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A YANKEE TRICK.

"Sail ho!"

Never, surely, did the cry fall upon more welcome ears than ours and except those of men imprisoned in a boat upon the open sea. For twenty weary days and nights had we, the officers and men of H. M. Ship Petrel, lain upon Commander R. H. Neville, hove-to and up in our own pinnace, patrolling one of the busiest reaches of the beaten globe on the lookout for slavers. From latitude 4 degs. north to latitude 4 degs. south was our beat, and we dared not venture beyond these limits. Our instructions were to keep out of sight of land and try to intercept some of the larger vessels, which, it was reported, carried cargoes of slaves from the — coast. The ship, the sea, the cloudless sky—there was nothing else to see, nothing else to think of. Work, study, play even, were alike impossible in that fierce, scorching heat. If you touched a bit of iron on deck it almost burned your hand. If you lay down between decks covered with a sheet you awoke in a bath of perspiration.

"Sail ho!"

The man, in his excitement, repeated the shout before he could be hailed from the deck.

"Where away?" sang out the captain.

"Two points on the weather bow, sir," was the reply.

That phrase about the "weather bow" was a nautical fiction, for there was no wind to speak of, and what there was was nearly dead astern.

"Keep her away two points," said Commander Neville, and the order was promptly obeyed.

In a few seconds the news had spread through the ship, and the men clustered on the bulwarks, straining their eyes to get a glimpse of the stranger. Even the stokers, poor fellows! showed their sooty faces at the engine room hatchway. Of course the stranger might be, and probably was, an innocent trader, but then she might be a slaver, and golden visions of prize money floated before the eyes of every man and boy on board the Petrel.

We did not steam very far, as of course our supply of coal was limited, and it was about two hours before we sighted the stranger. She was a long, three masted schooner, with tall, raking masts, lying very low in the water. All her canvas was set, and as a little wind had sprung up she was slipping through the water at a fair pace.

"She looks for all the world like a slaver, sir," remarked Mr. Brabazon, the first lieutenant, to the commander.

Neville said nothing, but his lips were firmly compressed and a gleam of excitement was in his eyes.

"I'ss a blank certainty, Mr. O'Riley," said he to the second lieutenant, "and signal her to ask her nationality and her code number."

This was done, and in answer to the signal the schooner slowly hoisted the American colors.

"She has eased away her sheets and lifted a point or two, sir," said the quartermaster, touching his cap.

The captain merely answered this by a nod.

"Put a shot in your gun, Mr. O'Riley," said he. "Lower your boat and make a fresh body demanding her name."

This was done, but the American took no notice.

"Fire a shot, Mr. O'Riley—wide of course," said the commander.

Again the deafening report of the big gun sounded in our ears, and we could see the splash of the shot as it struck the water about fifty yards from the schooner. Immediately a flag was run up, then another and another, and we saw that she was busily hoisting her code number, but was waiting not her name, letter by letter—the Black Swan.

"Just look that up in the United States merchant register," said the captain to the first lieutenant. And in half a minute he had reported, "No such name, sir."

This was something more than suspicious. And the wind was rising.

"Hoist the signal for her to heave to!" said Commander Neville. "Take a boat and a half a dozen hands, Mr. O'Riley," he continued, "board her, begin her papers and come back to report if her papers are not in order," added he, "you may search for slaves, but if she is one you had better do both her and me a favor by not finding any."

Lieut. Lord O'Riley reached the ship to see that everything about her had been carefully prepared. He spoke especially very emphatically to her crew of his one.

The British officer was received by a tall, thin, elderly man wearing a Panama hat, and speaking with a strong Yankee accent.

"Pass your papers if you please," said O'Riley. They were handed out.

"I report, on my grounds whatever, will come on board—and—detail difficulty, and may bring us—markedly impolite—consequence to your subject. Now!—"

"Look with your binoculars," cried the lieutenant.

"Why?"

"Do you think, Mr. George, I will?"

"You know plenty what you're doing, sir."

"Do you know the risk you run?"

"I do. No more polaver. Off with them in more or I'll knock them open."

Further remonstrance was useless. The thing was done, and the moment the first bolt was wrenched the contents of the case that seized upon the best pair showed the truth. Nearly three hundred slaves were packed between decks, many of the poor creatures standing so close that they could not lie down.

With a look of speechless contempt at the young man of the schooner the lieutenant walked to the side of the ship and waved his handkerchief. That instant a loud British cheer rang over the water, given by the blue jackets, who could be seen clustering in the rigging like bees.

"I told our skipper jollyment would overtake us," said the Yankee. "Say, mister," headed in another tone, "seeing that the poor dog, maybe, no has a glass of iced champagne down stairs?"

The lieutenant hesitated. To drink with the mate of a slaver! But—iced champagne!

Slowly he moved toward the companion way. "I don't mind if I do," he said at length, "and you may as well bring up your papers with the drinks, for I shall carry them on board the Petrel. Of course you understand that you are my prize."

And having set a guard at the hatchways the lieutenant descended the cabin stairs.

The iced champagne was duly bottled, opened, and when the genial lieutenant Lieut. Brabazon began to feel something like pity for the young man who had been so early seduced into the paths of crime. Probably he had a mother or a sweetheart somewhere in the states who imagined that he was already on his way home, whereon now his character was ruined, save if he escaped a long term of imprisonment.

This feeling was strengthened as he saw that his companion was gazing moodily at his glass without speaking a word. At length the young man lifted his head.

"Say, mister, what'll they do to me, think?"

"I can't tell. Of course you know that what you have been engaged in is a kind of piracy?"

"No!"

"I believe so. Cargo and crew are confiscated, of course. What they will do with you I can't tell."

"They won't hang me, will they?"

"Probably not," said the lieutenant; "but at this be a warning to you. You see what it is to wander into strange company and hanker after fashionable gilts. Lead an honest life in future, when you are released from custody. Avoid vicious companions—. But what's this?" he cried, as his eye fell on an empty scabbard hanging on the wall. It looked very like a United States service sword scabbard, and immediately the thought darted through his mind that this hypocritical young Yankee (who had been pretending to wipe away a tear as he listened to the lieutenant's good advice) had been doing something worse, or at least more heavily punished, than running cargoes of slaves.

The British officer looked round the cabin. A United States navy cap was lying on a plush covered bench.

"Ah! you've been having a bush with an American man-of-war?" cried Lieut. Brabazon. "You will have to tell my superior officer how you came into possession of these articles. I must place you under arrest!" And, bitterly regretting that he had sat down to table with the fellow the British officer rushed on deck.

"Quartermaster!" he cried, "bring up a guard of four men and take this man (pointing to the Yankee, who had followed him on deck) to the Petrel. If he tries to escape, shoot him at once!"

The quartermaster advanced to seize the prisoner, but before he reached him he involuntarily stopped short. A roar of laughter sounded in his ears. The American mate and his companions were shrieking and staggering about the deck. Even the crew of the slaver were, every man jack of them, grinning from ear to ear. The lieutenant was dumfounded.

"Excuse me, sir, but the joke was too good," said the Yankee, coming forward and holding out his hand. "I am the first lieutenant of the United States war ship Georgia, in command of a prize crew on board this vessel, taking her to port to have her condemned. We sighted her yesterday. Hearing that you had been on a visit to her the day before, and had gone away without doing anything, I couldn't resist the temptation of taking you in. Hope you don't bear malice! Let's drink that magnum of champagne."

It was evidently the best thing to do, and the lieutenant was not a bad sort of a companion on that occasion.

"Give my respects to your commander," called out the United States officer, as he gave what down into his boat, "and tell him that I am not to be so pity particular another time. And I'll try to take your kind advice and set a straight course in future!" he cried, as her boatswain's mate shot away for the last time from the side of the Black Swan.—Cornhill Magazine.

"Why isn't your name on the register?"

"Ain't it now? Well, I guess it must be because this is a new ship. We don't put our name on the register by telegraph, mister!"

"Just tell your men to knock off the hatches. I want to have a look at your cargo."

The skipper shook his head.

"I've been delayed long enough," said he, "and have lost a good part of the only wind we've had in this darned latitude for a week."

"I'll do it myself, then!" cried O'Riley.

"Not now, sir; not with six men while I have fifteen. You have no right to search the hold of a respectable American and disturb her cargo. Do you take me for a slaver, or what? If you must have the hatches up, send back to your men of war for a larger crew, so as to overpower me, you understand, and you may do it with pleasure. But I guess there'll be a complaint lodged at Washington, and you bills in London will have to pay for it. That's all, mister. I only want things fair and square within my treaty rights."

And having delivered himself of this long speech, the Yankee skipper turned on his heel.

Of course O'Riley could only return to the Petrel and report all this to his commander. "I'm convinced she is a slaver, sir," said he in conclusion.

"But you have no evidence of it, and you say the papers were all in order."

"Apparently they were, sir."

"Then I'm afraid I can do nothing," said the commander. And to the deep disgust of the whole ship's crew, the order was given for the Petrel to return to her course.

All that night, however, Commander Neville was haunted by a doubt whether he had not better have run the risk of a complaint and a reprimand rather than forego the overhauling of a suspicious looking a vessel, and in the morning a rumor reached his ears that the renegade, who had accompanied Mr. O'Riley to the Black Swan, had noticed something about her of a doubtful nature. The man was sent for and questioned, and he said that while the lieutenant was on board the ship of which he was in charge had dropped a little way astern, and that he had then noticed that the name of the vessel had been recently painted out, but that the last two letters were distinctly visible, and these letters were LE and AX.

"The scoundrel said she was a new ship!" cried the commander. "Boat ship!"

"We can't possibly catch her, sir, she's out of the fast lines and dirty."

"I don't know that, Mr. Brabazon," answered Neville. "There has been hardly any wind, and we know the course she was steering. She could not expect to see us again, so in all probability she has kept to that course. By making proper allowances we may intercept her. I am convinced of it."

The hope of again encountering the Black Swan, took as it was, caused quite a commotion in our little world. The day passed without our sighting a single sail, but when the morning dawned Lieut. Brabazon was forced to own that the commander's judgment had proved better than his own. By the greatest good luck we had hit upon the right track. There, right in front of us, was the American schooner, her sails lazily flapping against her masts.

"Full speed ahead, and stand by!" shouted the captain down the engine room tube.

"Signal to her to heave to, and if she does not obey, fire a shot right across her bows, Mr. O'Riley," commanded the commander. "Mr. Brabazon, you take a boat and thirty men well armed. Board her, and have her hatches off at once. You'd stand no nonsense, I know."

"All right, sir," cried the lieutenant, an active, somewhat impetuous officer, of the Lord Bountiston cum type. He had been unusually disgusted at his commander's decision to leave the Black Swan without searching her, and he was delighted that a more active policy had been begun.

"I say, Brabazon," whispered the commander to him, as he was going over the side, "you know I'm stepping a bit beyond my duty, and I'm just little anxious. If she turns out to be a slaver, as we suspect, step to the taff-rail and wave your handkerchief, will you?"

"I will, sir. I'm certain it will be all right," cheerfully responded the first lieutenant.

A tall, slim, young man dressed in white linen, received the British officer as he set foot on the deck of the Black Swan.

"I am at present in command of this craft, sir," said the young American. "The skipper is not in. He never goes at present. We had a visit from you two days ago, I think. Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes. I want you to take off your hatches," said the lieutenant sharply.

"With, sir," began the Yankee, "I guess your command is beyond your treaty power."

"I know all about that. Unset have the hatches off."

"And you are defaulting my and overhauling my cargo in no grounds whatever."

"Will you do it at once?" broke in the British officer.

Always the Best.

Most men are something in the profession of a Boston physician, from boiling pills, pellets and tonics for their liver than would do if not a single remedy of any sort were known in medicine. Many then go out of the patent nostrums of no one whatever.—Detroit Free Press.

Resolved, That for the next year I won't tell anybody my salary is twelve times as large as it really is, nor even if I am an actor, a singer or a newspaper writer.

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