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SUDDEN AND SHARP DOOM.

BY JOHN INMAN.

It is but seldom, of late years, that the community is startled by an account of piracy in waters adjacent to lands of civilization; and still more seldom that the alarm such accounts are fitted to awaken, is heightened to horror by details of cruelty and bloodshed. But there was a time, within the memory even of the present generation, when tales of frightful atrocities, committed on board vessels navigating to and from the West Indies, were of very frequent occurrence; and such were the numbers and audacity of the bucaniers infesting the vicinity of those islands, that the governments both of the United States and Great Britain deemed it necessary to employ squadrons of small vessels, adapted in size and speed and armament to their peculiar service, for the protection of their commerce and the destruction of the marauders. The latter most desirable object was in time effected, many piratical vessels being captured, and fearful numbers of the felons put to death, either in combat or by the gallows; but while the evil was yet existing, deeds of enormity were committed, of which in some instances the details became known, while in many others they could only be conjectured, so frightful as almost to transcend belief—to excite a doubt whether a process could indeed exist so tremendous as to establish such affinity between the nature of man and demon. Such I would not horribly my readers by describing; but one case of piracy, remarkable in its details, and most unexpected in its termination, has appeared to me sufficiently interesting to deserve, without being so dreadful as not to bear narration.

A good ship had taken her departure from the island of St. Croix, for New York. She had on board a large sum of money in gold, and two passengers; one a young man of eighteen or nineteen, returning from a winter's residence upon the island, for the sake of his health, the other a lovely boy of seven, the child of the captain. His mother had died at West End, of consumption, having sought refuge from that fell destroyer of youth and beauty at too late a stage of its attack; the captain was taking home this his only child, intending to place it in the care of its dead mother's parents.

This captain was a son of New England; still a young man, but eminently skillful in his profession, and even more remarkable for his moral than his professional excellence. Modest in speech and deportment, he was yet a man of consummate bravery, of indomitable firmness, and of a conscientiousness not often exhibited either on sea or land. He had heard of recent piracies, although as yet they had not become so frequent as in the progress of the next year or two, and when he left port it was with considerable anxiety on account of his child, and still more so on account of the treasure shipped on board his vessel, because it was not his own. His uneasiness had augmented by the fact that his ship was neither armed nor strongly manned, as, when he left the United States, no cause for alarm of the kind had been known or apprehended. Nevertheless, trusting in Providence and the good ship, and taking the precaution to conceal the gold where it would scarcely be found by an un instructed seaman, he set sail, not with a light heart certainly, but with a steady and undiminished spirit.

He had no skill in nautical description, and therefore shall not attempt a nautical account of what was said and done on board the Resolution during the first two or three days of her voyage; only it is to be remarked that the wind she had was light, frequently dying away into a perfect calm, and that her progress from the locality of apprehended danger was so slow as to increase in no slight measure the anxieties of the captain; nor were these at all alleviated by the rumours that reached him from the forecastle, of a bucanier who had given his name a terrible notoriety by acts of ex-

cessive daring and cruelty, recently committed in the immediate vicinity of the very latitude and longitude to which he found himself chained as it were, day after day. The name borne by this scourge of the seas—real or assumed—was Morgan; and brief as had been his career, it had already been signalized, according to the stories current among the crew of the Resolution, by exhibitions of cold blooded ferocity never exceeded and not often equaled even by pirates. His vessel, a large but swift sailing schooner, was said to be strongly armed and manned; but there was one among the crew, so said report, whose character and conduct were specially dwelt upon as combining the elements of wonder and of horror. He was said to be of gigantic stature and hideous appearance, and the possessor of enormous strength, which, however, he never exerted in working the vessel, but only in conflict where resistance was attempted. But the most extraordinary and revolting tale concerning him was that he was the hand always employed in putting to death the unhappy captives whom Morgan's policy or cruelty refused to spare; and that in his horrible office of executioner he displayed a savage enjoyment not less inconceivable than frightful. He was known, the sailors said, by the title of Jack Ketch, bestowed on him as descriptive of his peculiar employment, and originating in the deep abhorrence with which sailors universally regard the professional hangman, who in England has been known as Jack Ketch from time immemorial.

The third day of the voyage was well advanced, a good breeze had sprung up, and Captain Fowler was congratulating himself on his escape thus far and the increasing probability of ultimate safety, when a sail was descried just rising above the horizon. Soon it was made out to be a schooner, and rapidly approaching. Captain Fowler could not conceal his uneasiness, and ordered every rag of canvas to be crowded on his vessel; the stranger might be an honest wayfarer of the ocean, but he might also be the fearless Morgan. It was soon apparent, however, that the schooner had the most speed, and the wind favouring her as much as it did the ship, the latter was sure to be overtaken. The only hope that remained, therefore, was in the peaceful and honest character of the pursuer; and this hope disappeared when, as the schooner hove full in sight, she was seen to be large though extremely sharp, with tall and raking masts, and an extraordinary spread of sail, black as night in the hull, her decks crowded with men, and that she had no flag flying—Captain Fowler looked round upon his scanty crew and with a groan abandoned the idea of resistance; and when the pirate, for that such she was could not be doubted, fired a shouted gun over him, with the calmness of despair he ordered the ship to be hove to, and prepared for his fate.

There were degrees of horror to be expected in the encounter of pirates; and Captain Fowler, with his passengers and crew, endeavoured to find some consolation in the hope that their captor was not the dreaded Morgan. But this hope soon vanished when a large boat from the schooner full of armed men, drew near the ship, and it was seen that the forward oar was pulled by a man whose height and huge proportions left little room to doubt that he was the 'Jack Ketch' of whom report had spoken; and suspicion was changed into certainty when the boat came alongside, and this same giant stepped on board, followed by a middle size compactly built man of about forty, with light hair and smooth but sunburnt face, whom, with what seemed a mocking courtesy, he introduced as 'Captain Morgan.'

There was nothing terrific or even formidable in the aspect of the dreaded freebooter. His features were rather comely, his eyes were rather comely, and his person was rather comely, and had about his person no weapons, not even a cutlass or a dirk. It was noticed, however, that his orders to his men as they took possession of the ship's deck were brief, and uttered in a quiet tone of authority which bespeaks the habit of command; and nothing could exceed the promptness with which they were obeyed. Not a man of the fifteen or twenty whom he had brought with him spoke or moved except as he commanded; each man took in silence the station assigned to him; and Captain Fowler began to cherish a hope that after searching the ship and taking such portions of the cargo as

might suit his fancy, Morgan would let him go unharmed, and but little worse for the encounter. The gold he was sure could not be found, and he felt quite confident that the fact of its being on board was unknown to all except himself and the merchant from whom he had received it.

There was one exception to the orderly and disciplined conduct of the pirate crew; and this was in the demeanor of the huge fellow recognized by the captives as the Jack Ketch of the pirate schooner. It seemed he was not included in the brief but efficient orders of Morgan; for he wandered about the ship's deck, paying no attention to the proceedings of his captain or his comrades, and finally seated himself upon the windlass, where he amused himself with balancing one of the capstan bars upon the tip of his forefinger, as if utterly unconscious of the purpose for which he had come on board, or of the business then in progress.

Notwithstanding their anxiety and alarm, Captain Fowler and his passenger could not help watching this fellow with curious interest; and they found it very difficult to reconcile his appearance and deportment with the horrible office ascribed to him by rumour. His size and apparent strength were indeed enormous. In height he was about six feet and a half; of immense breadth in the shoulders long armed, and slender in the waist; but the expression of his face was that of vacant good nature, and there was an indecision in his movements, and a something in his physiognomy, which awakened the suspicion that his intellect was feeble. And this suspicion was correct.

Silly Sam—for that was the name he bore among the pirates—was indeed an idiot; and instead of filling the sanguinary office ascribed to him, he was, in truth one of the most harmless and kind hearted of human beings. His real name, his origin and history were unknown; it was believed, however, that he was of English birth, and there was some vague tale of cruelty exercised upon him in his childhood which had unsettled his reason. His enormous strength and his willingness to labor made him extremely useful on board Morgan's vessel, although he would take part in no engagement; and as he never required wages, or a share of plunder, seeming perfectly content with the food and clothing that were provided for him; and as he was moreover, at any time to do the work of any body that asked, he was a universal favourite among his fellows. To none of them, however, nor to Morgan himself, did he seem to have any personal attachment. The schooner was his home—the only one he knew—and on board the schooner he remained indifferent alike to the company he found there, and the business in which he was employed. The stern discipline maintained by Morgan forbade the attempt of any to play off upon Silly Sam those annoyances and pretty torments to which his feebleness of mind would have exposed him in such a crew; and even had it been otherwise, his great personal strength, equal to a successful contest with half a dozen of his fellows, would have made them cautious how they provoked him to anger. Such was Silly Sam—the terrible Jack Ketch of Morgan's rover, by report, but in reality one of the most innocent and inoffensive creatures that ever breathed the air.

But to return from this digression—As soon as Morgan had so stationed his men as to take complete possession of the ship, and satisfied himself that there was neither the means nor the power of resistance, he turned to Captain Fowler, and touching his hat with a cool courtesy that contrasted strangely enough with his proceedings, begged permission to examine his manifest. It was produced, and running his eyes over it, he marked with a pencil such articles of the cargo as he thought proper to appropriate—the crew of the ship and some half dozen of the pirates, among whom was Silly Sam, were set at work getting up the selected cases from the hold, and into the boat from the schooner; and in the meantime Morgan invited himself into the cabin, where he drew upon the captain's hospitality for a glass of wine and some other slight refreshments. His manner was polite but distant, very much like what one might suppose that a post captain in the navy would be, while making a visit of inspection to a merchantman suspected of having on board goods contraband of war. It was well fitted, however, to dissipate the alarm and anxiety of Capt. Fowler, who became every

moment more confident that the pirate would be satisfied with the plunder he had designed, and that when all this had been removed into the boat, his unwelcome visitor would take his departure without any display of cruelty, satisfied that he had got all there was on board the ship worth taking. He even began to accuse himself of injustice for believing the stories he had heard of Morgan's cold blooded ferocity; and to look upon him as quite a generous and gentlemanly personage—for a pirate—although he could not repress a feeling of uneasiness, a vague emotion of terror, when his guest began to fondle the boy—the blooming Edward—and taking him upon his knee, twisted his fingers among the curling ringlets of that dear head which the anxious father had so often pillowed upon his own bosom, and which his departed Mary had hallowed with a blessing in the last moment of her existence.

Still not a word was uttered, not an intimation of any kind was given, that seemed to justify apprehension; and when word was passed below that the transfer of the chosen articles was completed, and Morgan returned to the deck, leading Edward by the hand, the captain followed with a heart greatly lightened, and in almost undoubted confidence that in a few minutes he should be left at liberty to pursue his course.

The boat was still lying alongside, but laden with the plunder of the Resolution; and Morgan directed all but six of his men to row back in her to the schooner, which, having taken in her sail, had fallen a mile or two astern, the ship slowly drifting to leeward. Those who remained were heavily armed, except Silly Sam; and Morgan himself took from one of those ordered to the boat a cutlass and a pistol, remarking that they would be in the man's way while rowing, and ordering the boat to be brought back immediately to receive him and the others.

Captain Fowler was disappointed. He had expected that the pirates would leave his ship at once, but he easily satisfied himself by reflecting that the boat had really as much on board as she could carry, and that if Morgan's intentions were dangerous, he would not have left himself with so small a number of followers. He did not know the man with whom he had to deal.

As soon as the boat had put off, Morgan ordered the ship's crew to station themselves on the forecastle, and directed four of his own men, a pistol in each hand, to stand guard over them. Then turning to Fowler, to whom this arrangement had excited a renewal of fears, he said, in a cool, business like way, yet with something like a sneer upon his countenance, 'Now, Capt. Fowler, if you please, I'll trouble you for those fifty thousand dollars in gold that were put on board your ship by Steinmark & Company.' Had a thunderbolt fallen upon his head, Fowler could not have been more astounded. The demand was fearful; the knowledge it exhibited still more so. He could not deny that the gold was in his keeping; it was clear indeed that denial would be useless. Give it up he would not, be the consequences what they might, for it was the property of another; yet there was every reason to believe that should Morgan's search for it prove unsuccessful, torture, if not death, would be inflicted upon himself to wring from him the disclosure.

These thoughts darted like lightning through his mind, and with an inward groan he murmured, 'Father in Heaven protect my child!' Morgan waited a few moments for his answer but none was given. Then his brow grew stern, but still he preserved his calmness of voice and manner as he said, 'Will it please you, Captain Fowler, to give up the gold, or must I wring it from you?' Fowler cast his eyes despairingly around him, but there was no help, no manner of deliverance. He remained silent; and in truth he knew not what to say. The true character of the man into whose power he had fallen was revealed to him, even in the threat just uttered, and he felt that if there was no hope in resistance, there was none in supplication. 'Once more, and for the last time,' said Morgan, 'demand the gold. If you do not give it up, and quickly, I will find a way to reach it, more terrible than even your imagination has ever pictured.' Still no word from Fowler. He was nervous himself to die—to undergo tortures worse than death. The trust confided in him would not violate. But the torture was indeed to be applied in a mode and form, as the pirate truly said, which had

never been present to his imagination.

At a signal from Morgan, the captain was seized by Silly Sam and the other of Morgan's followers, his hands tied behind his back, and the rope fastened at the other end to one of the belaying pins of the quarter railing, with a 'slack' of about three feet, so that he could move in a semi-circle having about that length of radius; the passenger, being evidently in delicate health, and not likely to make any very powerful attempt at a rescue, was left at liberty. The crew, as has already been said, were prisoners, in some sort, upon the forecastle, guarded by four of the bucaniers, each of whom could make sure of two with his pistols, in case of their making any hostile movement. Thus the parties on board the ship were in two divisions; the sailors and their guard occupying the narrow space forward—while Morgan and his two followers, Captain Fowler, the passenger, and the child, were on the quarter deck.

Poor Edward looked on with amazement at the binding of his father; his little bosom heaved, his cheeks were flushed with anger, and tears gathered in his trembling eyelids. He gazed at Morgan for a moment as if to divine his purpose, and then rushing to his father leaped to his neck, around which he clasped his little arms, hiding his face in that bosom which was his nightly pillow.

Fowler kissed him fondly, and anxious to spare his boy the sight of those cruel sufferings of which he expected to be the victim, earnestly begged Mr. Anderson, the passenger to take him below into the cabin and keep him there. Anderson moved a step forward, to comply with this request, but Morgan bade him halt, and there was no alternative for obedience. Such was the situation of the parties—Fowler bound, the child clinging to his neck, Anderson standing near the cabin door, and Morgan between, with his two subordinates—Sam leaning against the mizen mast, his vacant countenance expressing no emotion, or even cognizance of what was passing, while he still amused himself with the handspike which he had taken up when he first came on board the Resolution.

'There is yet a moment for mercy,' said Morgan to Captain Fowler; 'will you give me the gold?' A shudder passed through the captain's frame, but he gave no answer. 'Take the boy from him, Harris!' said the pirate; and it was done, though not without some difficulty. 'Strip him!' Fowler started as if shot, and a pang of keenest agony thrilled his frame, as the terrible purpose of his tormentor flashed upon his mind; for it was Edward at whom Morgan pointed when his last brief command was uttered. 'Monster!' he exclaimed, 'you will not, you cannot be so cruel! Wreak your fury upon me, but spare the unoffending child! If you have the heart of a man within you let your savage dealing be with men, and leave hapless infancy in safety.' His frantic entreaties and his desperate struggles to break loose were equally in vain. Morgan looked on with a cold, relentless eye, while the fair back and shoulders of the boy were exposed, on which his hand had but now been laid in seeming kindness, the surpassing loveliness of that childish face, even now when it was blanched with terror, the mute appeal of that imploring look, and the fearful agony of the distracted father, might have stirred up pity, one would think, in the breast even of an inquisitor; but pity there was none in the heart of Morgan. He paused not for a moment in his savage purpose; and to the prayers, the imprecations of Fowler, he vouchsafed no other reply than a simple declaration of the horrible alternative—'The money or the boy!'

And now poor Edward is ready for the sacrifice,—at the command of his tiger-hearted chief, Harris prepares a scourge of small hard twisted cord, with five or six distinct lashes at the striking end, and knotted at intervals to give its blows the more effect. With cool unsparring deliberation, Morgan laid aside his hat and turned up his sleeves; and then grasping the arm of the helpless child, he gave one sharp, hard stroke, every noose of that accursed whip cutting clear thro' the white and tender skin; which in a moment was laced with stripes of a sanguine hue. A shriek of torture burst from the lips of the unhappy boy—one louder and of more terrific agony, from those of the miserable father—but both were drowned in a horrid yell, so fearful so appalling that Morgan started in amazement, and affright, and dropping his

instrument of torture, turned quickly round to see from whence it came. He turned and saw, and that look was his last. Quick as lightning descended upon the deck, a quivering, mangled corpse—his skull crushed into a shapeless mass as if by the fall of a thunderbolt, freighted with vengeance, from the Heaven he had outraged.

That fearful yell was uttered, that more fearful stroke bestowed by Silly Sam, the shriek of the suffering child, the sight of his scorched and bleeding body, had called up in the feeble mind of the poor idiot a terrible memory of that cruel infliction of his own childhood by which his brain had been crazed; and yielding to the desperate impulse of the moment; that impulse which prompted rescue for the victim, and vengeance on the oppressor, identifying himself in years long past with the one and Morgan with the other, he had swung aloft the ponderous bar, so providentially remaining in his hands, and, putting his whole giant strength into the blow, had struck the villain dead, even before he was himself conscious of the act.

For a moment all the spectators of this dreadful scene were paralysed with horror and astonishment. The first to recover possession of their senses were the four pirates stationed forward, and they rushed to the quarter deck to avenge their leader. Two of them fired at his executioner, but their shots took no effect, and the sailors of the Resolution, arming themselves with weapons like that with which the slaughter had been done, were so quickly upon them that before they could reach the slayer, the protection of their own lives demanded all their care. Anderson, with great presence of mind addressed himself first to the liberation of Fowler. A desperate conflict ensued, but it was soon over. One of the pirates was knocked down, and the other four, seeing the odds so greatly against them, threw away their pistols and begged for mercy. They were quickly seized and bound; and after some little deliberation as to the course most expedient to be taken with them, hurried into one of the ship's boats, with a single pair of oars, and the body of their felon commander, and left to make the best of their way to the schooner; Captain Fowler apprehending, and with reason, that suspicion would be awakened, and instant pursuit be made if the ship were seen getting under way, while some of the pirates were known to be on board, sail was then made upon the ship, and as night was now setting in, and then the wind still favourable, the rejoicing inmates of the Resolution entertained a strong hope of gaining so much head way before the truth should be known on board the schooner, as would insure them against pursuit, especially as they would be favoured by the darkness of the coming night; a hope which was fortunately realized. Silly Sam, who had been apparently stupefied by the contemplation of his own deed, as soon as the excitement which caused it had passed away, remained on board the ship, unconscious as it seemed of the departure of his comrades; and it need scarcely be added that he received every kindness, then and all his life after, from the grateful father whose child he had saved from cruel tortures, if not from death in a manner so strange and unexpected.

FUNNY DOINGS.—The Middle-town Post office is a subject of great contention about these days. A few months ago Tyler sent into the Senate the name of a 'Whig' for the place; but withdrew the nomination before it was acted upon, on being told that the candidate was not the right sort of a man for him. A few days since, Mr. Eli Wilcox, a Conservative, was notified that he was appointed to the office, and was requested to send on his bonds, which he did. Mr. Starr, the reformed Postmaster, was not in town when the news arrived; but his father immediately wrote to the President in his behalf; saying that his son was a true Tyler Democrat, &c., upon which 'Bob' Tyler, the President's son and Private Secretary, wrote back to Mr. Starr, saying that 'if your son is a Democrat, he shall not be removed';—and thus the matter stands. Wilcox says he will take possession, and Starr says he shall not. The one has the authority of the President, and the other of 'Bob' the son. To what a pitiable condition has our poor country become reduced! The administration of the affair was conducted with decency and even dignity by Jackson and Van Buren, compared with the present disgraceful career of John Tyler and company.—*New House Paladium.*