

Select Tale.

THE RUNAWAY SHIP.

BY CHARLES CASTLETON.

I had command of the good ship "Evershot"—a good ship, and one which had put much money into the hands of her owners. She was built for the India trade, and with the exception of one voyage to Smyrna, she had stuck to the purpose for which she was put together. On the present occasion, I was bound for India, and my cargo was made up of a curious variety. I had for passengers, an old gentleman, whose head was white, and his form bent with years, and his three sons, the youngest of whom was about five-and-thirty, and the oldest not far from fifty. Then there were several women and some half-dozen children.

We had doubled the southern capes of Africa, and were just poking our noses into the Indian Ocean, when a circumstance transpired which was destined to try our nerves somewhat. One afternoon one of the men in the foretop reported a sail very near ahead, in the line of our course.

"Some homeward bound Indiaman, probably," remarked Mr. Lee, my mate.

I nodded assent, and then went to the cabin and told my passengers that if they had any letters to send home, they had better have them ready, for perhaps we were about to meet a ship bound to Old England. They went to work upon my suggestion at once, and in the course of half an hour we had a letter-bag neatly sewed up and directed.

The wind was now a little south of east, so that we stood upon our course northeast with freedom, and the coming ship was heading very closely upon us, though as she came nearer she kept away a little further to the westward.

"Is it an English ship?" asked my white-haired passenger.

"I think it is," was my reply; and just as I spoke, my second mate came down from the foretop, where he had been with a glass. I noticed that his face looked troubled, and also that he kept back some remark which he was upon the point of dropping, at the time regarding the old man with a look which seemed to indicate that he was in the way. I took the hint, and carelessly walked forward. Mr. Becket, the mate in question, followed me. At the gangway I stopped.

"What is it?" I asked, now turning and looking into his face.

"Why, sir, that ship is the old 'Dorset.'"

"The 'Dorset'?" I replied. "Impossible."

"But I am sure," persisted Becket. "There is not another ship in England with such a figure-head. Those two girls are not to be mistaken."

"But are you sure she has that figure-head?"

"Certainly. You'll be able to see it from here in a few moments."

"But," said I, "the 'Dorset' has not yet had time to reach Sydney, let alone getting back as far as this."

"Of course not," answered Becket, with a keen glance about him; but don't you think a ship could run away without doing the errand she had in hand?"

"Eh!" That's all I uttered at the moment, for a strange thought was beginning to work its way to my mind.

"You remember what sort of a cargo the 'Dorset' had, don't you?" my mate remarked.

Of course I remembered, for I met the captain of the Dorset the day before she sailed, and had a quiet dinner with him at Cowley's. He was an old friend of mine, and named Bumstead—Harry Bumstead—and as good a sailor as ever trod a deck at sea. Now the facts, as they came crowding rather unpleasantly upon my mind were these: The Dorset sailed just two weeks before I did and took out twenty-three convicts who had been sentenced to transportation. Those of course, he was to drop at Sydney or Port Jackson, and as he had part of a cargo for that place, he was to go there first. So I knew that the Dorset had no business to be running away from the Indian Ocean now.

"What do you think about it?" asked Becket, who had been watching me.

"Let me take the glass," said I, without seeming to notice this question.

He handed me the glass, and I at once leaped upon the horse-block and set the focus. The coming ship was now so near that her hull was nearly all up, and my first look was upon the figure-head. There could be no mistake now. I could distinctly see the two female forms clasping each other by the hands, which I knew to be the adorning feature of the Dorset's outwater.

"Mr. Becket," I said, after I had satisfied myself on this point, "that is the Dorset, and no mistake."

"Yes,—but what do you make of it?"

"What do you make of it?" I asked.

He pondered a few moments, and then said, "I think the convicts have taken the ship!"

"So do I," was my rejoinder.

As I thus spoke, I walked aft to where my first mate stood by the wheel, and drawing him on one side, I told him my fears. He leaped upon the rail and gazed off upon our neighbour, and when he reached the deck again he was of my opinion.

"It must be so," he said. "What shall we do?"

That was the question. What should we do? The ship had now come to within half a mile, and all doubts respecting her identity were at an end. I now knew she was the "Dorset," and of course felt confident that the convicts must by some means have gained possession.

"She didn't have the best crew that ever was," remarked Lee, nervously. "I knew some of her men, and they were as precious a set of scoundrels as ever breathed."

This made the matter worse still. Of my whole crew, I could muster but thirty men, counting the three able passengers, having set five men on shore at St. Helena, sick with fever, and being unable at the time to make their places good. On board the Dorset, of course, there would be the three-and-twenty convicts, and in all probability, a good part of the crew—perhaps forty men in all. What should we do? To let the ship pass under such circumstances seemed hardly the thing for an Englishman, and to engage with such a renegade crew seemed sheer madness. I asked my officers what they thought—and they thought just as I did. I explained the matter to my three passengers, and they said they would help if they could be assured there would be no loss of any use.

But during this time the ship in question had been nearing us; as we steered so as to speak her, and now she was not more than two cables' length distant upon our lee bow.

"Ship ahoy!" I shouted, through my trumpet.

"Hullo?" came from the other ship.

"What ship is that?"

"The 'Ben Franklin,'" answered the same voice, the owner of which wore a Scotch cap and red shirt.

"Where are you bound?"

"To New York."

"Belong there."

"Yes."

At this moment she had ranged ahead far enough so that I could see she had the American flag at her peak, which had been before hidden by her canvass. There were certainly forty men leaning over her rail, and I knew at once that we could not openly overcome them. At that moment, had my ship been near enough, I could have jumped on board and engaged with these men single-handed. What had become of poor Harry Bumstead, thought I, and the few men who might have remained faithful to him.

While these thoughts, and a thousand others, were wildly rushing through my mind, the Dorset passed on. I knew it was my old friend for all the lies they had told me in answer to my questions. I had no thought or conjectures on the subject, but that that ship was the Dorset I knew just as well as I should have known my own brother. As the ship passed on, I saw a face at one of the quarter windows, I seized the glass and levelled it. It was the face of Harry Bumstead, as sure as fate! And he waived a handkerchief towards me with the most frantic gesticulations.

The sense of pain was just sinking into my whole soul, when an idea flashed across my mind that caused me fairly to leap from my feet. All was now hope and bustle in my brain, and as soon as possible I got my wits into working order.

"Put the ship upon her course again," I ordered.

"We can do nothing?" said Becket, interrogatively.

"Wait," said I, in return. "It isn't too late yet."

"But—"

"Stop. Wait until I have shaped out a plan and then you shall know it."

It was now quite late, for just as poor Harry Bumstead waived his handkerchief at me the last time, the sun was sinking in the western waters. I watched the Dorset until distance and gloom combined to hide her from me, and I knew that she was bound for the Atlantic; I saw her take in her lofty sails in preparation for the night, and I felt my hope increase. The last I could see she was steering southwest.

As soon as it was dark, I had the helm up, and ordered the ship to be wore round upon the other tack, and as soon as this was done I set the course due south and crowded on all sail. The officers and men gathered around me and wished to know what all this meant.

"It means," answered I, "that I will have those villains in irons again, if I can."

"But how?" came from half a dozen.

"I'll tell you. Our ship's by all odds the best sailer, even with equal sail set; but now that the Dorset has only topgallant sails over double-reefed topsails we can shoot ahead fast. By midnight I calculate to be further south than she will be, so I'll keep on this course until I am sure, and then I'll run to the westward and lie in waiting for her."

"And what then?"

"I can tell you better when the time comes. But be not afraid, for I won't run into danger." The breeze held fair, and we carried our royal and studding sails below and aloft. At midnight I knew we must be considerably further south than the Dorset, but instead of running directly west, I changed the course to west-south-west, knowing that thus we should come upon the other's tack soon enough. At three o'clock I made a careful reckoning of our log for the last nine hours, and also of the point the Dorset must strike, if she kept her course southwest, and I felt sure we were just where we should be.

My first move was to heave to and take in sail; and then I sent the topgallant masts on deck and housed topmasts. Next, I had all our arms brought upon deck, and I found we had more than enough for a brace of pistols and a cutlass to each man. After this I had the pumps rigged, and hardly had this been accomplished before the look-out reported a sail. I hastened forward, and could plainly see the outlines of the top-hamper of a heavy ship looming up darkly against the sky. I had the lanterns hoisted, and then set the men at work at the pumps. Ere long, the ship came near enough to hail; she put down her helm, and laid her course to run under her head.

"Ship ahoy!" now came from the Dorset—for I could easily make out the drapery of the figure-head.

I made my mate answer at my suggestion, for fear the villains should recognize my voice.

"Hillo! send a boat on board!" yelled Lee, just as the Dorset passed under our stern. "We've sprung a leak, and our ship is sinking!"

"What have ye got aboard?"

"Furniture and provisions, and forty thousand pounds in money!"

The Dorset hove to, and lowered a boat, which was soon alongside, full of men. The villains began to come over the side.

"Haven't settled much yet," one of them remarked, as he noticed how high we stood.

"We've kept the pumps going well," I said.

"Where's your gold? Let's have that first."

"This way," said I, moving to the poop.

When half way there, I motioned for the men to stop pumping.

"Down!" I uttered, and as I spoke I gave the man nearest me a blow with my cutlass across the head that knocked him down. Only fifteen of the men had come from the other ship, and as my crew were all prepared, these fifteen were all down and gagged almost before they could realize that any thing was out of the way. They were unprepared and nearly all of them unarmed.

"Ship ahoy!" I cried, through my trumpet, speaking as gruffly as possible, to imitate the voice of the fellow I had knocked down.

"Hullo!" came in reply.

"Send another boat. We can't bring half. Send quickly, for the old thing is sinking."

The Dorset soon lowered one of her quarter-boats, and came alongside, with ten men in it. They came hurrying over the side, and as soon as they were all in the gangway, we fell upon them—not wildly, but with regular system—and in a short time they were secure.

My course was now simple. I first saw every man so firmly bound that he could not even move, and then I called twenty-four men into the two boats, still alongside, leaving only six men aboard my ship. We pulled straight for the Dorset as smartly as possible. When we came to her gangway, I saw several heads peering over the rail, but we had taken the precaution to put on the Scotch caps of the convicts, and they had no suspicions. Becket was the first on her deck, and I followed next.

"Got the money?" asked a coarse fellow.

"Most of it is in the boat now," I replied.

"Rig a whip, and we'll soon have it aboard."

The villain had not noticed my weapons. I recognized in him at once the boatswain of the ship, a man who had been hired at Liverpool, and whose character was not among the best. As he turned to order the whip rigged, I saw that my men were all on board, and drawing my weapon, I sprang upon him and cut him down. At the first onset on board my own ship I had been careful not to kill any one, for fear I might be mistaken; but I was doubtful no longer, for some of the prisoners had confessed the crime. There were seventeen men left on board the ship for me to capture, and

we captured them without losing one of our men, and only killing four of them. As soon as our prisoners were safely secured, I made my way to the cabin, and in one of the galleries I found Capt. Bumstead.

In the hold of the Dorset I we found fifteen of the crew in irons. Bumstead explained to me, in a few words, what had happened. Only five days before, the boatswain, who had shown much subordination during the voyage, headed nineteen of the crew who had joined him, and having set the convicts free, they fell upon the rest of the crew at night and secured an easy victory.

The first and second mates they had killed, and the boatswain would have killed all hands, but the rest of the mutineers refused to have it done. So it had been arranged that the captain and his friends should be confined and set on shore on the first out of the way island they could find.

It was soon arranged that Bumstead should proceed to Sydney with his fifteen faithful men, feeling sure that the convicts could be so confined as to be safe. So I saw his prisoners faithfully ironed, and then took the mutineers on board my own ship, intending to carry them to Calcutta. They were fifteen in number; four only having killed in the conflict.

That night the Dorset tacked, and stood away for Australia, while we kept on up the ocean. We arrived safely at Calcutta, and before I left Captain Bumstead arrived, and the mutineers soon after paid for their crime with their lives.—*Baltimore's Dollar Monthly.*

Agriculture.

TO PREVENT A HORSE FROM BREAKING HIS BRIDLE.—The Editor of the Farmer and Planter gives the following method, imparted by a correspondent, from Mississippi, of preventing a horse from breaking his bridle, a troublesome habit in some otherwise valuable horses:—

"Have you a horse that breaks his bridle? Go to the store, buy a large fiddle-string, tie one end of it to his bit, pass the other up under the head-stall and tie to the other side of the bit. Tie the string from half to three-quarters of an inch shorter than the head-stall, make loose the martingales, and hitch him with the reins (strong ones) and let him pull. Thus you see all the strain will be upon the cat-gut, and that cutting down on his naked head soon brings him to terms. I have never yet seen one make the third attempt under this treatment, and rarely the second. Try it."

If cat-gut cannot be procured, tough, annealed iron or copper wire might answer the same purpose.

SUMMER CARE OF TREES.—The general policy in the management of a young tree is to throw its whole vital, wood-making power into those branches, and those alone, which are needed, and are to be preserved; that is, so to manage the tree that half its growth, every two or three years, shall not be thrown away in pruning. Examine the branches. See first what are necessary to make the tree symmetrical. Then pinch off every other sprout. If one starts from the bottom, pinch it off at once. If a branch is pushing out too rapidly for the rest, and threatens to outgrow them, pinch off the end, and stop it. In this way all the sap is appropriated just where it is wanted, and the tree does not have to be shocked every year by the wounds of the pruning knife. All young trees should be mulched. It is time to do this now.—Let not their roots get the blighting impression of the hot sun at all. The mulching can be done in numerous ways. If the tree needs enriching, put a good coat of coarse manure around it. The cheapest mulch, and one that answers well, though it does not look very well, is the grass mowed about this time in the deer-yard. Put on enough of it so that it will not dry up, but form a mass and rot. Do not try to grow too much wood. If the trees are set out this spring, remember that their roots have not got firm hold of the earth yet, and that their ability to feed the branches is limited.—Therefore, cut down to meet the ability of the roots, in their new location. With intelligent care, you can save all your trees, and soon put them beyond harm's way. Beyond all means, do not be afraid of manure, in almost any form.—*American paper.*

HOW TO MANURE TREES IN GRASS LAND.—Very few persons manure trees growing in sod or grass land, in a judicious or economical manner. The general practice is to dig the manure in, within a diameter of six feet, having the body for the centre. The tree takes its food from the young root-lets, whose mouths extend just as far on every side, as the branches of the tree; hence, this manure applied close to the bottom of the tree, is not where the roots take it up; and of course but little