side. She was a proficient in music, and had a fine voice, and touched the piano with a skillful hand.

The evening passed on delightfully—Elsie had just finished a song, and remarked that the room was too hot for her, when the stranger politely offered to escort her to the piazza. Gladly she took the arm which that day saved her life, and went out, where in the balmy air they could look at the moon as she sailed a queen amid the attendant stars of night. The stranger looked forth upon the landscape so beautifully diversified with shadow and with light, and sighed:

"Why do you sigh?" asked Elsie, in a tremulous voice, as she pressed the arm to which she clung still closer to her side.

"To think that in a world so beautiful, there are so few hearts!" was his reply.

"Perhaps you have been disappointed in love, which makes you think so, and perhaps you do the hearts that are, an injustice!" she replied in French almost as correct as his own.

"It is true, lady," said he, with another sigh. "I loved a lady whom I believed to be an angel of light, a good and true hearted as she was beautiful! She lured me on by every art which woman knows, until I almost worshipped her! But when I told my love, when I laid my bleeding heart down at her feet, she cast off her mask and laughed me to scorn, trampled upon the heart which she had won and—lady, what is the matter? Help here, Miss C.—is fainting!"

The last words were spoken in as good English as ever was used by true American lips.

A crowd quickly gathered around the fainting girl, who was carried to her room. She had at last recognized "Ned K.," through his well assumed disguise, and north as she knew him, and the worth which she had so cruelly discarded, the blow was like death, not only to her pride, but to her heart, for at last she had learned that she had a heart.

K. at once threw off his disguise and appeared in his neat uniform, for his trunk had arrived that afternoon, and it appeared that his father and the Major, to whom he had made himself known, were old schoolmates and friends. Ned was not less a hero and a lion in his uniform than he had been as a troubadour, for his story was soon known to all, and as to Elsie C.—the verdict of the ladies generally was, that she had been served right.

Poor girl, she felt her punishment.— She had not the heart to see Ned again, without he sought an interview, which he was too proud to do, and on the next day she left for home, first writing him a note full of gratitude for his noble act, and begging him to forgive her for her conduct in the first place. Ned keeps that note yet—keeps it as a dear and sacred relic. I know this to be so, for I have seen it.

Ned remained for a couple of weeks a favorite guest at the "White Sulphur," and many a fair lure was spread for his manly heart, but he did not yield it up. He went to sea again, when "orders" came and went single. He still remains so—So does Elsie C.

If they ever should get applied, I will let the reader know of it.

Things Worth Knowing.

The United States are composed of thirty-two States and nine Territories. They contain a population of 27,000,000, of whom 3,000,000 are white. The extent of sea coast is 12,550 miles. The length of the ten principal rivers is 20,000 miles. The surface of the five great lakes is 90,000 square miles. The number of miles of railroad in operation is 20,000, which cost \$78,000,000. The length of canals is 5,000. It contains the longest railroad on the globe—the Illinois Central—which is 784 miles. The annual value of its agricultural production is \$260,000,000. Its most valuable production is Indian corn, which yields annually 40,000,000 bushels. The amount of registered and enrolled tonnage is 4,007,010. The amount of capital invested in manufactures is \$600,000,000. The value of farms and live stock is \$500,000,000. Its mines of gold, copper, lead and iron are among the richest in the world. The value of gold produced is \$100,000,000. The surface of its coal fields is 138,131 square acres. Within her borders are 80,000 schools, 5,000 academies, 234 colleges and 3,800 churches.

To Sportsmen.

S. Sutherland, of Richmond, Va., gives the following rule to load a gun properly: "Try it repeatedly with charges, consisting of equal bulks of powder and shot, till you come to a quantity with which the gun will not recoil, or but slightly; this will give you the proper quantity of shot. With this load, however, the gun will scatter in all directions. To correct this, reduce the quantity of powder until you find that the shot is carried as close as you desire. A gun loaded thus, will never burst. To make it carry further, use shot of larger size. No gun should be fired more than twenty times without being wiped out. When in the field, it will be much safer to carry the piece always at half cock."

Rattle Snake Bite.

The Medical Journal says the following prescription is an infallible cure for rattle-snake poison: Mix together four grains of the iodid of potash, two grains of corrosive sublimate, five drachms of bromine, and keep the mixture in a glass-stoppered vial, well secured. Ten drops of this mixture, diluted with a table spoonful or two of wine or brandy, constitute a dose, which is to be repeated if necessary according to the exigencies of the case.

The American Journal of the Medical Sciences contains the results of quite a number of experiments made with this antidote, resulting in its complete triumph.

Horrible Combustion of a Human Being.

A horrible case of spontaneous combustion is reported as having recently occurred at Cairo, Ill. A man named Faxot, suffering under *diluvium tremens*, entered a saloon and called for a glass of brandy. Immediately after drinking it his breath came in contact with a lighted match in the hand of a bystander, and instantly took fire and burned for nearly two minutes, when death ended his tortures.—The agonizing screams of the wretched man are described as having been horrible in the extreme.

An honest farmer, having a number of men hoeing in his field, went out to see how his work went on. Finding one of them sitting still, he inquired the cause. The man answered: "I thirst for the spirit."

"Grog you mean, I suppose," said the farmer, "but if the Bible teaches you to thirst after the spirit, it says also—'Ho! every one that thirsteth.'"

To CLEAN GLASS.—Common newspaper is one of the best articles. The chemical operation of some ingredient of ink, gives a beautiful polish. Slightly moisten a piece of paper; roll it up and rub the glass; and then take a dry, soft piece and repeat the process. No lint will remain, as in the use of cloth.—*German Telegraph.*

Good.—The Sunday Atlas, in a fit of revolutionary enthusiasm says: "Hurrah for the girls of '76!"

"Thunder!" cries a New Jersey paper, "that's too darned old. No, no, hurrah for the girls of '17!"

The highest price paid for domestic labor in Chicago, at the present time, is \$8 per month, and in that vicinity, for farm labor, \$10 and \$12 per month.

The Mesquemoie Indians of Wisconsin have excellent saw and grist mills in operation near Husbena, on the Wolf river, Wisconsin.

Mr Davis, a well known peach grower, of Claremont County, Ohio, reports that not more than one peach bud in twenty thousand has escaped the frost.