

Literature, &c.

The British Magazines.

THE PIRATE'S TREASURE.

A TALE OF THE SEA.

[Continued from our last.]

In the evening the body of Don Diego was bro't upon deck, where his crew, under the superintendance of the priest, prepared it for its commitment to the deep. The corpse was, as is usual in such cases, wrapped up in the blankets and sheets in which it had lain, and a white napkin was tied over the face and head. In his right hand, which was crossed over the breast, was placed a gold doubloon. In his left hand a bag containing a book, a hammer, and a candle, while on the bosom was laid the little crucifix worn by the deceased. It was next enveloped in a hammock, with a couple of eight-pound shots, and a bag of ballast at the feet to sink it—the hammock was then carefully and closely sewed up, and the whole operation finished by leaving the sail-needle thrust transversely through the nose. At midnight the vessel was hoisted, and all the ship's company assembled at the lee gangway. The Spaniards and negroes bore each a burning torch in his hand; the blaze of which, as they held them elevated above their heads, cast a strange and fearful light through the deep darkness, and illuminated the ocean far and wide with a supernatural refulgency.—When all was ready, the priest, accompanied by Isabella came up from the cabin, and the Spaniards lifting up the body carried it forward to the waist, where one of the ship's gratings had been but projecting over the side, and on this the corpse was laid, its feet to the water. Around this the torch-bearers formed a circle, and the priest, standing at the head, began the funeral service for the dead at sea. The wind had now subsided into a gentle breeze: and nothing disturbed the profound silence of the crew during mass, save the slight splashing of the waves against the windward side of the ship, and the deep-drawn, convulsive sobs of the young lady as she stood enveloped in her mantillo, in the obscurity of the main rigging. Mass being concluded, the priest solemnly chanted the funeral anthem:—"May the angels conduct thee into Paradise; may the martyrs receive thee at thy coming; and mayest thou have eternal rest with Lazarus, who was formerly poor!" He then sprinkled the body with holy water, and continued;—"as it hath pleased God to take the soul of our dear brother here departed unto himself, we, therefore, commit his body to the deep, in the sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection on that day when the sea shall give up its dead. Let him rest in peace!" The Spaniards responded "Amen!" and the priest repeating, "May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace—Amen!" made the sign of the cross; and the bow-chaser, which had been loaded and made ready for the occasion, firing, the end of the grating was gently elevated, and the corpse heavily plunged into the water. The waves parted heaving and foaming round the body as it disappeared,—when to our horror and astonishment we beheld it, the next minute, return slowly to the surface, deprived of the canvass covering in which it had been sewed. The dead man came up as he had gone down, in an upright position, and floated a little time with his back to the vessel, but the motion of the water turned him round by degrees till we distinctly saw his face. The head was thrown back, and the eyes wide open; and under the strong stream of light poured on them from the torches, they seemed to glare ghastly and fearfully upwards. His gray hairs, long and dishevelled, floated about his face, at times partially obscuring it; and one arm, stretched forth, and agitated by the action of the waves appeared as if in the act of threatening us. When the first burst of horror had subsided, I caught hold of Isabella to prevent her seeing the body, and was leading her off, when some of the men, lowering their torches from the main-chains, whispered that it was the murdered man, old James Gemmel. The Captain had been hitherto looking on with the rest without having apparently recognized him; but when the name struck his ear, he shrunk back and involuntarily exclaimed "It's a lie—it's an infamous lie! Who dare say he was murdered? He went overboard two days ago. But don't let him on board; for God's sake keep him down, or he'll take us all with him to the bottom. Will nobody keep him down? Will nobody shove him off? Helm-a-lee!" he bawled out, waving the steersman, but the man had deserted his post, eager to see what was going on; he, therefore, ran to the wheel himself, and again issued his commands, "Let go the main-top sail weather-braces, and bring round the yard!—Let them go, I say!" His orders were speedily executed. The vessel gathered way and we quickly shot past the body of the old man.

For several days after this, we pursued our course with a favourable wind which drove us swiftly forward on our voyage. The captain now kept himself constantly intoxicated, seldom made his appearance in the cabin, but left us altogether to the care of the steward. An subordination was now at an end—his whole time was spent among the seamen, with whom the mixed familiarity and was addressed by them without the slightest portion of that respect or deference commonly paid to the master of the vessel. The appearance of

the men, also was much altered. From the careless mirth and the gaiety and the characteristic good humour of sailors, there was now a sullenness and gloom only visible. A constant whispering—a constant caballing was going on—a perpetual discussion, or some step of deep importance was about to be taken. All sociality and confidence towards each other were banished. In place of conversing together in a body, as formerly, they now walked about in detached parties, and among them the boatswain and carpenter seemed to take an active lead. Yet, in the midst of all this disorder, a few of our own crew kept themselves separate, taking no share in the general consultation, but from the anxiety expressed in their countenance, as well as in that of the mate, I foresaw some storm was brooding, and about to burst on our heads.

Since Montaldo's death, Isabella had been in the habit of leaving her cabin after sun-set, to enjoy the coolness of the evening breeze, and in this she was sometimes joined by the priest, but more frequently was only attended by her slave. One evening she came up as usual, and after walking back and forward on the deck till the dews began to fall, she turned to go below: but just as we approached the companion way, one of the negroes who now in the absence of all discipline, lounged about the quarter deck, without rebuke, shut down the head, and throwing himself on it, declared that none should make him rise without the reward of a kiss. This piece of insolence was received with an encouraging laugh by his fellows, and several slang expressions of wit were uttered, which were loudly applauded by those around. Without a word of remonstrance, Isabella timidly stooped, and would have attempted getting down the ladder without disturbing the slave; when, burning with indignation, I seized the rascal by the collar, and pitched him head foremost along the deck. In an instant he got on his legs and pulling a clasp-knife out of his pocket, with a loud imprecation he made towards me. All the other negroes likewise made a motion to assist him, and I expected to be assailed on all hands, when the mate interfered, and laying hold of the marlin-spike, which I had caught to defend myself, pushed me back, as he whispered "Are you mad, that you interfere? For heaven's sake, keep quiet, for I have no authority over the crew now!" And he spoke the truth; for the negro brandishing his knife, and supported by his comrades was again advancing, when the hoarse voice of the boatswain, as he ran to the scene of action, arrested his progress.

"Hallo! you there, what's the squall for? Avast, avast, Mingo! off hands is fair play—ship that blade of yours, or I'll send my fist through your ribs, and make day light shine through them in a minute," I related the behaviour of the negro, and requested him to send the slaves forward, when I was cut short with, "there are no slaves here, young man! we are alike free in a British ship.—But d— his eyes for an insolent son of a—; he pretend to kiss the pretty girl. I'll let him know she belongs to his betters! The black wench is good enough for him any day. Come my dear!" he continued, turning to Isabella, "give me the same hire and I'll undertake to clear the way for you myself." He made as if he meant to approach her, when, careless of what the consequences might be to myself, I hastily stepped forward, and lifting up the head of the companion, Isabella in an instant darted below. "This lady is no fit subject for either wit or insolence," said I, shutting the doors, "and he is less than man who would insult an unprotected female." For a little while he stood eyeing me as if hesitating whether he should resent my interference, or remain passive, at length he turned slowly and doggedly away as he uttered—"You ruffie big, and covey with a brisk note my lad!—But I've seen me do as wonderful a thing as twist your windpipe and send you over the side to cool yourself a bit, and so I would serve you in the turning of a wave, if it was not that we may have use for you yet! I see in what quarter the wind sets, but mind your eye; for sink me if I don't keep a sharp look out a-head over you."

I now saw that things had come to a crisis—that the crew meant to turn pirates; and I was to be detained among them for the sake of my professional services. I could not, without a shudder, reflect on what must be the fate of Isabella among such a crew of reckless villains; but I firmly resolved that, come what might, my protection and care over her, should cease but with my life.

To be prepared for the worst, I immediately went below, loaded my pistols, and concealed them in my breast, securing at the same time all my money and papers about my person. While thus employed, one of the cabin-boys came down for a spy-glass, saying that a sail had been in sight to windward. Upon this I followed him up, and found the crew collected together in clamorous consultation as to the course they should follow. Some were for lying to till she came down; and taking her, if a merchantman; and if not, they could easily sheer off—but this motion was overruled by the majority who judged it best to keep clear for fear of accidents, accordingly all the spare canvas was set, and we were soon going large before the wind. But the Dart, though reckoned the fastest sailer out of Clyde when close hauled on a wind, was by no means fleet when away and going free; she had now met with her match, for the stranger was evidently gaining rapidly on us, and in two hours we saw it was impossible for us to escape. The priest and I were ordered down with a threat of instant death

if we offered to come on deck, or make any attempt to attract observation.

I now communicated to Isabella my apprehensions with regard to the crew along with my resolution to leave the vessel if the other proved a man-of-war, and earnestly advised both her and the priest to take advantage of it also. She thanked me with a look and smile that told me how sensible she was of the interest I felt in her welfare, and expressed her willingness to be guided by me in whatever way I thought best.

Shortly after we heard a gun fired to bring us to, and the Dart hailed and questioned us to her port and destination. The answers, it appeared, were thought evasive and unsatisfactory, for we were ordered to come close under the lee quarters of his Majesty's sloop of war Tartar, while they went to examine our papers. This was now our only chance, and I resolved that if the officer should not come below, I would force the companion door, and claim his protection. But I was not put to this alternative. As soon as he arrived, I heard him desire the hatches to be taken off, and order his men to examine the hold. The inspection did not satisfy him; for he hailed the sloop and reported that there were Spanish goods on board which did not appear in the manifest:—"Thou remain on board, and keep your stern lights a burning all night, and take charge of the ship!" was the reply. In a state of irksome suspense we remained nearly two hours, expecting every minute to hear the officer descending. At length to our relief the companion doors were unlocked, and a young man, accompanied by the captain, entered the cabin. He looked surprised on seeing us, and bowing to Isabella, apologized for intruding at such an unseasonable hour. "But I was not given to understand," he added "that there were passengers in this ship—prisoners I should rather pronounce it, Mr Mahone, for you seem to have had them under lock and key, which is rather an unusual mode of treating ladies, at least. No wine sir," he continued, motioning away the bottles, which the captain was busily placing on the table—"No wine, but be pleased to show me your register and bill of lading."

He had not been long seated to inspect them, when a shuffling and hurried sound of feet was heard overhead, and a voice calling on Mr Duff for assistance, showed that some scuffle had taken place above. Instantaneously we all started to our feet, and the lieutenant was in the act of drawing his sword, when accidentally looking around, I observed Mahone presenting a pistol behind. With a cry of warning, I threw myself forward, and had just time to strike the weapon aside, when it went off. The ball narrowly missed the head of Duff, for whom it had been aimed, but struck the priest immediately over the right eye, who making one desperate and convulsive leap, as high as the ceiling, sunk down dead, and before the captain could pull out another, I discharged the contents of mine into his breast. We then rushed upon deck; but it was only to find that the boat's crew had been mastered, and to behold the last of the men tumbled overboard. The pirates then dispersed, and exerted themselves to get the ship speedily under way; while the boatswain sung out to extinguish the lanterns, that the Tartar might not be guided by the lights.

"It's all over with us," exclaimed my companion; "but follow me, we have one chance for our lives yet. Our boat is still towing astern; do you throw yourself over and swim till I slide down the painter and cut her adrift. Come bear a hand, and jump, don't you see them hastening aft?" and in an instant he pitched himself off the taffrel, slid down the rope which held the boat, and cast her loose. But this advice, however judicious, it was impossible for me to follow—for, at that moment, repeated shrieks from Isabella put to flight all thoughts of my own individual safety; I therefore hurried back to the cabin, determined that if I could not rescue her along with myself to remain and protect her with my life. And in a happy time I arrived! The candles were still burning on the table; and through the smoke of the pistols which still filled the cabin, I beheld her struggling in the arms of a negro—the identical slave who had displayed so much interest in the early part of the evening. With one blow of the butt end of my pistol I fractured the villain's skull—caught up Isabella in my arms—ran up the ladder, and had nearly gained the side, when the boatswain, attracted by her white garments, left the helm to intercept us and I saw the gleam of his uplifted cutlass on the point of descending, when he was suddenly struck down by some person from behind. I did not stop to discover who had done me this good office, but hailing Duff, and clasping Isabella firmly to my heart, I plunged into the water followed by my unknown ally, with the aid of my companion whom I found to be John Wylie, the mate, we easily managed to support our charge till the boat reached us; when I found that the greater part of the men had been rescued in a similar manner.

When morning dawned we perceived the Dart like a speck in the horizon, and sloop of war in close chase. Our attention was next turned to our own situation, which was by no means enviable; we had escaped, it is true, with our lives for the present; but without a morsel of food or a single drop of fresh water with us in the boat; we could at least, only expect to protract existence for a few days longer, and then yield them up ultimately to horror and misery. By an observation made the day before on board the Tartar, Mr Duff informed us that we were to the north east of the Bahamas; and distant about one hundred

and seventy miles from Walling's island, which was the nearest land. This was a long distance, but as despair never enters the heart of a British sailor, even in situations of the utmost extremity, we cheered up each other; and as no other resource was left us, we manned our oars, and pulled away with life, trusting to the chance of meeting with some vessel, of which there was a strong probability as this was the common course of leeward traders. And our hopes were not disappointed, for next day we fortunately fell in with a brig from the Azores, bound for Porto Rico, on board of which we were received with much kindness; and in five days we found ourselves safely moored in Porto Rico harbour.

My first step on landing was to inquire for a boarding house for Isabella, and I had the good luck to be directed to one kept by a respectable Scottish family, in Orange Terrace, and to this I conducted her. My next transaction was to charter a small cutter; and to communicate to Duff the secret of the hidden treasure; at the same time asking him to venture himself and his men on its recovery. I also gave him to understand, the probability of a rencontre with the pirates, in the event of their having escaped the sloop, for I was aware that Mahone had overheard the whole confession, from my finding him listening at the cabin door. Without hesitation the lieutenant at once agreed to accompany me, and engaging some hands out of a vessel newly arrived, we soon mastered a party of fourteen men. As it wanted only six days of the festival of St. Jago, and the distance across the Carribean sea was great enough to require all our exertions to be there in time, we embarked and sailed that very night.

Our cutter proved a prime sailer—and although the winds were light and variable by the help of our sweepers we made the Rocks on the evening of the sixth day. As the Spaniards had foretold, the moon was climbing the western sky, and pouring the fulness of her splendour with a mild and beautiful effulgence on the untroubled deep, as we slowly drifted with the current between the Wood Rock and the adjacent isle. All was calm and silent over the desert Archipelago and the vast surrounding waters, save now and then the sudden flight of a sea-fowl awakening from its slumbers as we passed; or the occasional rear of the juncos faintly wafted from the mainland. We ran the cutter into a deep and narrow creek; moored her safe, and proceeded well armed to the eastern extremity. There we found the projecting point of land, and the old vanilla tree exactly in the situation described—its huge, twisted trunk was still entire; and from the end of its solitary branch which was graced by a few scattered leaves the body of a man in the garb of a sailor hung suspended in irons. The clothes had preserved the body from the birds of prey, but the head was picked clean and bare, leaving the eyeless and bleached skull to glitter white in the moonlight. In perfect silence and with something of awe on our spirits impressed by the solitude, and dreariness of the scene, we seated ourselves on the rocks, and with a time piece in my hand, I began to mark the progress of the shadow, for nearly three hours we watched in this manner, listening attentively for the slightest sound from seaward; but everything continued hushed and still, except the creaking of the chain as the dead man swung to and fro in the breeze. Midnight was now drawing near—the moon, radiant and full, was creeping high through the deep blue of heaven, and the shadows of the branch and stem were approaching each other, as towards the desired point. At length the hand of my time piece pointed to within a minute of the time. It passed over. The branch and shadow now merged into one, and threw their shadow due east; and the first spadeful of earth had been thrown out, while the man who had been stationed to keep the look out, came running to inform us that a boat was rapidly approaching from the east. We immediately concluded that they must be part of the Dart's crew; and their long and vigorous strokes, as they stretched out to the extent of their oars, showed that they knew the importance of every moment that elapsed. Our implements for digging were hastily laid aside, and we concealed ourselves among the rocks till they should come within reach. In a short time the boat was seen ashore, and eight men armed came forward, partly Spaniards, and partly the ship's crew among whom I recognised the boatswain, and to my surprise, Mahone, who I had shot and left for dead in the cabin.

Without giving them time to prepare for the assault, we quitted our shelter and sprang among them at once, laying about with our cutlasses. For a little space the skirmish was toughly and hotly contested, for the pirates were resolute and reckless, and fought with the desperation of men who knew that their only chance of their lives lay in their own exertions. In the confusion of the fray I lost sight of Duff, and was closely engaged with one of the Spaniards, when the voice of the boatswain shouting forth a horrible imprecation, sounded immediately behind me. I turned around and sprang aside from the arms of his cutlass, and as my pistols were empty, retreating, acting on the defence, when he pulled his out, fired, and hurled his weapon at my head. The shot passed without injuring me, but the pistol aimed with better effect, struck me full on the forehead. A thousand sparks of fire flashed from my eyes—I felt myself reeling and on the point of falling, when a cut across the shoulder struck me at once on the ground. When I recovered from my stupor, and opened my eyes,