

TERRIBLE REVENGE.—A TALE OF THE SEA.

In the year 186—, I had the misfortune to lose the vessel I then commanded upon one of those dangerous coral reefs which lie hid beneath the smiling blue waters of the Gilolo passage, near Borneo. The schooner became a total wreck a few hours after she struck, but the crew and I were providentially rescued by a passing vessel, and carried in safety to Singapore.

The residents at that port were extremely hospitable and kind to us, but after a few weeks' sojourn upon the fair island I grew tired of leading an inactive life; so, when one of the leading merchants asked me if I would engage myself as second mate on board the only one of his ships then ready to proceed to Europe, I joyfully accepted his offer, and was duly installed on board the "Flowery Land," a fine barque of four hundred and eighty tons register, loaded with a heterogeneous cargo of native produce, and manned by Malay sailors.

Captain Stubbs and Mr. Harley, the chief officer, both Englishmen, had traded in the East for some years, and were conversant with the Malay language.

When a youngster in a Western ocean liner I had seen sailors badly treated by the officers—had suffered myself, in fact; but the cruel manner in which the skipper and mate of the "Flowery Land" abused the unhappy crew of that vessel astonished and disgusted me. The Malays were really smart hands, knew their work, and were willing and able; but from the serang down to the bandaddee (cook,) none enjoyed immunity from the savage brutality of the captain and first officer.

I openly remonstrated with the latter once—it was the third day subsequent to our departure, and the vessel was passing the town of Malacca. He was beating the serang with a belaying pin for executing an order I had given him.

"Avast there, Mr Harley!" I said. The man is not in fault; I told him to furl that awning, because the ridge-rope parted."

"H—ll you did! Well, it don't matter; the more belaying-pin soup you give these blasted niggers the better they love yer," he replied, as he turned away laughing.

I glanced upwards at the serang; the devilish expression on his face was a warning to me; the condensed, strong passions of angry hate positively contorted his rather handsome visage, and I instinctively guessed he thirsted for revenge.

I told the mate; I cautioned him to be on his guard, for I felt fully convinced that an *emeute* would ensue, if the hands were not better respected.

"A very worm will turn when trodden upon," I said, "and you treat these unhappy human beings worse than beasts of burden."

He laughed scornfully. "You are the first man I ever met who thinks a nigger has a soul; and if he has, he don't dare call it his own while I'm over him," he added.

I turned on my heel and walked away. I could not bandy words with such a vulgar ruffian.

The "Flowery Land" passed Pulo Penang and entered the Bay of Bengal during the second dogwatch that evening. I relieved the mate at eight bells and paced the deck until ten o'clock, when the breeze died away, and I had to arouse the men to trim sail, which they did obediently enough. At midnight what wind there was drew ahead, and I was busy getting the yards braced up, when Mr Harley came on deck and relieved me. I gave him the course, repeated the usual formula, and went below to my berth.

I had been asleep about an hour, when a shrill shriek of agony, echoing through the saloon, startled me to life, and the hurrying tramp of many feet upon the deck above told me that the hour of trouble had arrived.

I seized a revolver that hung at my bunk's head and rushed into the saloon. In the dim, yellow light of the swinging lamp I saw Captain Stubbs stretched partially across the table, his brains exuding from his riven skull, while blood welled up from many a ghastly wound in his body and trickled in crimson rivulets to the floor. Near by stood four Malays, each armed with a gleaming, murderous creese, each wearing the awful look of ferocity I had aforesaid noticed on the face of the serang. Their eyeballs, starting from their sockets, glared like red hot coals, while their olive cheeks were blanched with insane fury, livid with concentrated rage. I levelled my pistol full at the head of the foremost ruffian and pulled the trigger. My ball pierced his brain; he leaped convulsively forward and fell a corpse.

Then a ringing yell broke from my desperate foes, and ere I could aim again, my weapon was dashed from my hand and I was flung heavily upon the deck. One of my fierce assailants, his hand on my throat, his hot breath scorching my face, raised up his knife to strike my life away. I saw the blue steel gleam in the dusky light, and I knew its point was death; I closed my eyes and waited the coming blow. It never fell!

A heavy form stumbled over me, then another and another, and I felt that some agency was exerting itself on my behalf. In a confused heap we wrestled and struggled together; I receiving many a desperate wound in my efforts for salvation, and dealing many a crushing blow around, until, bleeding and exhausted the life breath stifled in my throat, and all sense forsook me.

When consciousness returned, I found myself lying on the poop-deck, securely bound; while the serang, bending over me, was laving my fevered brow with water, and stanching the blood which trickled from my wounds.

"Be still, sir; you are safe now," he whispered in my ear, as he began to remove the bonds which held me.

My head swam, and I had but a confused notion of what had occurred.

"Where is the mate?" I asked, when recollection of the melee of the past night first dawned upon me. In the morning twilight I saw the old dark, savage shadow flit across his face.

"Dead, dead!" he hissed, as his fingers clutched convulsively the sponge he held.

"Why have you spared me?" I asked faintly.

"Because you are a good man, you never beat us. I hear what you tell the burra-malum (chief mate) yesterday," he replied, and the fierce expression died away and the tones of his voice softened to sweetness at the mere recollection that I had treated him as a fellow-man.

"The others would have killed me," I said.

"They did not know—they were sick with anger; I stopped them. They are your servants now," he answered apologetically.

He tended me gently, had a hammock slung for me on deck, and prepared for me such viands as he deemed would be most acceptable to me in my exhausted state.

I repeatedly asked him what he and his comrades intended doing with the vessel, whether they intended to proceed, and so forth; but the only answer he would vouchsafe me was a cunning smile and an impressive "I know, I know."

At last, however, when I was rapidly regaining health and strength, he called a conclave of all hands upon the poop, brought up the late captain's charts and nautical instruments, and formally stated his designs.

The purport of his harangue, which was too verbose to give here in full, was this: I was to act as captain of the vessel, he being my chief officer; the crew were to maintain their original positions until the vessel arrived in port. He frankly owned that neither he nor his comrades had at that time any more than a very remote idea of the position of the vessel, but were well aware that I could easily ascertain it, and then wished me to navigate the vessel for them to a place which he would point out to me on the chart. I was to have full command, my orders were to be exactly obeyed, and my life would be spared, and I should be allowed to depart when the voyage was ended. On the other hand, if I refused to accede to their request, or if I in any way attempted to play them false, I was to be instantly immolated.

I asked what port they wished me to make, and I confess I was astonished when the serang selected a chart of the world, and indicated that of Rio Janeiro, in Brazil.

"I have go there before," he added, in explanation.

I saw my only chance of escaping with life lay in my complying with their demands, so I stated I would do as they wished me, whereupon they expressed themselves highly gratified.

I took a meridian altitude that day, and found the latitude. The next determined the longitude, and, from the position of the vessel at noon, took my departure, and shaped a course round the Cape of Good Hope—for I decided upon following our agreement to the letter, until a fair chance of surrendering the vessel and mutineers to those who had power to deal with them offered itself.

We had a fine passage to Cape Aguilhas, off which, however, we were detained for a fortnight by adverse winds. The crew would not allow me to speak any of the vessels we passed, or even exchange signals with them; and they kept a strict watch over my actions whenever land was in sight.

We had been out from port rather more than three months, when one noon I altered the vessel's course, and informed the serang that the following day I expected we should make Rio Janeiro.

"You must leave to-night, then, or I fear the men will kill you after all," he said. "I am sorry; you are good, but they fear you will betray them."

"How am I to get away?" I asked, for I knew the man was my friend.

"I will have a boat prepared; you must get into her; I will lower you down, and perhaps some ship will pick you up," he replied.

I thought this a good plan, and agreed to it. He had provisions stowed in the gig, telling the crew, as an excuse for so doing, that the anchorage at Rio was a great distance from the town. Just before dawn on the following day he sent the men below on some pretext, and lowered the gig unobserved into the sea. I knew the vessel was much nearer Rio Janeiro than he anticipated, so I did not care to exert myself by rowing, as I knew I should soon be rescued. I was right; when the sun rose above the eastern horizon, I descried the land right ahead, while a large fleet of vessels were standing down directly toward me.

I hailed the foremost one, a Chilean brig, flying the Venezuelan flag. She hove to and took me on board. I explained my position to the captain, and he consented to assist me. During the afternoon we passed through the narrow channel to the most magnificent harbour, in point of scenic beauty, in the world. Reaching past the noble fort on the Ilha das Cobras, we soon made the anchorage, and moored the pretty vessel in close proximity to the town. H.B.M. sloop of war "Tartar" was in port; so, by the advice of the skipper of the brig, I rowed off to her and told my story.

Her commander listened to it interestedly, and as, ere the conclusion of my recital, the "Flowery Land" hove in sight, he at once despatched armed boats to capture her. This manœuvre was easily accomplished. Her crew were placed in irons, and I was sent on board to identify them. The serang was missing; he had evidently fallen a victim to his comrades' fury for aiding my escape. However, he had his revenge, for the remainder of the mutineers were sent to England, tried at the Old Bailey, London, where I testified against them. Seven of the ringleaders were sentenced to be hanged, which judgment was carried into effect, and the others were condemned to various terms of imprisonment.

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