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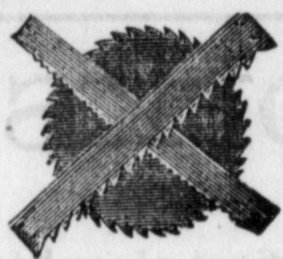
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BY

W. CLARKE RUSSELL.

(Condensed for THE REVIEW.)

CHAPTER XXXI.—Continued

I at once went to work and related our adventures, and on coming to an end I asked him if he could give me news of the Iron Crown.

He answered no; he had not heard of the vessel, but that he had learned about a fortnight ago, though he could not recollect the source from which he had received the intelligence, that a vessel bound to Porto Rico had been spoken, and reported that she had on board four men, whom she had found adrift in an open boat, and that the fellows said they had gone in search of a man and lost their ship in thick weather. "And I believe, sah," said Captain Ducrow, "dat dah name of dah vessel they gave was dah Iron Crown; but I won't swear to it, for I ain't got no memory worf speaking of, 'cept for poetry."

Here he sent a languishing look at Miss Grant.

"For poetry!" I rapped out. "Do you know," I exclaimed, turning to my companion, "that this looks uncommonly like as though poor Gordon and his men were picked up."

"I hope so," she answered, "and it seems so indeed. It will diminish by so much the horrors of our memories of the ship. And four men, too, Mr. Musgrave! That must mean that the poor cabin-boy was recovered."

"Pray, captain," said I, "which is the nearest port whereabouts; some civilized place of houses and ships, I mean, where we may be able to put ourselves in the way of getting to Rio?"

He looked steadfastly around the horizon, as though seeking information on the gleaming sea-line, and then gazing at me with one eye shut, full of thought, he exclaimed, "Dere'll be nuffen nearer than Nassoo."

"And how far off will that be?" said I, "in the shape of time, I mean."

"Well, may be a week, may be a month. Dere's no predicting ob de winds."

"Tell yah what," he suddenly exclaimed, "take mah advice and let me bowl yah to Havana. Dere's breezes to be trusted off de Bahama bank."

"All right," said I. "Havana will suit very well. And now to square the matter off while we're upon it—what about the passage money?"

He uttered a few disconnected syllables. "De grub—lost time yeeie—nuffen p'raps 'longshore arter all;" then bringing his eyes to me, and staring a little without speaking, he exclaimed, "Say fifty dollars apiece!"

"You shall have it," said I, pulling out my pocket-book, and giving him a sight of some Bank of England notes in it.

The negro now came along, bearing the meal that had been ordered. A small carpenter's bench was brought from forward, a piece of sackcloth spread over it, and Miss Grant and I fell to. The beef proved a piece of corned buffalo hump, and speaking for myself I eat with extraordinary relish after our three weeks of turtle and crawfish. Even out of the flinty biscuit I could get enjoyment, while the chocolate was as well made and handsomely frothed as any I ever tasted ashore.

Captain Ducrow stood by us while we breakfasted. I asked him to join us, but he said his own breakfast of tea, biscuit and molasses would be coming along shortly, and he'd rather wait.

CHAPTER XXXIII.**ABOARD THE ORPHAN**

Havana, according to Captain Ducrow, was within eight or nine days' sail of us. The outlook of the run, for run it was to prove, was not a thing to trouble either Miss Grant or myself at the first blush, coming as we did fresh to this little schooner from the horrors and perils of an open boat at sea, and from three weeks of hopelessness in an island prison. But it does not take long for the novelty of rescue to wear out. Before darkness closed upon that first day of our deliverance we had ceased to marvel at our happy escape. We had grown used to thinking of it, and though gratitude was always in our thoughts, there was no longer the passionate delight and astonishment rising at moments to incredulity.

Hence when the evening settled down hot as iron that has blackened out its white heat, along with a fining down of the breeze to a mere sighing of air that threatened a dead calm anon, Miss Grant's and my conversation naturally went to the prospect before us, of the passage in this stifling, leaking, ill-provisioned little schooner to Havana, that yet lay some hundreds of miles distant.

"I am thinking," said I, "that if we were to come across a good comfortable roomy craft, it would be as well to transship ourselves without regard to her destination."

"I will do whatever you wish," she said simply.

"Only," said I, "suppose she should be bound to a European port?"

She seemed to be sunk in reflection.

"It would be rather a blow, perhaps," I continued, feeling a bit cynical as I progressed in this talk, "to be borne off to

England or to France or to Spain even, or say North America—"

She interrupted me: "The ship might be going the other way; she might be sailing to the East Indies perhaps, or to Australia."

"Oh," said I, with a short laugh, "in that case, then, we must stop where we are. But suppose the vessel bound for Europe, would you be willing to go on board of her?"

"If it were your wish—yes."

"But, Miss Grant, so grave a matter must not lie altogether upon my shoulders. Remember your sailing to Europe again would greatly prolong the term of your divorce from your sweetheart."

I could see her smiling in the moonlight though she hung her head. "We might not sight a ship," said she, presently.

"But if we do," said I, "shall we leave this crazy old hooker for her?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed.

"Without regard," I said, striving to steady my voice, though my heart just gave a flop that was like to choke me, "to the port she is bound to?"

"Oh, yes," she responded with a note of archness in her voice; "the captain would not alter his course to oblige us, you know."

"It would only signify a little further delay," said I, "with the comforts of civilization between, and that is what we both want now. Of course on our arrival, be the place Tagus or the Thames, be it Boston or Marseilles, I should immediately go to work to equip ourselves afresh for a second, and, I hope, successful voyage to Rio."

"You are very kind," she answered, a little above her breath, while I could see her biting her lip to another hide smile.

Late as it was and wearied as I was when I saw her to her miserable little hole of a berth, I yet paced the deck for above an hour afterward in as odd, unreasonable a temper as ever possessed me, full of the agitation of fifty wild thoughts all rolling one to another in as lively a play as ever the sea showed off a harbor, with the water shoaling in, spouts to the sweep of the wind one way, and the current seething into it the other. The fact was, a resolution to keep Miss Grant by my side, no matter what the name of the stars might be that looked down upon us, had been growing and hardening in me, till I whipped out with it in the suggestion that it would be good for us both to transship ourselves at the first opportunity that offered, no matter where the vessel we entered might be bound.

CHAPTER XXXIV.**WE QUIT THE ORPHAN.**

Well, we had three days of this sort of thing—three days and three nights of it; and then on the morning of the fourth a breeze of wind darkened and roughened the western ocean, and presently the little schooner was again under way, off her course by some three and a half points, but sweeping through it gayly nevertheless.

This day, shortly after noon, a small brig passed us. When I first sighted the squares of her canvas I took her to be a big ship, for she showed a sky-sail on the main, which threw her up tall and spire-like as she came blowing up, radiant as cotton could make her, over the blue edge I had not said a word to Ducrow about our intention of leaving her schooner if a chance came, but I thought I would do so now, especially as yonder craft promised the opportunity I had fallen half crazy in yearning for during our time of stagnation. But first I spoke to Miss Grant. We were sitting under a little awning aft, whence we had a good view of the distant sail as it slowly enlarged.

"If that ship will receive us," said I, "shall we exchange this schooner for her?"

"You must think me very capricious, Mr. Musgrave," she answered; "have I not again and again answered yes to such another question as that? When my mind is made up, I do not quickly change it indeed without excellent reason."

"But I want you to reflect. I wish you to think for yourself, and of yourself wholly. Be that fellow's destination what it will, he is bound to sail as straight for it as the wind will let him. He is heading about east. Now that is a direction entirely contrary to your wishes."

"My wishes?"

"I mean that his bowsprit points to any other quarter of the world than where he lies."

She looked at me an instant with an expression in her eyes that showed her mind to be full, though I was to blind to make out a shadow of what was there—too sensitive, perhaps, I should say, for to be oversensitive is to be worse than blind sometimes; and then, after a little pause she said, quietly, "Once more, Mr. Musgrave, I'm quite willing to leave the schooner."

"Captain Ducrow!" I sung out.

"Hilloo, sah!" he answered, from the rail, where he was standing with his arm round a backstay, watching with a grin the flash of his little ship through the small ridges which whitened into cream along the dirty green of the vessel's sheathing.

"Step this way, will you?" said I.

He sprang to the deck and approached.

"We want you to speak that vessel," said I, pointing. "In a word, we want you to stop her so that we can go aboard of her, as we find your accommodation

scarcely all that we require, at least under these burning heights; otherwise, we're both of us quite in love with your charming little vessel, while we highly value you for your good breeding, and thank you excessively for the attention you have paid us."

This bit of trowelling I deemed necessary that the rest might be easy, but his surprise mastered his gratification, and with a sort of a grin in his twisted mouth while his eyes on the other hand stared their amazement, he cried: "Yah wan to leave dah Orphan, hein? 'commodation not good? But I know dah reason. De calm's disgusted yah. Yah was werry most satisfied afore de wind fell."

"Come, captain," said I, "it shall be the same to you. See here!" I pulled out my pocket-book and produced a banknote for £20. "There," said I, slapping it, "place us aboard yonder craft and this is yours. Of course, if she's bound to some outlandish place we shan't quit you; but put us within hailing distance, will you—signal to speak to her; and if she will receive us and her destination be some port convenient to ourselves, you shall have this money the same as though you had landed us at Havana."

He eyed the note greedily as I folded it up and returned it to the pocket-book, following that, too, till it was hidden, and then said: "All right, sah. Yah'll miss dah Orphan—dere's nuffen afloat—but den, of course, if dah lady hain't comfortable—" He suddenly roared out: "Hi! Moses! you black teef, lay aft, mah bird-ob-Paradise, an' hoist dat ensign half-mast high. 'Dat'll make 'em reckon we've got something on our minds."

The negro came shambling along with the ensign, and a very tattered symbol of Britannia's mercantile sovereignty floated slowly aloft, and then blew out within a dozen feet of the topmast-head. The stranger, however, appeared to take no notice of this. There was no telescope aboard us, but she was near enough now to enable me to distinguish her with the naked eye. She showed no color, nor indeed exhibited any disposition to shift her helm to bear down to us. Ducrow luffed till our canvas was shaking fore and aft, so that nothing could be more expressive of our desire to speak than the posture of the schooner, almost at a stand, plunging to the short sea that she now brought almost right ahead, with every dingy balsamed cloth on her trembling, and the half-masted ensign streaming like a flame aloft, and giving deep emphasis to every hint discoverable in the schooner's attitude. As the stranger drew out she showed herself a brig, a smaller vessel than the Iron Crown, though large enough to have stowed the Orphan between her rails. She was under all plain sail with the weather-clew of the mainsail up, and she slid past with a careful courtesies upon the swell, a streak of cold gleaming at her fore foot to the light of her bows, with a yeasty, trembling like a ball of wool there which unwound itself as she thrust it forward. But though she did not alter her course by so much as a quarter of a point, our own wind-jamming brought us close enough aboard to enable us to see her people plainly. A couple of figures were pacing the poop under the snow-white awning. There was a group of heads forward, and a sailor in the fore-topmast rigging swinging out with his face toward the schooner watching us.

Our chance, however, was presently to come, though we had to wait for a little while longer.

It was on the morning of the sixth day of our rescue from the perils of the open boat. All night long the weather had been breathless, but with the rising of the sun there came a small breeze of wind, a little to the eastward of south, which as the morning advanced freshened, and the schooner was sliding through it once again heading saucily along her course, with Ducrow strutting the deck in high spirits, a couple of negroes repairing a sail forward, another at the tiller, a fourth perspiring at the old pump.

Suddenly Ducrow bawled out, "Sail ho!" pointing ahead.

I looked languidly in the direction he indicated, not rising even, so sick was I of his cry of "sail ho!" heretofore as barren as a parrot's meaningless croak of the words. I was conversing with Miss Grant at the time, and turning to her afresh, proceeded with what I was saying without giving the vessel ahead another thought. Time passed; presently Ducrow said, "Dat fellow's a big 'un what's coming long dah. We musn't hab de go-by given us dis time, if it's to be helped, sah. Must make more fuss, odderwise dere's no chance of getting compassionate." So saying, he went to the little locker, and took out the ensign, and bent it, jack down to the halyards, and ran it half-mast high, belaying in slackly that it might blow out with a good visible curve. This done, he bawled to his men to shorten sail.

"Down jib, mah blackbirds! down wid both tawp-sails! jump, mah blacks, jump! Hurrah fo' de ship! Up main-tack, let go main-peak halyards. Now den, Hebenzer, you black teef, down heilum, and throw us right up into de wind—up into de wind—up into de wind, I says," wallowing about in a most extraordinary manner as he bawled these orders, and springing from the deck on his naked feet as though the planks were too hot—as well they might be!—to suffer him to stand upon them. Thus all in a moment

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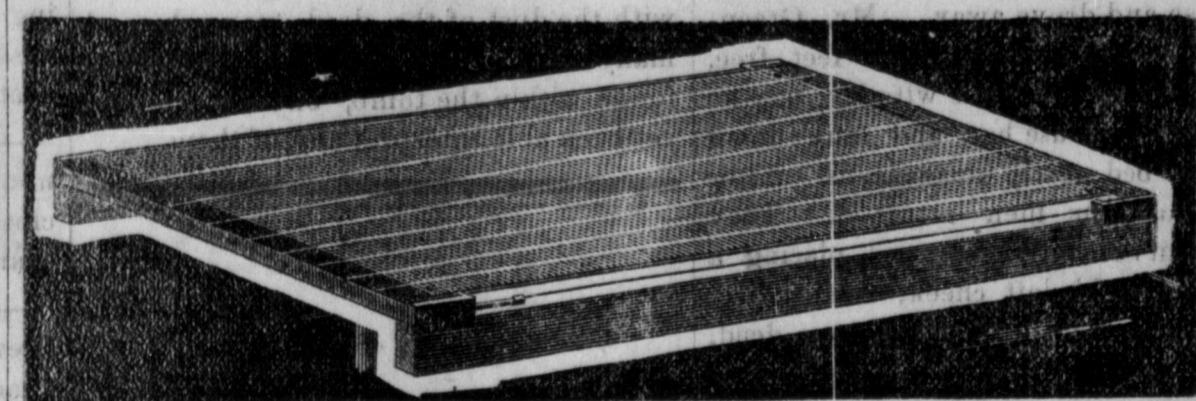
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