

The Captured Lighter.

A Story of Brazil.

The American ship Reindeer swung at her anchorage in the harbor of Rio de Janeiro, and to her side was lashed a lighter, into which the larger vessel was discharging her cargo of flour that had been brought from the United States.

Tending the slings and tackles at the rail was the second mate, assisted by Howard Deering, ordinary seaman, a lad of eighteen years.

An "ordinary seaman," he it understood, is one who has passed the several grades of "green land," "boy" and "first-class boy," and has but one more step to take ere he becomes an "able seaman"—one who is supposed to be capable of performing any duty required of a sailor, aside from navigation.

The younger mariner, however, claims to simply know how to "hand, reef and steer." "Hand," in this instance, means to furl a sail, while to "reef" is to take in a portion only of a piece of canvas and secure it to yard or boom, as the case may be, and to "steer," of course, requires a knowledge of the compass and ability to manage a vessel's helm.

So it may be seen that a youth must have passed some time on salt water ere he could satisfactorily fill the position of "ordinary seaman."

It was an unusual time at which the Reindeer has arrived in this southern port for it was during a civil war, in which the naval forces had rebelled against the government.

While Howard and his shipmates were at work, the reports of cannon were heard. Admiral Mello's insurgent fleet was cruising about the spacious harbor, which extended some seventeen miles inland and is twelve miles in breadth, keeping up a desultory fire upon the numerous forts that were manned by the followers of Peixoto, the President of the republic.

These latter strongholds answered viciously, but, either through poor marksmanship or inferior explosives, little damage was done.

As the officer and the boy stood leaning over the rail, waiting for the negroes upon the lighter to unhook the "slings," the former remarked, with a smile:

"I tell you what it is, lad, I wouldn't mind being a man-o'-war's man, or even a soldier, if I was as sure of being as safe as those fellows are in the forts yonder or the sailors on board the frigate. Why, I don't believe any one of our gunners could hit the broadside of Sugar Loaf" at a cable's length distance."

"They have certainly done but little damage as far as we can see," replied Howard, "and it looks to me as if the most fighting was being carried on between the steam launches of Mello's fleet and the soldiers along the water front of the city."

"Yes, the admiral is keeping his small boats busy; and that is policy, for, don't you see, they make many a good capture of freight, on its way from the vessels at anchor, to the landing places? There was but few lighters not under the protection of foreign flags which, escape. I tell you what, boy, they would like to get hold of our cargo, for flour is always welcome, either in camp or afloat."

"None of the lighters from this ship have been molested," replied Howard.

"That's because they belong to an American and floated the Stars and Stripes; but this fellow we are loading to-day does not carry our flag."

Just then a ship's boat pulled up to the gangway, and the captain, hurrying over the rail, sprang to the deck and approached his officer.

"Mr. Williams," he began, in a voice so low that it could only be heard by the mate and Howard, "I could not send off an American lighter to-day, as they were all in use, so I have risked one load in a Brazilian 'bottom.' As we have been discharging nearly a week, and have employed only American boats, I hope that the insurgents may think we have done so this time and not molest us."

"They may, captain," answered the mate; "but it is very doubtful, for these chaps have a keen eye to the main chance, and, I'll warrant, can tell who are the owners of every lighter in Rio as far as they can see them."

"Well, then, if they should pounce upon us," continued the captain, "I have hit on a plan which I think—and so does the American consul—will pull us through. I will send you with a couple of men, to act as captain and crew, and will place the cargo in your charge. If you are overhauled by one of Mello's launches, assert your American citizenship and stoutly protest against interference, but offer no resistance. Now, then, go and select your men and make ready."

As the officer walked to his room to change his clothing, Howard stepped up to the skipper and asked:

"Captain, may I go with Mr. Williams?"

"What, lad!" said the captain, "are you anxious to run the risk of getting a wound from a rifle-ball, or being made a prisoner?"

"I would be a safe as any of the men whom the second mate might take with him," replied Howard.

"Well, well, if you really wish to go, all right, for I hardly think there is much danger," assented the captain. "Oh, there is a letter for you, which came in the last mail," he added.

Howard took the letter, but so pleased was he at the prospect of the trip ashore that he put it into his jacket pocket, purposing to read it at leisure.

When the lighter swung away from the side of the Reindeer, and spread

its dilapidated sails to catch the strong sea breeze, Mr. Williams remarked to Howard and the other sailor whom he had taken with him:

"The captain's scheme may work; but I doubt it, for we are in Brazilian waters, and this flour is not under the protection of the American flag, though we ourselves are. But we will soon find out, for it isn't more than a mile and a half to the landing place."

About half the distance between ship and shore had been covered when an exclamation from one of the native boatmen attracted the attention of the whole party to a steam launch which was coming rapidly toward them.

"We're in for it, now!" muttered the second mate, while the Brazilians on board were badly frightened.

When within a hundred yards or so, the small howitzer in the bow of the launch was discharged, and a shot came skimming along the water, sinking from sight in front of the lighter.

"That means for us to stop, I should judge," said the mate. "Slack off that sheet, Howard, and we'll have a palaver with these fellows, for we can't run from them."

And he calmly seated himself on a barrel of flour.

In a few minutes the launch was alongside, and an officer sprang on board the lighter.

Ignoring the American completely, he stepped up to the native captain, and demanded to see his papers.

The man produced a worn and much-soiled document, and handed it to the officer. The latter looked at it, smiled, and said something which brought three men from the launch to his side.

One of the men grasped the tiller of the lighter, while the other two trimmed down the sheet of the sail, and soon the lighter was headed toward the further side of the bay, where the insurgent fleet was lying at anchor.

It was now that Mr. Williams entered his protest. Stepping to the side of the officer, he asked with much force:

"Sir, are you aware what you are doing? This is an American cargo, and I, as an American citizen in charge of it, demand that you call off your men and allow us to pursue our course."

The officer turned what he probably meant to be a look of astonishment upon the speaker, then tapped the rail of the lighter with his hand and replied, in broken English:

"Si, si, señor! But this Brazilian!"

Then he relapsed into silence.

In vain did the mate expostulate. The officer either could not or would not understand what was said, and so in less than half an hour from the time they had left the Reindeer, the three Americans stood upon the gun-deck of Admiral Mello's flag-ship, Aquidaban.

"Well, my boy," said the mate to Howard; "the skipper has sent us on a lively cruise this time. I'm not frightened about ourselves, but I'll bet a month's wages against the cook's coal-scuttle that that flour will make 'duff' for these brown-skinned heathen afloat, and not a pound of it be stirred up into fancy cake by the senoritas ashore. But who's this coming to have a look at us? I should think by his good lace and fancy rigging he is a high-flyer, perhaps Mello himself."

The officer that came up was a man of commanding appearance slightly past middle age, and clad in the uniform of a senior lieutenant in the Brazilian navy.

He was accompanied by an officer of inferior rank and two marines. These latter began unceremoniously to search the pockets of the American sailors.

"Decidedly cool, I should say," murmured Howard, under his breath, as one of the marines took the still unopened letter which he had received that morning, and handed it to the junior officer.

"That's just what it is," replied Williams, in disgust, as the other marine drew a paper from his pocket. "But there's a document that will make them think twice before they offer any serious affront to 'yours truly.' Why, if they as much as dared to consign me to the 'brig' (place of confinement on naval vessels), they would have to answer for the insult to Uncle Sam."

The letter and the paper taken from the mate were handed to the lieutenant, who, turned upon his heel, walked aft and entered the cabin, or rather, the ward-room.

He had been gone but a short time when a messenger appeared on deck, and our friends, much to their surprise, were conducted below.

There, seated on a table, was the lieutenant. Before him was spread the official-looking document taken from Mr. Williams, but in his hand he held the boy's letter with the seal still unbroken.

"To which of you does this letter belong?" he asked, in excellent English closely scrutinizing the features of his prisoners.

"To me, sir," replied the youth, stepping forward.

"It is postmarked 'Portland, Maine, U. S. A.' Is that your home?"

"Yes, sir. The letter is from my mother."

"And you carried it in your pocket unopened? I fear you are not a loving son," the lieutenant said, with a frown.

"I got it just before the lighter—which your men captured—left the side of the Reindeer," replied Howard.

"I should judge that since then your time had been well occupied," rejoined the officer, grimly. "But now you have no longer any excuse to delay reading the news from home."

And he extended the letter to the young sailor.

Upon receiving it, Howard started to put it in his pocket, for he felt that the ward-room was not the place to read the loving mother's message.

"Examine it now, my boy; it is my wish," commanded the officer.

Much surprised at the manner of the lieutenant, Howard obeyed, and quickly scanned the closely-written pages.

When he had finished, he folded them and held them in his hands, standing in silence before the officer.

"Is your mother well?" enquired the lieutenant.

"She is, sir."

"And your father?"

"My father has been dead some years, sir—lost at sea when in command of the bark Rambler."

"Lost at sea?" repeated the lieutenant. "Ah, it is a fate that may await any sailor!"

Then rising from his chair, he laid his hand upon the boy's shoulder and said:

"Toil look to be a good young fellow, and I doubt not that in your mother will find that help in her declining years of which she was deprived when the sea claimed your father. Go, my boy; return with your friends to your vessel."

"And, sir," to Mr. Williams, "tell your captain that, although through the exigencies of war he has lost the cargo which he consigned to a Brazilian lighter, for reasons which it is now necessary to explain, it is returned to him, with the advice to be more cautious in future. The launch which effected your capture will conduct you in the direction of the city, as far as it will be expedient to go; but when on shore allow every one to suppose that Admiral Mello relinquished his claim to the confiscated flour because it was in charge of an American officer and seamen. It will be a good bait to lure some other, and perhaps richer cargo, into our hands. Good-by!"

As the lighter under the convoy of the steam-launch, went over the waters of the bay toward Rio, Mr. Williams, who had been silent for some time, broke forth in a long, low whistle, which was followed by the remark:

"That beats anything I ever experienced in all my knocking about this world. Howard can you tell me what it all means?"

"No, sir. I am as much at a loss to explain the Brazilian's action as you are."

"Brazilian?" queried the other.

"Why that man is no Brazilian! He's an American—as much of a one as I am myself. No! There's something behind it all, or we'd never have got this load of flour back."

It was nearly evening when our friends arrived on board the Reindeer and received the congratulations of the captain, who was ready to make clear the mysterious conduct of the Brazilian lieutenant.

"It is strange, Howard," he remarked, "that you should not have recognized your uncle!"

"My uncle?" repeated Howard, in astonishment.

"Yes, your father's brother, and the man for whom you were named. Since you were displaced from the flagship, I have had a visit from her executive officer, who explained the whole situation, and I have you to thank for the safety of a hundred or more barrels of flour. It seems," continued the captain, "that during our civil war your uncle held a commission in the United States navy. At the close of the war he left the Government service and entered the merchant marine."

"This I have heard my mother say," answered Howard, in a puz'z'd manner. "But, as nothing had been heard from him for years, we supposed him dead."

"No," answered the captain, "he came to Brazil, where his vessel was lost on the coast. Then he received an appointment in the navy, when the country was an empire and ruled by Dom Pedro. Since then he has followed the fortunes of the navy, until now we find him under Admiral Mello. The letter which I gave you this morning revealed your identity to him. It was the cause of your being released, and of my own vessel receiving the captured cargo."

That night Howard wrote a long and interesting letter to his mother, full of startling news; but what he was most proud to forward her was one hundred dollars, received from the owners of the cargo for the share which he had had in the return of their property.

Battles Decided by a Single Shot.

There are certainly three instances on record of a siege or battle having been decided by a single shot. First in order of importance was the shot—believed to have been fired by one of his own men—which killed Charles XII. in the trenches of the fortress of Friedriehshall, which immediately led to the raising of the second siege of Friedriehshall. This is perhaps the most important musket shot ever fired in the history of the world. Next comes the discharge of the mortar fired by Lord Cochrane during the defence of Port Trinidad in 1808. This shot foiled a French surprise and saved the fortress. Lastly, there was the single discharge of grape-shot which saved the fortress and town of Haddington in 1548. The French invaders had actually forced their way into the outworks of the castle when the one well-directed shot created such havoc in their densely-packed ranks that there ensued an immediate panic, which ended in flight.

In order to be healthy and beautiful women should make their habitual beverages of water into which a little fresh lemon juice has been mixed, and they should eat plenty of fruit at all seasons. Oranges are especially recommended, this fruit possessing, it appears, extraordinary virtue. The Marquis de Crequy, who died at the end of the last century at the age of 98, and who was still then a most attractive old lady with an apple-blossom complexion, an abundance of snow-white, silky hair and all her teeth unimpaired, lived during the last forty years of her life almost exclusively on oranges. She was wont to eat a dozen of them for her breakfast and the same number for luncheon and dinner, accompanied each time by a few thin slices of rye bread and a bowl of chicken broth.

HUMAN SACRIFICES IN RUSSIA.

Vain Attempts to Abolish the Practice—Revelations of a Newspaper.

It is probably known to few people that the practice of sacrificing human lives under certain conditions still exists in parts of Empire of Russia. The Government and the orthodox church have attempted in vain to stop the human practice; but up to the present time they have been unsuccessful.

Revelations regarding the custom were made in recent issues of the Gazette of Yakootsk, Siberia. It prevails among a sect known as the "Tchukshen," not far from that city. Old people, beyond the Biblical limit as to age, and sick ones, tired of life, offer themselves as the sacrifices.

When a "Tchukshen" decides to offer himself up, he sends word to all his relatives, friends and neighbors, who visit him and try to persuade him to change his intentions.

But prayers, upbraidings, threats, are useless in such a case, and the fanatic prepares for his end. The friends and relatives leave his house and return in ten to fifteen days, bringing the death candidate white clothing and several weapons, with which he is supposed to defend himself in the other world against evil spirits and shoot reindeer.

After completing his death toilet the candidate takes his place in a corner of his house or hut. About him gather his relatives, who offer him the choice of three instruments of death, a knife, a spear, and a rope. If he chooses the knife, two friends hold his arms while a third plunges the blade into his breast. Practically the same thing is done if he decides to die by the spear. When he prefers the rope, two of those present place it about his neck and strangle him to death. A cut is then made in the breast to let the blood flow out. All those present sprinkle their faces and hands with the blood, believing that it will preserve them from evil and bring them fortune.

The body, after this ceremony, is placed on a sled, which is drawn by a reindeer, to the "cremation hill," near the village. The neck of the animal is cut at once upon arrival at the place. The body is stripped of clothing, which is then cut into small pieces and placed on the altar with the dead man or woman. During the cremation the "mourners" utter prayers to the spirits, begging them to watch over those mortals still left on earth. This custom has been followed by the sect for centuries.

Music on the Bench.

The natives of Fiji are amenable to a criminal code known as the Native Regulations. These are administered by two courts, the District Court, which sits monthly and is presided over by a native magistrate; and the Provincial Court, which assembles every three months before the English and native magistrates sitting together. In "South Sea Yarns," Basil Thompson gives an amusing account of the District Court.

The court-house, a native building carpeted with mats, is now packed with natives, sitting cross-legged, on a small place being reserved in front of the table for the accused and the witnesses. The magistrate takes his seat, and his scribe, sitting on the floor at his side, prepares his writing materials to record the sentences.

The dignity with which the judge adjusts his shirt collar and clears his throat is a little marred when he produces from his bosom a jew's harp with which to beguile the tedium of the hours.

The first case is called. Samuela and Timoteo, two neck-faced youths of eighteen and nineteen, sitting fashion before the table, are charged with fowl-stealing. They plead "Not Guilty," and the owner of the fowls, being sworn, deposes that having been awakened at night by the voice of a favorite hen in angry remonstrance, he ran out of his house, and after a hot chase captured the accused red-handed in two senses, for they were plucking his hen while it was still alive.

Quite unmoved by this tragic tale, Vatoreba seems to listen only to the melancholy notes of his jew's harp; but the witness is a chief and a man of influence withal and a period of awe-filled silence follows his accusation, broken only by a subdued twinging from the bench. The judge has not yet opened his lips during the case and as the jew's harp is not capable of much expression, it is with some interest that we await the sentence.

Suddenly the music ceases, the instrument is withdrawn from the mouth, the oracle is about to speak. Alas! he utters but two words, "Vula tolu" (three months), and there peals out a malignantly triumphant strain from the jew's harp.

But the prosecutor starts up with a protest. One of the accused is his nephew, he explains, and he only wished a light sentence to be imposed. Three months for one fowl is too severe; besides, if the boy has three months, he must go to the central gaol and not work out his sentence in his own district.

Again there is silence and the voice of the jew's harp has changed from triumph to thoughtfulness. At length it ceases and the oracle speaks again, "Bogi tolu" (three days).

Couldn't Shake His Confidence in the Meter.

Citizen (at gas company's office): "You have sent me a bill of \$3.85 for gas consumed in July and August. Here are affidavits from all the members of the family to prove that the house has been locked up all summer and that we have burned no gas whatever during July and August."

Gas Company Official: "Yes, sir. Three dollars and eighty-five cents, please. The meter can't lie."

HORN FLY TRAP.

Ingenious Device for Lessening a Great Evil.

A horn fly trap has been recently patented by a Canadian farmer which, if it accomplishes what is claimed for it, will call down blessings on the head of its inventor. The trap consists of a contrivance about six feet high and four feet wide, so built as to fit closely in a stable door. At the outer side a curtain is hung; the inner side, fitting to the opening to the door, is composed of compact brushes made of broom corn extending from the top downward and from the sides to the centre, so that the cow can go through, but in doing so it is completely brushed over every part of the body, the elasticity of the broom corn causing it to spring back in place as the cow passes through.

When in place the tips of the brushes close together, leaving no opening through which the flies can follow. The roof of the structure is composed of wire netting, which lets in the light, thus attracting the flies to it, but preventing them from getting out. In this top is placed a trap which the flies can enter, but cannot get out again. In using the trap the cow is driven into the machine and the curtain is let down behind it; it is then driven through the brushes into the stable the flies being brushed off as it goes through. The flies cannot get through the brushes forward, and the curtain keeps them from coming back into the open air; a shake of the curtain drives them upward into the trap.

The editor of the Live Stock Journal saw twenty-eight cows put through the trap in twenty-eight minutes, the time including the removal of the machine to three different barn doors. The results were—the cows in the stable entirely free from flies and the flies in the trap, which was taken down and put in the kitchen oven for a few minutes, to their utter destruction.

It might be thought useless to remove the flies in this way, since the cows would receive a fresh supply as soon as they were turned into the pasture again, but the Live Stock Journal says that while the process would pay even if it had to be repeated every day, since it would afford an opportunity to milk in peace, and those who wished could keep the animals up during the heat of the day, when the pests were at their worst, yet it is found that when the cows have been put through the machine a few times the number of flies is greatly and permanently reduced.

Locusts in Central America.

"You have read about John the Baptist living upon locust and wild honey," said a clergyman who has been travelling in Central America. "Well, here's a locust, and he produced from his pocket a well, a locust. It doesn't hop or jump, and had no semblance of life because, indeed, it was nothing but a great bean, looking like a huge cranberry-bean pod. It is five inches long and almost as big around as a banana. It had a deep, mahogany-colored skin of hard consistency. 'I have eaten many of them. They grow on trees as big as elms and fall to the ground when ripe. Split them open and they contain a yellow substance looking like mustard. Mixed with water, it makes a very delicious and nourishing drink that will sustain life for a long time. One of these pods will make a quart of drink, and everybody uses them. They are not the locusts of John the Baptist, but I understand that the tree grows in that land of the Bible.'"

No Recompense Whatever.

Lawyer—"Of course, I'm willing to bring suit for any amount you say, but don't you think \$50,000 is rather a large amount for a breach of promise?"

Old maid client—"No sir."

Lawyer—"Do you think you have suffered to that extent?"

Client—"You wouldn't ask that if you had heard the women around this town laugh when they get to talking about me."

A Leading Question.

Nephew—"Aunt Hepzibah, who was Myles Standish?"

Aunt Hepzibah (who still has hopes): "He was a Puritan captain who lived more than a hundred years ago. Now run away."

Nephew—"Did you know him, auntie?"

The Intellectual.

The pedantic and profound young man sent the frivolous summer girl something to read. It was "Locke on the Understanding," and she wrestled with it for two hours, then she sent him this note:

"Locke on the Understanding, received. Thanks. Please send key."

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