

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE FOR DECEMBER.

THE PICCAROON.

CONCLUDED.

As we stood on, she was seen more distinctly, but, to all appearance, nobody was aware of her proximity. We were mistaken in this, for the Captain suddenly jumped on a gun, and gave his orders with a fiery energy that startled us.

"Leroux!" A small French boy was at his side in a moment. "Forward, and call all hands to shorten sail; but, DUCEMENT, you land crab!—Man the fore clew garnets.—Hands by the topgallant clew lines—peak and throat—halyards—jib down—haul—rise tacks and sheets—let go—clew up—settle away the main-gaff there!"

In almost as short a space as I have taken to write it, every inch of canvass was close furlled—every light, except the one in the binnacle, carefully extinguished—a hundred and twenty men at quarters, and the ship under bare poles. The head yards were then squared, and we bore up before the wind. The stratagem proved successful, the strange sail could be seen through the night glasses, crackling on close to the wind, evidently under the impression that we had tacked.

"Dere she goes, chasing de Gobel," said the Dutchman. She now burned a blue light, by which we saw she was a heavy cutter—without doubt our fellow-cruiser the Spark. The Dutchman had come to the same conclusion. "My eye, Captain, no use to dog from her, it is only dat footy little King's cutter on de Jamaica station."

"It is her, true enough," answered Williamson; and she is from Santo Martha with a freight of specie, I know. I will try a brush with her, by."

Splinter struck in before he could finish his irreverent exclamation. "If your conjecture be true, I know the craft—a heavy vessel of her class, and you may depend on hard knocks and small profit, if you do take her; while, if she takes you—"

"I'll be hanged if she does!"—and he grinned at the conceit—then setting his teeth hard, "or rather, I will blow the schooner up with my own hand before I strike; better than than have one's bones bleached in chains on a key in Port Royal.—But you see you cannot control us, gentlemen; so get down into the cable tier, and take Peter Mangrove with you. I would not willingly see those come to harm who have trusted me."

However, there was no shot flying as yet, and we therefore staid on deck. All sail was once more made, the carronades were cast loose on both sides, and double shot; the long gun slewed round; the tack of the fore and aft foresail hauled up, and we kept by the wind, and stood after the cutter, whose white canvass we could still see through the gloom like a snow-wreath.

As soon as she saw us she tacked and stood towards us, and came gallantly bowling along, with the water roaring and flashing at her bows. As the vessels neared each other, they both shortened sail, and finding that we could not weather her, we steered close under her lee.

As we crossed on opposite tacks, her commander hailed, "Ho, the Brigantine, ahoy!"

"Hillo!" sung out Blackie, as he backed his main-top-sail.

"What schooner is that?"

"The Spanish schooner, Caridad."

"Whence, and whither bound?"

"Carthage, to Porto Rico."

"Heave to, and send your boat on board."

"We have none that will swim, sir."

"Very well—bring to, and I will send mine."

"Call away the boarders," said our captain, in a low stern tone, "let them crouch out of sight behind the boat."

The cutter wore, and hove to under our lee quarter, within pistol shot. We heard the rattle of the ropes running through the davit blocks, and the splash of the jolly-boat touching the water, then the measured stroke of the oars, as they glanced like silver in the sparkling sea, and a voice calling out, "Give way, my lads."

The character of the vessel we were on board of was now evident; and the bitter reflection that we were chained to the stake on board of a pirate, on the eve of a fierce contest with one of our own cruisers, was aggravated by the consideration that the cutter had fallen into a snare, by which a whole boat's crew would be sacrificed before a shot was fired.

I watched my opportunity as she pulled up along side, and called out, leaning well over the nettings, "Get back to your ship!—treachery!—get back to your ship." The little French serpent was at my side with the speed of thought, his long clear knife glancing in one hand, while the fingers of the other were laid on his lips. He could not have said more plainly

"Hold your tongue, or I'll cut your throat." The officer in the boat had heard me imperfectly; he rose up—"I won't go back my good man, until I see what you are made of;" and as he spoke, he sprung on board; but the instant he got over the bulwarks he was caught by two strong hands, gagged, and thrown bodily down the main hatchway. "Heave!" cried a voice, "and with a will!" and four cold 32lb. shot were hove at once into the boat alongside, and crashing through her bottom, swamped her in a moment, precipitating the miserable crew into the boiling sea. Their shrieks still ring in my ears, as they clung to the oars and some loose planks of the boat. "Bring up the officer, and take out the gag," said Williamson. Poor Walcolm, who had been an old messmate of mine, was dragged to the gangway half naked, his face bleeding, and heavily ironed, when the blackamoor, clapping a pistol to his head, bid him, as he feared instant death, hail, "that the boat had swamped under the counter, and to send another." The poor fellow, who appeared stunned and confused, did so, but without seeming to know what he said. "Good God!" said Mr Splinter, "don't you mean to pick up the boat's crew?" The blood curdled to my heart as the black savage answered, in a voice of thunder, "Let them drown and be d—d! fill, and stand on!"

But the clouds by this time broke away, and the mild moon shone clear and bright once more, upon this scene of most atrocious villainy. By her light the cutter's people could see that there was no one struggling in the water, and that the people must either have been saved, or were past all earthly aid; but the infamous deception was not entirely at an end.

The Captain of the cutter seeing that we were making sail, hailed once more. "Mr Walcolm, run to leeward, and heave too." "Answer him instantly, and hail again for another boat," said the sable fiend, and cocked his pistol. The click went to my heart. The young midshipman turned his mild pale countenance, laced with his blood, upwards towards the moon and stars, as one who had looked his last on earth; the large tears were flowing down his cheeks, and mingling with the crimson streaks, as a flood of silver light fell on the fine features of the poor boy, as he said firmly, "Never." The miscreant fired, and he fell dead. "Up with her helm, and wear across her stern." The order was obeyed. "Fire!" The whole broadside was poured in, and we could hear the shot rattle and tear along the cutter's deck, and the shrieks and groans of the wounded, while the white splinters glanced away in all directions.

We now ranged along side, and close action commenced, and never do I expect to see such an infernal scene again. Up to this moment there had neither been confusion or noise on board the pirate—all had been coolness and order; but when the yards locked, the crew broke loose from all controul—they ceased to be men—they were demons, for they threw their own dead and wounded, as they were mown down like grass by the cutter's grape, indiscriminately down the hatchways to get clear of them. They stripped themselves almost naked; and although they fought with the most desperate courage, yelling and cursing, each in his own tongue, yet their very numbers, pent up in a small vessel, were against them. Amidst the fire and smoke, and hellish uproar, we could see that the deck had become a very shambles; and unless they soon carried the cutter by boarding, it was clear that the coolness and discipline of my own glorious service must prevail, even against such fearful odds, the superior size of the vessel, greater number of guns, and heavier metal. The pirates seemed aware of this, for they now made a desperate attempt forward to carry their antagonist by boarding, led on by the black Captain. Just at this moment, the cutter's main boom fell across the schooner's deck, close to where we were sheltering ourselves from the shot the best way we could; and while the rush forward was being made, by a sudden impulse Splinter and I, followed by Peter, scrambled along it as the cutter's people were repelling the attack on her bow, and all three of us in our haste, jumped down on the poor Irishman at the wheel.

"Murder, fire, rape, and robbery! it is capsized, stove in, and destroyed I am! Captain, captain, we are carried aft here—Och, hubbadoo for Patrick Donnelly!"

There was no time to be lost. If any of the crew came aft, we were dead men. So we tumbled down through the cabin skylight, the hatch having been knocked off by a shot, and stowed ourselves away in the side berths. The noise on the deck soon ceased—the cannon were again plied—gradually the fire slackened, and we could hear that the pirate had scraped clear and escaped. Some time after this, the Lieutenant Commanding the Cutter, came down. Poor Mr Douglas! we both knew him well. He sat down and covered his face with his hands, while the blood oozed down between his fingers. He had received a cutlass wound on the head in the attack. His right arm was

bound up with his neckcloth, and he was very pale. "Steward, bring me a light—Ask the doctor how many are killed and wounded; and, do you hear, tell him to come to me when he is done forward, but not a moment's sooner. To have been so mauled and duped by a cursed Buccaneer! and my poor boat's crew—"

Splinter groaned. He started—but at this moment the man returned again. "Thirteen killed, your honor, and fifteen wounded; scarcely one of us untouched." The poor fellow's own skull was bound round with a bloody cloth.

"God help me! God help me! but they have died the death of men. Who knows what death the poor fellows in the boat have died?" Here he was cut short by a tremendous scuffle on the ladder, down which an old quarter-master was trundled neck and crop into the cabin. "How now Jones?"

"Please your honour," said the man, as soon as he had gathered himself up, and had time to turn his quid and smooth down his hair; but again the uproar was renewed, and Donnelly was lugged in, scrambling and struggling, between two seamen. "This here Irish chap, your honor, has lost his wits, if so be he ever had any, your honour. He has gone mad through fright."

"Fright be d—d!" roared Donnelly; "no man ever frightened me; but as your honour was skewering them bloody thieves forward, I was boarded and carried aft by the devil; your honor—pooed by Beelzebub, by—" and he rapped his fist on the table until every thing on it danced again. "There were three of them your honor—a black one and two blue ones—a long one and two short ones—each with two horns on his head, for all the world like those on father McCleary's red cow—no, she was humbled—it is father Clannachan's I mane—no, not his neither, for his was the parish bull; fait, I don't know what I mane, except that they had horns on their heads, and vomited fire, and had each of them a tail at his stern, twisting and twining like a conger eel, with a blue light at the end on't."

"And dat's a lie, if ever dere was one," exclaimed Peter Mangrove, jumping from the berth. "Look at me, you Irish tef, and tell me if I have a blue light or a conger eel at my stern."

This was too much for poor Donnelly. He yelled out "You'll believe your own eyes now, your honor, when you see one o' them bodily before you! Let me go—let me go!" and, rushing up the ladder, he would have ended his earthly career in the salt sea, had his bullet head not encountered the broadest part of the purser, who was in the act of descending, with such violence that he shot him out of the companion ladder several feet above the deck, as if he had been discharged from a culverin; but the recoil sent poor Donnelly, stunned and senseless, to the bottom of the ladder. There was no standing all this; we laughed outright, and made ourselves known to Mr Douglas, who received us cordially, and in a week we were landed at Port Royal.

DEFENCE OF SMOKING.—First: Smoking that is called unseal, the author affirms to be the common source of harmony and comfort,—the badge of good fellowship in almost every state, kingdom, and empire, &c. Secondly: Smoking that is termed low and vulgar was, and is, an occasional recreation with most of the crowned heads of Europe; among which may be named his late majesty, and their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Sussex and Cumberland (!) Ferdinand of Spain, and the Emperor Nicholas of Germany (!) besides very many of the nobility of either empires and kingdoms. Thirdly: Smoking that is termed idle, is singularly popular with mechanics, the most industrious classes of England. Fourthly: Smoking that is said to be dirty and filthy, is in the greatest esteem among the most moral and cleanly sect in christianity—the Society of Friends, or Quakers, &c. Fifthly: Smoking that is affirmed to be revolting and disgusting, is indulged in by the most rigidly kept women in the world—those of Turkey, who, elevated in the dignity of the harem, are taught to consider a whiff of their lord's *chibouque*, a distinction. Then the ladies of both Old and New Spain, who, twining in the mazes of the giddy waltz, take the *cigarros* from their own pretty lips to transfer to those of their favoured partners.—*Meller's Smoker's and Snuffaker's Companion.*

SIR ASTLEY COOPER.—He continued to carry on a practice unexampled, we dare to say, for extent and emolument, in the annals of surgery, of this or any other country. We believe we may state, on unquestionable authority, that in the last year of his abode in the city, at New Broad-street, he realized the largest sum ever known by a medical practitioner; no less, indeed, than £21,000!—and for years after his