

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE, FOR DECEMBER.

THE PICCAROON.

"FADER was a Corramantee,
Moder was a Mingo,
Black Picaniny Buccra wantee.
So dem sell a me Peter, by jingo.
Jiggery, jiggery, jiggery."

"Wellsung, Massa Bungo," exclaimed Mr. Splinter,
"where do you hail from, my hearty?"

"Hillo! Bungo indeed! free and easy dat any how.
Who you youself eh?"

"Why, Peter," continued the Lieutenant, "don't
you know me?"

"Cannot say dat I do," rejoined the negro, very
gravely, without lifting up his head, as he sat mending
his jacket in one of the embrasures near the water-gate
of the arsenal—"Have not de honor of your acquaint-
ance, sir?"

He then resumed his scream, for song it could not
be called:—

"Mammy Sally's daughter
Lose him shoe in an old canoe
Dat lay half-full of water,
And den she know not what to do.
Jiggery, jig!"

"Confound your jiggery, jiggery, sir! But I know
you well enough, my man! and you can scarcely have
forgotten Lieutenant Splinter of the Torch, one would
think?"

However, it was clear that the poor fellow really had
not know us; for the name so startled him, that, in his
hurry to unlace his legs from him, as he sat tailor fashion,
he fairly capsize out of his perch, and toppled down on
his nose—a feature fortunately so flattened by the hand
of nature, that I question if it could have been rendered
more obtuse had he fallen out of the maintop on a
timber-head, or a marine officer's.

"Eh!—no—yes, him sure enough, and who is de
Picaniny hefficer—Oh! I see, Massa Tom Cringle?
Gara-mighty, gentlemen, where have you drop from?
Where is de old Torch? Many a time hab I Peter
Mangrove, pilot to Him Britannic Majesty squadron,
taken de old brig in and through amongst de keys at
Fort Royal!"

"Ay, and how often did you scour her copper against
de coral reefs, Peter?"

His Majesty's pilot gave a knowing look, and laid
his hand on his breast—"No more of dat if you love me,
massa."

"Well, well, it dont signify now, my boy; she will
never give you that trouble again—foundered—all hands
lost, Peter, but the two you see before you."

"Werry sorry, Massa Plinter, werry sorry—What!
de black cooks, mate and all?—But misfortune can't be
help. Stop till I put up my needle, and I will take a
turn wid you." Here he drew up himself with a great
deal of absurd gravity. "Proper dat British hefficer in
distress should assist one anoder.—We shall consult
together.—How can I serve you?"

"Why, Peter, if you could help us to a passage to
Port Royal, it would be serving us most essentially.
When we used to be lying there, a week seldom pass-
ed without one of the squadron arriving from this; but
here we have been for more than a month, without a
single pennant belonging to the station having looked
in: our money is running short, and if we have to hold
on in Carthage for another six weeks, we shall not
have a shot left in the locker—not a copper to tinkle on
a tombstone."

The negro looked stedfastly at us, then carefully a-
round. There was no one near.

"You see, Massa Plinter, I am desirable to serve
you, for one little reason of my own; but, beside dat,
it is good for me, at present to make some friend wid
de hefficer of de squadron, being as how dat I am ab-
sent without leave."

"Oh, I perceive, a large R against your name in the
master attendant's books, eh?"

"You have hit it, sir, werry close; besides I long
mosh to return to my poor wife, Nancy Cator, dat I
leave, wagabone dat I is, just about to be confine."

I could not resist putting in my oar.

"I saw Nancy just before we sailed, Peter,—fine
child that; not quite so black as you, though."

"Oh, Massa," said Snowball, grinning, and showing
his white teeth, "you know I am such a terrible black
fellow.—But you are a leetle out at present, Massa—I
meant, about to be confine in de workhouse, for stealing
de Admiral's Muscovy ducks;" and he laughed loud and
long.—"However, if you will promise that you will
stand my friends, I will put you in de way of getting
a shove across to de east end of Jamaica; and I will go
wid you, too, for company."

"Thank you," rejoined Mr. Splinter; "but how do
mean to manage this? There is no Kingston trader

here at present, and you don't mean to make a start of it
in an open boat, do you?"

"No, sir, I don't; but, in de first place—as you are
a gentleman, you will try and get me off when we get
to Jamaica? Secondly, will you promise that you will
not seek to know more of the vessel you may go in, nor
of her crew, than they are willing to tell you! provided
that you are landed safe?"

"Why, Peter, I scarcely think you would deceive
us, for you know I saved your bacon in that awkward
affair, when through drunkenness you plumped the
Torch ashore, so?"

"Forget dat, sir,—forget dat!—never shall poor
black pilot forget how you saved him from being seized
up when de gratings, boatswain's-mates and all, were
ready at de gangway—never shall poor black rascal
forget dat."

"Indeed, I do not think you would willingly betray
us into trouble, Peter; and as I guess you mean one of
the forced traders, we will venture in her, rather than
kick about here any longer, and pay a moderate sum
for our passage."

"Den wait here five minute,"—and so he slept down
through the embrasure into a canoe that lay beneath,
and in a trice we saw him jump on board of a long
low nondescript kind of craft, that lay moored within
pistol-shot of the walls.

She was a large shallow vessel, coppered to the bends,
of great breadth of beam, with bright sides, like an
American, so painted as to give her a clumsy mercantile
sheer externally, but there were many things that be-
lieved this to a nautical eye: her copper, for instance,
was bright as burnished gold on her very sharp bows,
and beautiful run; and we could see from the bastion
where we stood, that her decks were flush and level.
She had no cannon mounted that were visible, but we
distinguished grooves on her well-scrubbed decks, as
from the recent traversing of carronade slides, whilst
the bolts and rings in her high and solid bulwarks
shone clear and bright in the ardent noontide. There
was a tarpawling stretched over a quantity of rubbish,
old sails, old junk, and hencoops, rather ostentatiously
piled up forward, which we conjectured might conceal
a long gun.

She was a very taught-rigged hermaphrodite, or brig
forward and schooner aft. Her foremast and bowsprit
were immensely strong and heavy, and her mainmast
was so long and tapering, that the wonder was, how
the few shrouds and stays about it would support it: it
was the handsomest stick we had ever seen. Her upper
spars were on the same scale, tapering away
through topmast, topgallant-mast, royal and skysail-
masts, until they fined away into slender wands. The
sails, that were loose to dry, were old and patched, and
evidently displayed to cloak the character of the vessel
by an ostentatious show of their unserviceable condition;
but her rigging was beautifully fitted, every rope lying
in the chafe of another, being carefully served with
hide. There were several large bushy-whiskered fel-
lows lounging about the deck, with their hair gathered
into dirty net bags, like the fishermen of Barcelona;
many had red silk sashes round their waists, through
which were stuck their long knives, in shark-skin
sheaths. Their numbers were not so great as to excite
suspicion; but a certain daring reckless manner, would
at once have distinguished them, independently of any-
thing else, from the quiet, hard-worked, red-shirted
merchant seamen.

"That chap is not much to be trusted," said the
Lieutenant: his bunting would make a few jackets for
Joseph, I take it." But we had little time to be criti-
cal before our friend Peter came paddling back with
another blackamoore in the stern, of as ungainly an ex-
terior as could well be imagined. He was a very large
man, whose weight every now and then, as they breast-
ed the short sea, cocked up the snout of the canoe with
Peter Mangrove in it, as if he had been a cork, leaving
him to flourish his paddle in the air, like the weather-
wheel of a steam-boat in a seaway. The new comer
was strong and broad-shouldered, with long muscular
arms, and a chest like Hercules; but his legs and thighs
were, for his bulk, remarkably puny and mishapen. A
thick felt of black wool in close turfs as if his face had
been stuck full of cloves, covered his chin and upper
lip; and his hair, if hair it could be called, was twisted
into a hundred short plaits, that bristled out, and gave
his head, when he took his hat off, the appearance of a
porcupine. There was a large sabre cut across his
nose, and down his cheek, and he wore two immense
gold ear rings. His dress consisted of short cotton
draws, that did not reach within two inches of his
knee, leaving his thin cucumber shanks (on which the
small bullet-like calf appeared to have been stuck be-
fore, through mistake, in place of abaft,) naked to the
shoe; a check shirt, and an enormously large Panama
hat, made of a sort of cane, split small, and worn shovel
fashion. Notwithstanding, he made his bow by no
means ungracefully, and offered his services in choice

Spanish, but spoke English as soon as he heard who
we were.

"Pray, sir, are you the master of that vessel?" said the
lieutenant.

"No, sir, I am the mate, and I learn you are desirous
of a passage to Jamaica." This was spoken with a broad
Scotch accent.

"Yes, we do," said I in very great astonishment; "but
we will not sail with the devil; and who ever saw a
negro Scotchman before, the spirit of Nicol Jarvie con-
jured into a blackamoore's skin!"

The fellow laughed. "I am black, as you see; so
were my father and mother before me." And he looked
at me, as much as to say, I have read the book you
quote from. "But I was born in the good town of Port
Glasgow. * I was told you wanted to go to Jamaica;
I daresay our Captain will take you for a moderate
passage money. But here he comes to speak for him-
self.—Captain Vanderbosh, here are two shipwrecked
British officers, who wish to be put on shore on the east
end of Jamaica; will you take them, and what will you
charge for their passage?"

"Vy, for one hundred thaler, I will land them safe in
Mancheoneal Bay; but how shall we manage, William-
son? De cabin vas paint yesterday."

The Scotch negro nodded. "Never mind; I daresay
the smell of the paint won't signify to the gentlemen."

The bargain was ratified, we agreed to pay the stu-
pulated sum; and that same evening, having dropped
down with the last of the sea-breeze, we set sail for
Bocca Canoa. When off the Sandomingo Gate, we
burned a blue light, which was immediately answered
by another in shore of us. In the glare, we could per-
ceive two boats, full of men. Any one who has ever
played at snap-dragon, can imagine the unearthly ap-
pearance of objects, when seen by this species of fire-
work. In the present instance, it was held aloft on a
boat-hook, and cast a spectral light on the band of law-
less ruffians, who were crowded together, that they en-
tirely filled the boats, no part of which could be seen.
In a few moments our crew was strengthened by about
forty as ugly Christians as I ever set eyes on. They
were of all ages, countries, complexions, and tongues,
and looked as if they had been kidnapped by a press-
gang, as they had knocked off from the tower of Babel.
From the moment they came on board, Captain Van-
bosh was shorn of all his glory, and sank into the petty
officer, while to our amazement the Scottish Negro took
the command, evincing great coolness, energy, and
skill. He ordered the ship to be wore, as soon as we
had shipped the men, and laid her head off the land,
then set all hands to shift the old suit of sails, and to
bend new ones.

"Why did you not shift your canvass before we start-
ed?" said I to the Dutch Captain, or mate.

"Vy vont you be content to take a quiet passage? and
hax no question?" was the uncivil rejoinder, which I
felt inclined to resent, till I remembered that we were
in the hands of wretches, where a quarrel would have
been worse than useless. I was gulping down the in-
sult as well as I could, when the black Captain came aft,
and with the air of an equal, invited us into the cabin
to take a glass of grog. We had scarcely sat down, be-
fore we heard a noise like the swaying up of guns, and
some other heavy articles from the hold.

I caught Mr. Splinter's eye—he nodded, but said
nothing. In half an hour afterwards, when we went on
deck, we saw, by the light of the moon, twelve eighteen
pound carronades mounted, six of a side, with their ac-
companiments of rammers and sponges, water buckets,
boxes of round, grape and cannister, and tubs of wax-
dip, while the combings of the hatchways were thickly
studded with round shot. The tarpawling and lumber
forward had disappeared, and there lay long Tom ready
leveled, grinning on his pivot.

The ropes were all coiled away, and laid down in
regular man-of-war fashion; while an ugly gruff beast of
a Spanish mulatto, apparently the officer of the watch,
walked the weather side of the quarter-deck, in the
true pendulum style. Look-outs were placed aft, and
at the gangways and bows, who every now and then
passed the word to keep a bright look-out, while the
rest of the watch were stretched silent, but evidently
broad awake under the lee of the boat. We noticed
that each man had his cutlass buckled round his waist
—that the boarding-pikes had been cut loose from the
main boom, round which they had been strapped; and
that about thirty muskets were ranged along a fixed
rack, that ran athwart ships, near the main
hatchway.

By the time we reconnoitred thus far, the night be-
came overcast, and a thick bank of clouds piled upon
clouds began to rise to windward; some heavy drops of
rain fell, and the thunder grumbled at a distance. The
black veil crept gradually on, until it shrouded the
whole firmament, and left us in as dark a night as ever
poor devils were out in. By and by, a narrow streak
of bright moonlight appeared under the lower edge of

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