

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

A MAN OVERBOARD.

A THRILLING EPISODE OF OCEAN LIFE.

I think it is about twelve years—it may be thirteen—since the Jacob Morgan, a ship of seven hundred tons burden, sailed from Brunswick, Georgia, for the East Indies. She was a noble ship, but if we believe the assertions of one who sailed in her, she was built for misfortune. She was launched from her stocks at mid-day, but yet the moon was seen in the heavens when she gave her first impression to the salt-water. Several years subsequent to the period when the story opens, she was driven upon one of the Martyr's reefs, and her ill-fated timbers were strewn upon the sands of Florida.

At the time of which we write, the Jacob Morgan was commanded by Captain Ben. Wallack, a powerful, broad-chested man, but as kind and considerate as he was bold and strong. Seamen were scarce, and ships' crews were obtained with difficulty; and under these circumstances men were taken who otherwise would have been rejected. The ship had been six days out, when the first mate, Gwynn, from Providence, R. I., was suddenly taken sick, and on the next morning his lifeless clay was consigned to the deep grave of the blue Atlantic.

This untimely event left Captain Wallack in a critical situation. Nat Faulkner, his second mate, was by no means qualified for the office, nor would he have taken the responsibility had the Captain desired it.

There was but one man in the ship who possessed sufficient knowledge of seamanship for the mate's berth, and though Wallack found that to him he must give the office, yet he did so with many misgivings. The man's name was Tom Roland, haughty and overbearing in disposition, seeming by his general conduct to have been in the habit of commanding, rather than obeying on shipboard, and who had already begun to exercise a sort of control over the crew. But the case was one of necessity, and Tom Roland was installed in the office of first mate, and quartered in the cabin.

For several weeks things passed off extremely well. Roland proved to be a thorough navigator and finished seaman, and a ready and efficient officer, and Captain Wallack began to think his misgivings were entirely groundless. Over the crew Roland had the most thorough control, and even those men who evinced towards the captain marks of insubordination moved without a murmur at the slightest beck of the mate.

One morning when Captain Wallack and his second mate had the morning watch, they both kept the deck until Roland had finished his breakfast, when the latter took his watch at a few minutes past eight o'clock; they went below. When they reached the cabin, Mr Russell, the supercargo, was just rising from the table, and taking a book from the head of his berth, sat down on a stool at the head of the ladder and commenced reading. He passed a few observations on the weather, as the captain and second mate sat down to breakfast, and went on with his reading. Some five minutes had passed when Wallack and Faulkner were started by a sudden exclamation of pain from the supercargo, and on turning they saw that he had dropped his book and sat with both hands pressed upon his stomach, while his features had assumed a livid hue, expressive of the most acute suffering. The captain sprang quickly from the table, and laying his hand upon the sufferer's shoulder, exclaimed—

"What is the matter, Mr Russell?"

"Oh, God! I don't know! Here it is! I burn!" uttered the suffering supercargo, as he pressed his hands upon his stomach.

"What have you been eating? What have you been drinking?" asked Wallack, in a frenzy of anxiety.

"Nothing—nothing. Oh, oh," groaned the poor fellow.

Wallack cast a trembling glance at his second mate and for a moment they were both silent.

"It is strange," at length muttered Faulkner—poor Gwynn was taken exactly the same way.

The captain made no reply, but his countenance wore a strange shade of doubt and suspicion, as he gazed upon the torpid features of the supercargo.

That night the broad Atlantic rolled its ceaseless waves over another of the ship's company. Mr Russell had breathed his last.

Captain Wallack and Nat Faulkner had the last dog-watch. Roland had gone down into the cabin, while the foremost hands, with the exception of the man at the wheel, were all forward. The captain paced the quarter-deck in a thoughtful, troubled mood, ever and anon casting an anxious glance towards the cabin, where his first mate had disappeared a short time before, then turning his gaze towards the fore-castle, where the men had congregated. Faulkner was by the wheel, and several times as the captain approached him in his walk, did he start to join him, but a fearful suspicion kept

him back, and until the watch was changed, neither did he nor Wallack speak a word, save such as related to the management of the ship. At eight o'clock Roland came on deck for the first watch. The ship was upon the starboard tack, and close hauled upon the wind, and just able to stand on her course.

As Captain Wallack gave up the deck, he requested the mate, if the wind should haul round to the eastward, to call him. Roland replied kindly that he would, but beneath the half-curling smile that rested upon his features the captain thought he could detect a lurking spirit of evil. He let not a shadow of doubt rest upon his countenance, but with a blank frankness he wished his mate a pleasant watch and went below.

"Faulkner," said the captain, as he cast a furtive glance at the head of the ladder—"let not a word escape you, unless it be of common place affairs, until we turn into our berths; but keep your weather eye open, and follow my movements."

Faulkner did not start at this request, for the same thoughts seemed to be passing in his own mind.

"Let's see," said the captain, in a tone loud enough to be heard on deck—"I must run over my reckoning before I turn in. Mr Faulkner, just hand me that chart if you please."

As Wallack spoke, he reached over into his berth and took out his pistols, which he proceeded carefully to load, taking care the while that his back was towards the companion way. Faulkner followed his example, and ere long the candles were extinguished, and the two men retired, but not to sleep.

"Faulkner," whispered the captain, "we are in a snug fix, for I have reason to believe there is mutiny on board. Russell and Gwynn have both been poisoned."

"So I believe," returned Faulkner, in the same low tone, "and, if I am not much mistaken, there will be poison in our coffee-cups to-morrow morning."

"Ha, have you seen anything?"

"Yes. I saw Roland give the cook a small paper to-night, and they held an animated conversation about it. I knew from their manner that their was mischief in their minds."

"Then, in God's name what will we do?" uttered the captain. "Their plans must be all formed, and I suppose that they made arrangement for the disposal of those in the fore-castle who do not join them. Would to heaven I knew how many of them there are."

"You have a passage between the docks to the fore-castle bulk-heads," suggested Faulkner.

"Yes."

"Perhaps you might gain some information by listening."

"No. If Roland leads the plot—and I know he does—he would not dare to carry on his conversation there, for they would hear him."

"Hark?" whispered Faulkner as a suppressed voice at the wheel met his ear.

"He bent his head out of the bunk and caught the following words which he knew to be from the lips of Roland:

"They are both asleep before this time. You look out for the deck a minute, while I see the boys in the fore-castle."

"He is going to the fore-castle," whispered Faulkner. Now is your time to follow him."

No—you had better go, Faulkner, for it may be that some one will come down to see me, and in that case our movements would be discovered—There's mutiny and no mistake. You know where the passage runs between the boxes—just abait the mainmast it takes a short turn to starboard and follows along the chock down to tanks. Slip out from our berth, and go over to where the supercargo used to bunk, and move that panel—it moves easier than mine does."

Faulkner lost no time in obeying the captain's directions. There were two secret communications to the hold of the ship, through the cabin bulk-head, through one of these he soon made his way. Nearly a half hour elapsed ere he returned and during that time the captain's mind was tortured by various fearful emotions. Until the death of Russell, he had not held a suspicion of direct mutiny, and his former fears with regard to Roland had nearly been quieted, but now the suspicion had been sudden, and it was strong even to the very certainty. A thousand like incidents came back to his mind, which singly had appeared as nothing, but which now helped to solve the mystery of Gwynn's death. Wallack had medical knowledge enough to know that the supercargo had been killed by white arsenic, and he now knew that his first mate came to his end the same way, though the dose of the latter must have been much smaller than that which sent poor Russell to his untimely end, and its symptoms had not been so palpable.

While the captain lay thus ranking his brain, Faulkner returned from his espionage, and as he crept stealthily past the foot of his bunk, Wallack fancied he could hear his heart beat in his bosom.

"What news?" asked the captain, almost fearing to put the question.

"We are lost!" uttered Faulkner, as he clasped his hands in silent agony.

"Lost!" reiterated the captain. No, no, that cannot be. Some of them will surely help

Ben Wallack, returned the mate, in a tone that made the captain's stout heart beat more quickly. You have not one solitary friend on board the ship!"

"All—are they ALL against us?"

"All but poor Nat Faulkner. I have heard the whole plot, and every part and parcel of it. Roland is an old slave-dealer, and all the men, with the exception of four, whom he frightened or persuaded to join him, are from St. Domingo, from whence they came in company to pick up the first ship they could meet with, that suited their purposes. We are to be murdered to-morrow, and then Roland intends to run for the coast of Benguela, and take in a load of slaves for either Brazil or Cuba. When the bloody villain began to talk to-night, he had some thoughts of killing you, and then trying to gain me into his service, but he soon rejected the idea, and to-morrow we both die."

"Don't give up yet," said the captain. "Some plan may be devised to thwart them in their villainy."

"No, no, Wallack,—there are sixteen of them, and we know not how to meet them. If we drink not their poison they will kill us. But there is one consolation—we will die together, honest men."

"By the power of Great Heaven we will not die!" uttered Wallack, in a tone so loud that it might have proved dangerous. "My arm is fit for half a dozen of them. No Faulkner let me think. You say Roland thought of retaining you in his service?"

"Yes."

"Then I have it. I'll tell you on the watch to-night."

As the Captain spoke, he heard a slight foot-fall at the companion way, and fearing that he might be watched, he turned over upon his back, laid his hand upon the butt of his pistol and fell into a slow steady snoring, which he kept up until his watch was called at midnight.

The remainder of the night passed on without disturbance. Wallack and his solitary friend carried on such conversation as they could during their watch, and in the morning they came on deck half an hour before the cook had prepared their breakfast. The Captain walked up and down the lee side of the quarter-deck several times in a sort of angry mood, and uttered stifled curses to himself until at length he stopped before his second mate, and shaking his finger menacingly in his face, he uttered—

"Mr. Faulkner, that makes the fourth time you have by your lubberly carelessness tore up the paper containing my day's work. Now if you do it again, I will disrate you and put you before the mast."

"Do it as soon as you please," returned Faulkner, his face reddening with apparent anger. "You won't frighten me."

"Don't be insolent, sir."

"I am not insolent."

"You were."

"It's a lie!" uttered Faulkner, actually trembling at the sound of his own words, addressed to his Herculean commander.

Captain Wallack took one step forward, as the word dropped from the officer's lips, and the next instant he dealt him a blow upon the breast that prostrated him upon the deck.

"Captain Wallack," said Faulkner as he arose from the fall, "you shall suffer for this—I will be avenged as sure as there is a God in Heaven!"

The Captain made no reply; but turning quickly on his heel, he went to his cabin. Twice did Roland start to follow him, but yet he remained on deck. There was a strange light in his eyes as he caught the revengeful expression upon Faulkner's countenance, and then, as if a sudden thought had struck him, he went quickly to the caboose, and gave some hurried directions to the cook. After that he took two or three hurried turns up and down the quarter-deck, and then beckoning to Faulkner who stood sulkily leaning against the lee rail, he walked forward to the bitts. The second mate followed his silent request, and in a moment after he had passed the caboose, the cook came out and threw overboard the coffee he had prepared for breakfast.

"When Faulkner came up to the bitts, Roland cast a furtive glance around, then looking fixedly into the companion's eyes, said—

"Faulkner, have you the courage to follow up the revenge you have sworn against the Captain?"

"Yes."

"But you would not dare to take the Captain's life?"

"I dare to take the life of any man that strikes me."

Roland's eyes sparkled as he heard this—he then asked—

"But say, then, who would take his place in command?"

"Who," returned Faulkner, with a perfect appearance of honest intent. "Why, who is there but you that is qualified?"

"If I were Captain, Faulkner would you follow me?"

"Yes,—even to the hoisting of the black flag so that I had revenge."

Roland grasped his companion by the hand, and after gazing a moment into his face, he went on and detailed the whole plot he had formed for taking the ship, landing the cargo on the coast of lower Guinea, and going into the

slave trade. His recital was just the same that the second mate had heard while listening at the fore-castle bulk-head and as he concluded, he said—

"Faulkner will you join us?"

"Yes readily—but remember, it shall be my hand that finds the life of Wallack."

"Then be it so," returned Roland. "And now we must have the matter settled as soon as possible, for Wallack intends to touch at Cape Verde, and we are not more than three days sail from there at the farthest so you must have him out of the way to-night. I want to keep away to-morrow morning and run down between St. Mathews and Ascension."

"But, say, Roland, why have you not put Wallack out of the way before this. It seems to me, if I had been in your place, I should have made quick work of it."

"So I should think," replied the villain, with a peculiar meaning smile—but you see I have been picking them off carefully. Had I known how the land lay with you, Wallack would not have been living now."

Before night, Wallack learned the result of his own and Faulkner's stratagem of the morning—but the two had to be exceedingly careful, for Roland's eyes were open to all that passed about him, and they knew that if their deception was suspected, their death would be certain and immediate. But the most difficult part of the work was to be accomplished, for they had sixteen stout men to be disposed of. Faulkner learned that five of the principal mutineers upon whom Roland placed the greatest dependence—were in the captain's watch, while there were six or seven who were mere hirelings stationed in the watch with their leader. Wallack's main hope was in disposing of the five leading mutineers, in his watch, by some stratagem, and then despatching Roland before the watch below could come to their rescue; but whatever was to be done must be done before midnight, as all hands would be on the alert for action, before the morning watch was set.

At length the captain and second mate took the first watch. Nine o'clock passed and so did ten. Wallack paced the deck in a steady, thoughtful mood, ever and anon casting his eyes about upon the crew, most of whom were forward. The moon threw its beams upon the Herculean form of the captain, and a close observer might have seen the iron muscles as they worked in his limbs. His countenance betrayed the varying thoughts and intense anxiety that moved within him. Five times after the bell had told that ten o'clock had passed, did he walk from the wheel to the mainmast and back. At the sixth turn just as he reached the rack in which was coiled the mainsail halyard, he stopped suddenly, with a nervous quickness, while the flashing of his eyes and the instantaneous contraction and expansion of the muscles of the face, showed that some powerful idea had shot in his mind. He quickly resumed his walk, however, and the same appearance of cool thought once more rested upon his features.

The wind was now blowing a good, top-gallant breeze from the S. S. E., and the ship was close-hauled upon the starboard tack, and stood E. half S. under single reef top sail and top-gallant sails.

"Mr Faulkner," said the captain, again stopping in his walk near the mainmast, at the same time motioning for his second mate to come to him.

"I have it. Watch my every motion, and fail not to catch every word I utter. At the first opportunity you get, as soon as every one of the men are up, secure the cabin and fore-castle companion-ways, and arm yourself."

This Wallack spoke in a hurried whisper, and then raising his voice said—

"Mr Faulkner, will you go below and tell my mate that I should like to see him a moment on deck?" Then he added in a whisper, "I tell him I have business of the utmost importance."

Faulkner looked a moment into the commander's face, as if he doubted whether this order was given in earnest, but the confident resolution which met his gaze, assured him, and he immediately went below to do his errand. In a few moments he returned, followed by the first mate, who had not stopped to dress himself, but came in his robe de nuit.

"Mr Roland," said the captain, as his mate came on deck, at the same time stepping over under the lee of the sparker, "I should not have called you had I not the most urgent necessity. If you will just step this way, out of the earshot of Faulkner, I will tell you."

Roland stepped to the lee-rail, and leaned his back against it, while the captain stood leaning against the rail at the mate's left hand.

"Roland," continued he, "I'm afraid Faulkner is up to some evil design."

"Ah!" uttered the villain, while a peculiar sparkle shot from his eyes. "Perhaps he has not forgotten the blow you gave him."

"Look out, sir! look out, Roland, or you'll be overboard."

As Wallack uttered the first syllable of this exclamation, he placed his hand upon Roland's mouth, and, with a crushing irresistible force, he bent him back over the rail. At the same time he caught the mutineer by the leg, and ere the last syllable of this exclamation fell from his lips, Roland was plunged headlong into the sea. All hands on deck had heard the captain's warning, but none had seen his deed.