

## Literature, &amp;c.

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## AN INCIDENT AT SEA.

The breeze during the night, continued strong and steady, and Saucy Sally having put her best foot foremost, made a long leg during the last twelve hours of her career. At day-light, one solitary sail was seen far away on the lee quarter—one of our impatient consorts, doubtless, of the late calm—her head was turned in a like direction, with our own, yet she did not, like us, appear to be quite so anxious to make up for lost time; at all events, she did not show any thing like the quantity of drapery wherewith Saucy Sally was invested. Probably her captain was paid by the month, and felt no pressing inducements to urge him home. Whatever the motive, the stranger was under easy sail, whilst Saucy Sally was bowling cheerily along under the superfluity of *muslin*, every thing being sweated well up, and her sails standing like boards.

The joyous party of Saturday night had again assembled and done justice to their ample matutinal fare. Order and regularity were every where observable, and crew and passengers prepared to do reverence to that day, whose command to keep holy was scrupulously adhered to by the excellent commander. The main deck awning was spread; the capstan, garnished with the glorious banner of Albion, was fitted to do duty for pulpit. As if in reverence of the sacred rites, the breeze, hitherto a fresh one, died away to a gentle air, propelling the floating sanctuary some two knots through the water. Saucy Sally sported royals and skysails, with the lower foretop-mast and foretop gallant studding sails braced just so far forward as to be cleverly full on the starboard tack. We had carried the south east trade a long way across the equator, being, at the moment of which I now treat, in Lat. 14 deg. 5 min. north Long. 33 deg. west. Just as we were preparing to commence service, we passed close by the heel of a topmast. It was covered with barnacles, and was attended by three large veracanta and a superb dolphin, which, for a brief space, paid their respects to our ship, ultimately, however, returning to the wave worn spar. What reflections this fragment of a ship tended to awaken! Was the loss of her mast her sole mishap? or had the fated bark and her gallant band become the victims of the relentless deep? Or worse—far worse—were they even then, their goodly vessel stript of all her gay and lofty apparel, driving a sheer hulk at the mercy of the elements—no means left to gain the wished for haven—no hope again to list the much loved voice of mother, brother, wife—famine and thirst their consorts—a fearful death their anticipated doom! Was this the destiny of her of the broken topmast? The ocean blabs no secrets.

Prayers had been said, and Macsawney was just about to commence Blair's beautiful discourse, 'On the disorders of the Passions,' when Bosy, who was leaning now over the poop rail, now casting a glance to leeward, broke forth:—

'I ax pardon captain, but the stranger craft has fetched our wake, set his fore-to-ga'nt sail, an' is walkin' up to us like winkey.'

'What distance is he?' asked Macsawney, without moving muscle or feature,

'I can just make out the reach of his fore course as he rises to the swell.'

'Very good. Keep him in your eye and when I've done service I'll take a look at him myself. Never mind him, gentleman,' said the skipper with the utmost placidity to his passengers, who thronged the side to catch a glimpse of the stranger, 'we'll ascertain who and what he is by and by. In the meantime, let me beg attention to the fate of the envious Human, which should prove a wholesome lesson to us all.'

How far Macsawney profited by the powerful discourse, which he read with a clear an earnest voice, it would be difficult to tell, but to judge by the leeward looks of his auditors, their throats were at least divided, and no sooner had the volume been closed than an eager rush towards the taffrail ensued. The captain after carefully replacing his books and seeing the main deck in its usual position, ascended the poop ladder, followed by Mr. Sunfile and O'Donoghue. The breeze had still more subsided and Saucy Sally drew her stately form lazily through the water. The stranger's hull was now clearly discernible, and instead of the scanty canvass which he had so lately shown, he had now

packed every stitch that he could set, which to expedite his junction, he was most assiduously wetting.

'Humph!' ejaculated Macsawney, after a patient survey, 'That fellow's more anxious to speak us than I am to exchange communications with him. His actions seem suspicious, to say the least, and as it's always best to be prepared, why it may be just as well to load the waist guns (these were two ineffective short nine pound gunnades) with round and canister, and to send the small arm chest on deck. Mr. O'Donoghue, see to it, my man.'

'Nivur fare, sir,' responded the mate, as an Irishman invariably does,—'nivur fare, sir.' And away skipped O'Donoghue to execute his superior's command.

'Gentlemen,' continued the captain, in the quiet, sententious manner which characterized him in every emergency, 'I've seen some of you turn up the nellys and albatrosses sharp and sure; now, as there may be worse kites than them coming up astern, perhaps you would have no objection to a shot should they come beyond friendly hail.'

The hint sufficed. A general move ensued, and rifle and fowling piece were in instant requisition. When next I returned to the deck, I found the poop and main deck awning (sailed), the ship still continued her course, but every practicable arrangement had been adopted for defence, provided our persevering pursuer meditated a hostile encounter.

'Ay, ay!' said Macsawney, rubbing his hands, as he glanced complacently at his mustering band; 'this looks like Mr. Sunfile call the hands aft!'

The mate hastened to obey.

'My lads,' said the captain, addressing his crew, 'I need not tell you that the manœuvres of that fellow astern are something more than suspicious; should he turn out to be the craft I doubt he is, a knife at the throat, or a walk of the plank is most likely to be our choice. Now, I have no fancy for either alternative, but am determined to fight the ship whilst one plank holds by another. You know my mind, lads, so you that are jolly boys will stand to it like trumps, and you, if there be any such among you, that feel qualmish, away with you to the coal hole!'

Macsawney's oration was full as forcible as the most impressive harangue of the Roman Cicero; at least it elicited as warm a response from his complacent auditors, who stood prepared to do his bidding in whatever manner might be required.

'Thankee, thankee, my sons,' said the skipper; 'now, mind me, if this fellow means mischief, the first thing he will do will be to order us to heave to. I shall obey; but mark me, the moment the main-top-sail is to the mast—her stun' sails and main-royal, and sky sail clue lines—whatever chances, there can be no harm in keeping the ship under easy working command. You understand me my men? And now as you value life, have ready ears and willing hands. Stations, lads, stations!'

By the time that these several dispositions had been made, the stranger, a beautiful brig, had approached within long gun shot. We (that is, officers and passengers) were congregated upon the poop-deck, in anticipation of momentarily receiving a summons to round to. This, however, did not appear to be part of the unknown's policy; and whilst he was fast drawing ahead, Macsawney, who carried on the duties of his ship as if she floated unquestioned, mistress of the blue expanse, ordered eight bells (having taken the sun) to be struck and invited his passengers to partake of their customary meridian. They were in the act of descending, when Bosy reported that the brig, having given a broad yaw to leeward, showed Spanish colors at her peak. Those were scarcely set, ere they were dipped, in indication that it was their wish to speak to us. The atrocities which have degraded Spain's once imperial banner, coupled with the rakish loom of the stranger, and our proximity to the Cape de Verd Islands, the favorite resort of the lawless, caused us to survey him with a curiosity in which apprehension was not slightly mingled. Our doubts and fears were in course of speedy solution—for the *soidisant* Spaniard had now lessened his distance to a couple of hundred yards. A more exquisite hull it was impossible to look upon—long, low, and of exceeding beam—the bow round as an apple, with a cutwater as sharp as a wedge, from which projected a female figure-head of the most graceful proportions. Every line was symmetry itself—her bottom beautifully moulded, her copper bright as burnished

gold, and her run clean and fine as the heels of a racer; in short, the very model of what an English nobleman's yacht should be. The capacity might amount to some 300 tons. The beauty of the hull was fully equalled by the gear aloft, which was taunt-tapering, and well set up; the lower mast clean scraped and bright varnished, with long heads painted white. He carried coarces, topsails, with a slab reef to make them stand better, top-gallant sails, foretopmast staysail jib, boom mainsail, a thundering ringtail, foretopmast, and foretop gallant studding-sails; his royal yards were sent down, and his flying jib-boom housed: all his yards were remarkably square, his canvass well cut, and it was impossible to surpass the light, airy tracery of his taper masts, with all their mazy lines of superincumbent cordage. As we approximated, we gave our meteor flag to the breeze,—his Spanish ensign still floating at his peak. His lovely craft was in perfect command, and having drawn a little before our lee-boom, he immediately halted.

'Ship, ahoy!'

'Hallo!' responded Macsawney.

'What ship's that?'

'The Saucy Sally. What brig's that?'

'The Vomito Prieto,' was the answer.

'Where are you from?'

'The Cape of Good Hope.'

'Heave to—heave to! I've intelligence to communicate.'

'Ay, ay!' sung out Mac. 'Cheerily, my lads, round in the weather main, and topsail braces. Foretop, there! down to gallant stun'sail; in with big Ben; clap on the topmast stunsail down-ballo! That's it—with a will men. So—o! Man royal and skysail clue lines!'

In a surprisingly short space, the Saucy Sally was reduced to top and top-gallant sails, jib, and spanker, the fore and main course hanging in the hails. The *Venito Pietro* was still under sail, although, while our ship was obeying her injunctions, she had hauled up so sharp in the wind as not only to deaden her way, but to drop some short distance astern. Perceiving our maintopsail to the mast, he once more ranged within hailing distance.

'Ship, ahoy! Send a boat on board of me, d'ye hear!'

'Brig ahoy!' shouted Mac. 'No boat of mine leaves this ship. If you have anything to communicate send your own boat.'

'Send your boat this instant, sir, or I'll fire into you!'

'Blaze away!' sung out the imperturbable Scotchman. 'Down on the deck, lads; you shall pepper him by and by.'

A pause ensued; the vessels gradually separated; the *Vomito Pietro* hove to some sixty yards forward of the Sally's lee beam, and without further ceremony, exchanged the Spanish ensign for the skull and marrowbones. At this moment both vessels had nearly lost steerage way, the wind having fallen dead calm.

'We must be guided by circumstances,' said the captain, addressing us; 'but in no case must we allow them to obtain a footing upon our decks. Better go to the bottom like men than be flung into it like dogs. He will, no doubt, seek to board, under the cover of his long guns. Let him try; but don't I implore you throw away a shot until each of you is sure of his man,—every one they lose, adds to our chance of escape.'

The captain was right in his conjecture; for scarcely had he ceased speaking, ere the *Vomito*, apparently satisfied with reconnoitring, launched both her quarter boats full of men. No sooner had they touched the water, than they sent forth a wild yell, to which, as a fitting accompaniment, the roar of their long eighteen opened its deadly throat, happily without any material injury resulting. Emboldened by the non-return of fire, the boats after a brief conference under the *Vomito's* stern, commenced pulling, making somewhat of a sweep, apparently with the design of assailing the Saucy Sally on either quarter.

'Divide yourselves,' continued the watchful Mac; 'but, above all, be cool—be steady. Ah!' he exclaimed rubbing his hands with great delight, 'it would be a noble chance,—I'll try it, by George; at the worst, it can but fail. Look alive a hand or two,—ease off the weather, and haul in the lee, main braces: there's a cat's paw afloat,—the ship already feels it, and there will be more ere long. Jump aft, O'Donoghue, take the wheel, run the pirate along side,—and d'ye mind me, let every mother's son of you, as he wishes to see

kith and kin again pay the strictest attention to my commands.'

Circumstances had, indeed, altered the Scotchman's plans. As the very moment he was endeavoring to give a warm reception to the five and twenty or thirty wretches, armed to the teeth, fast approaching in the pirate's cutters,—at that moment a light air swelled the Saucy Sally's sails. Like other tropical flaws, this air was extremely partial, and did not yet extend to the *Vomito*, which lay a motionless log on the water. Freshening in its course, at length it struck the guilty brig, but too late to save her from the grapple of the Saucy Sally, who was already speeding under its influence. Two minutes sufficed to lay her along side, but few more to pour her resistless crew upon the corsair's decks; and whilst the main body battled the astonished ruffians, one or two secured the helm, and got the brig before the wind,—Saucy Sally bearing her faithful company, her passenger riflemen picking off the banditti with surprising accuracy. Discomfited on every hand, the survivors hurried below, leaving their trophy in the Sally's power. The boats, meanwhile, foiled in the moment of possession, rowed with all the energy of despair; but the breeze had once more set in strong and steady, and both the Saucy Sally and *Vomito* were dropping them fast. Their maniac yells rent the air,—the water flashed under the fury of their strokes, and the boats were urged onwards with a strength almost superhuman.—At the moment when hope must have been all dead within them, the *Vomito* suddenly bore up in the winds eye. Could it be? Had the merchantman failed, and were their comrades victors? They paused upon their oars, joining company, as if to ponder the course proper to be pursued. Brief was the space permitted for consideration. A plash, a stunning report, and an iron shower, sped its fatal flight, dashing the splintered oars from their nerveless grasp—scattering, with one crash, the dying and the dead, with the shattered skiffs that bore them, in ruined fragments on the devouring deep. One instant, and the welkin rung with the howl of despairing fiends; another and nought was heard save the faint and passing struggle of mental agony—fearful, but just retribution. Their own trusted weapons had been turned upon themselves: and O'Donoghue, by the mouth of their boasted Long Tom, had sent them unannealed to their account.

Let me bring my narrative to a close. What was to be done with the pirate prize and her surviving crew? It was impossible for the Saucy Sally to spare hands to navigate her into port, and as to suffering her escape, it was not to be dreamt of.

'Thieves' law for thieves' claw!' said the captain. 'These rascals, even when they do fall into the hands of our cruisers—and sorry am I to say the instances of late are more than rare—too often escape through some curst Old Baily boggle. Now, and it isn't the luck of every merchantman to catch a pirate, and as I'm a warm advocate of good old practices, why I'll e'en try back to the times of Blackbeard, and other worthies. Therefore, a long rope and a short shirt; the gangway of the fore-yard arm.'

I leave those who 'sit at home at ease' to decide how far the practice of Macsawney's Jeddart justice is correct. To my thinking, were pirates strung up when and were taken, the seas would be clearer of them, and we story tellers be deprived of one very attractive theme. In the present instance, to use the cant of some of Cromwell's Round-heads, *Phineas arose and executed judgement*.

The main hatch was opened; a portion of the hold was laid bare; tackle and falls were lashed to the mainstay; the heavy eighteen pounder was swung aloft—the rope that suspended it was divided; the gun fell, head foremost, crashing though the bottom of the beautiful but evil *Vomito Pietro*. The water rushed wildly in; the captors withdrew. The corsairs were left to their doom, and ocean speedily and forever enshrouded them and their crimes from the ken of mortal eye.

Saucy Sally encountered no further adventure; but, in due course, dropped her anchor in the bosom of the silver Thames.

## CHOOSE WISELY THE WIFE OF THY BOSOM.

Go, my son, said the eastern sage to Talmore, go forth to the world,—be wise in the pursuit of knowledge—be wise in the accumulation of riches—be wise