

A FIGHT WITH PIRATES.

In 1875, owing to the wreck of a Boston brig in the China Sea, I was left in Hong Kong in pretty bad shape. After I had carried a flag of distress, as you might say, for two weeks, an Englishman offered to let me work my passage to Liverpool, but as I was about to accept it I ran across a countryman who had a berth for me. One of the largest trading houses in Canton at that time was composed of three Americans, and they owned two small steamers and three or four sailing craft. These vessels are employed in collecting goods from the various islands to the southeast, and some of the voyages extended up the Yellow Sea as far as Teng-chow. Just at that time the firm had come into possession of a new steamer, and she was about to make her first voyage. There had been trouble with piratical craft, and the steamer had been fitted out to take care of herself. She carried two six-pounders, twenty American cavalry carbines, a score of revolvers, and was fixed to throw hot water overboarders. Her complement of men was fifteen, of whom the cook, steward and three firemen were natives. All others were Americans and Englishmen. The supercargo was an American, who could rattle off the Chinese language as well as the best of 'em, and the Captain and some of the others could "smatter" more or less.

Our first voyage was to be up the Yellow Sea, and we carried a load of American and English goods. The cargo well deserved the name of miscellaneous. There were muskets, fish spears, sole leather, tinware, looking glasses, calicoes, buttons, stoneware, lamps, fish nets, groceries, axes, and almost everything else you can think of, and the supercargo also carried money to purchase what we could not traffic for. We were to pick up in exchange whatever foreign markets called for in Canton, which included teas, rice, several species of nuts, dye-stuffs, roots, barks, skins, etc.

I was in luck to secure the place of mate, for Captain Tabor was a splendid fellow and the crew was one which could be depended upon. We had three or four men who understood the handling of the six-pounders, which had been sent over from the United States, and with the supply of small arms at hand we felt ourselves a match for anything except a gun boat. We got away in good shape, ran up between the coast and the island of Formosa, and then steered to the northeast to fetch the Liao-Kiao Islands, which are seven or eight in number and deal in ginseng, sarsaparilla, and other medical roots. We stopped a day at Ke-Lung, which is at the northern end of Formosa, and almost opposite Foochow, on the mainland, and while here it was noticed that the native members of our crew were very thick with a lot of suspicious characters who were hanging about us the greater part of the day. The supercargo overheard them discussing our voyage and making many inquiries, and when he spoke of the matter to the steward that pigtailed gentleman explained that all our natives were related to the strangers who had been hanging about, and of course the latter took an interest in them.

I didn't know Chinese character as well as some of the others, and was therefore somewhat surprised to hear the captain and supercargo discussing the impudence of the natives aboard we had left Ke-Lung by fifty miles. The fireman had given the engineer trouble, and the steward had a certain sort of impudence in his obedience to commands. I did not know until now that a gang of twenty or more of the fellows of Ke-Lung had attempted to induce the captain to give them passage to the island of Teesuan, which we meant to visit. They had offered big passage money and were willing to put up with any accommodations, but he mistrusted them, and firmly declined to have one of them aboard. The steward and fireman were soundly berated by the captain and threatened with irons if any more trouble occurred, and there the matter was dropped. At the close of the second day we dropped anchor off a small island to the southwest of Teesuan, called Kung-Wah. There was no harbor, but the depth of the water enabled us to get within a cable's length of the beach in a comparatively sheltered spot.

Call all the men at once, but make no noise. That junk has got fifty men in her hold, and the natives on shore are in with the plot to capture us. Take a pair of handcuffs and have the cook secured in his berth.

After I had called the men I went to make a prisoner of the cook, but he was nowhere to be found. His object in remaining aboard up to that hour was to drug our coffee and to note what preparations we were making. When he got ready he probably swam to the shore with his news, but he could have reported little more than the fact that he had drugged our coffee, which all who were awake at midnight would probably make use of. When the men had received their orders we paid our attention to the junk, and one of the guns was quietly rolled across the deck and trained upon her. When the night glass was directed to the shore we could make out that many of the natives were moving about and evidently getting ready for some expedition. There was no question now but what we were to be attacked. We had a good pressure of steam, plenty of hot water, and the hose was attached and a man assigned to take charge of it.

It was an hour and a half after midnight before there was any decided move on the part of the enemy. The captain of the junk could not have had a night-glass, and perhaps he reasoned that we were so badly off. He kept playing out his cable foot by foot until he was so close on to us that I could have tossed a biscuit aboard of him. Owing to the set of the tide or some cross-current, he dropped down to us stern first, while we lay broadside to the beach. The stern of the junk was pointed amidships of the steamer, and our gun would rake the whole deck at every discharge. At one o'clock two men left her in a small boat and went ashore, and then forty or fifty armed men came out of the hold and took their stations on deck. A few had muskets, but most of them carried knives and a sort of hand grenade which has been termed "stink pot." These bombs are filled with a villainous compound which is let loose as they are broken and the fumes are more to be dreaded than a bullet. Their plan as we solved it, was for an attack on both sides of us at once. A fleet would come out on us from the shore and the junk would drift down on us at the same time. We had the cable ready to slip, sent the engineer to his spot, and then waited.

At about half past one o'clock while the tide had yet half an hour to run we saw the shore boats make ready to come off. They knew that the cook had drugged or poisoned our coffee, therefore sent a boat in advance of the fleet to see in what shape we were. The boat came up very softly and rowed twice around us before the Captain hailed and let them know we were wide awake. Some sort of a signal was given from the boat, and the fighting opened at once. Just the moment we saw the people on the junk getting ready to drift her down upon us we gave them the grape from the sixpounder. They were not pistol shot away, with most of the men crowded aft, and I verily believe that the one discharge killed or wounded twenty men. I was at the gun with two others, a man armed with a carbine was near us. He fired six or seven shots while we were reloading and three or four musket shots were fired at us. Our second shot drove all who were left alive below hatches, and believing that the carbineer could keep them there, we ran the run to the starboard side to beat off the boats. It was high time. While the first discharge of the gun had done for a score of them, they were a reckless and desperate lot and would not retreat. They were provided with bombs, spears, blow guns, and muskets, and the man who was to sprinkle them with hot water had been shot dead at their first fire. As soon as we got our gun over, some one picked up the nozzle of the hose pipe and turned it loose on every boat within reach. But for the hot water the fellows might have carried us by boarding, for 200 to 10 is big odds.

Captain Tabor had traded at this island a year before and he knew that the natives were all right as they were kept in awe by superior force. There was a trader on the island who had a large stock of roots, and after a palaver lasting two days and nights

the supercargo finally made a bargain with him. It was observed by the captain that some change had come over the natives for on his previous trip they had been eager to close a bargain at any figure named. The natives in our crew had been permitted to go ashore, and a dozen or so of the leading men of the island had come aboard and inspected us. It was night of the second day before a trade was agreed upon. On the following day we were to begin landing and receive goods. There was a big crowd of natives on shore opposite the steamer, and they had canoes, catamarans and dhows enough to have embarked 300 people. Just before night closed in we sighted a large junk coming down from the direction of Formosa, but gave her no particular attention. About nine o'clock she came jogging along at a tramp's gait, and dropped her mud hook within 200 feet of us. I gave her a looking over with a night glass, and as only five or six men could be out on her decks, it was natural to conclude that she was a trader.

Being in port, with fair weather for the night, the crew might expect that only an anchor-watch would be maintained. The men must therefore have been somewhat surprised when Captain Tabor invited our five natives to go ashore, and spend the night with their friends, and announced to the rest of us that we should stand watch and watch. The cook was the only native who did not go. He declared that he had enemies ashore who would kill him, and he was therefore allowed to occupy his accustomed quarters. There were ten of us besides him, and soon after the junk anchored, the guns were cast loose and loaded with grape, the fire arms brought up and made ready, and the engineer was instructed to keep steam enough to permit us to move. The cable was arranged for slipping and then five men turned in "all standing," and the other five of us stood watch. Before this occurred the captain said to me:

Mr. Graham, this may be going to a good deal of trouble for nothing, but the man who deals with these natives has got to be prepared for any emergency. If they trouble us it will not be until after midnight. I will therefore head the second watch. Keep your eyes on that junk, and permit no boat to come aboard under any circumstances.

I distributed my men over the vessel to the best advantage, and reserved to myself the right to act as free lance. That is, I went from one part of the vessel to another and kept one eye on the junk and the other on the beach. All was very quiet up to 11 o'clock, when I made two discoveries in quick succession. The cook had prepared a large dish of coffee for our use during the night. We had a large urn on a stand in one corner of the dining room and a lamp underneath kept the coffee hot. The same thing is in general use in American hotels and restaurants. I was on the point of entering the cabin to secure a drink of the beverage when as I passed an open window, I heard the cover of the urn rattle, and then caught the footsteps of some one in retreat. It could be none other than the native cook, I urged, but did not go to his quarters to verify or disprove my suspicions. I entered the cabin, turned up the light, and carefully examined the urn. The rascal had certainly "dosed" it. There was a grayish powder on the cover and on the edge of the urn, and in his haste he had spilled some on the floor. A look inside showed numerous bubbles on the surface of the liquid but these broke and disappeared while I was looking. The rascal could have but one object in his actions. I arranged the can so that no one could secure a drink, and then started to notify the captain. As I passed along the deck I looked for the junk, and in an instant saw that she had decreased the distance between us. The tide was setting in, and she was either dragging her anchor or had purposely raised it and allowed herself to drift. The captain was up as soon as I touched his arm, and when I reported my suspicions of the cook and the junk he replied:

Such screaming and shouting and shrieking as they indulged in when the boiling water spattered over their half-naked bodies was pandemonium of itself, and all the time we kept playing on them with the guns and

carbines. The fight could not have lasted over seven or eight minutes and as soon as they began to draw off I ran my gun to the port side, loaded with shell and sent the missile right through the junk's stern. Half a dozen fellows rushed out of the hold and jumped overboard, and I gave her two more. When the third was fired there was an explosion, probably of a barrel of powder, which lifted her deck thirty feet high and split her wide open. She sank right there before our eyes, and the wails of the wounded wretches who floated about for a minute or two were dreadful to hear.

Captain Tabor felt that such treachery as the natives had shown deserved the severest punishment, and we turned both guns loose on the village and fired forty or fifty shells. When day light came not a human being was in sight. Portions of the junk had been driven on the beach and the natives had fled and left everything behind them. The sharks were probably attracted to the spot by the sounds of firing and they certainly had a rich feast. I never saw them so thick before nor since, and as they fished up the bodies from the bottom around us three or four would seize and tug at a single one and tear it to pieces. I was sent ashore with a flag of truce, with four men armed to make it respected, and on the sands I found the body of our fireman, and not far off that of our cook. After some hard work I induced the head man to come in out of the forest and talk to me. His name was Wung Hang, and a more humble man I never met. He laid it all to the people on the junk.

The natives of our crew had conspired with fellows at Ke-Lung to secure passage abroad and over power us. When this game could not be worked, owing to the refusal of the captain to take them, they followed on after us in the junk, and found a cheerful co-operator in old Wung Hang, the trader. He denied taking any part in the affair personally, and added that he did his best to dissuade his people from making the attack. His loss according to his own figures was sixty odd killed, wailed, almost everyone else was wounded or scalded. Five men got ashore from the junk, which had nearly fifty men aboard of her.

We are in a situation to take every dollar worth of goods the old rascal had in his storehouse, but Captain Tabor had no intention of blasting his prestige in that fashion. We held the trader to the contract already made, and landed our goods and put his aboard. He had been soundly thrashed, and like plenty other men under the same circumstances, he respected the thrashers. He supplied us with the best of provisions, detailed natives to do all our work, and when we were ready to leave he supplied us with five natives and gave Captain Tabor full power to decapitate them at the first signs of disobedience. During the next three years, or until I severed my connection with the steamer, we got around to the island about once in six months and old Wung Hang always had a good bit of cargo ready for us, and would deal with no one else.

HOUSEHOLD.

TO MAKE SOFT SOAP.—Dissolve three pounds of potash in three quarts of water. Put the potash in the lump in an old saucepan, pour the boiling water on it, set it on the stove and leave it till it is dissolved; it may take several hours. Stir it about with a stick now and then, taking care not to splash it on you. Put three pounds of clean fat in a tub or small barrel. When the potash is dissolved pour on the fat, stir well with the stick and leave it. Next day pour a kettle (holding at least a gallon) of boiling water slowly to the potash and fat stirring thoroughly. Do this every morning till the soap is made, which you will know by it beginning to look like stiff jelly when cold and losing all appearance of grease. Then try it; if it seems too strong or makes the hands rough, add more boiling water. The soap will be ready to use in about nine days after it is started.

CREAM TOAST.—Pare the crust off the slices of bread and toast quickly. Have a saucepan upon the side of the fire in which milk is kept boiling; dip each piece as it is toasted in this and pile in a deep covered dish, and when

all the toast is ready pour over it a sauce made of one cupful of boiling milk, two tablespoonfuls of butter, a little salt and the white of one egg, beaten stiff and whipped in at the last, just before the milk is drawn from the fire; cover and let it stand five minutes before it goes to the table. This preparation of toast is very delightful.

SWEET WAFERS.—Six eggs, one pint flour, two ounces melted butter, one and one-half cups of powdered sugar, one cup milk, one teaspoonful of nutmeg. Beat the whites and yolks separately and very stiff; rub the sugar and butter together and work in first the yolks, then the milk, then the flour and whites. Bake in well buttered wafer or waffle irons very quickly, browning as little as possible. Roll them while hot upon a smooth round stick not larger than your little finger slipping it out carefully when the cake takes the right shape. These little cakes are an acceptable addition to any tea or supper table, and look well among fancy cakes in a basket.

USES FOR OLD TOMATO CANS.—A prominent junk dealer recently received an order for 10,000 old tomato cans. The dealer explained that much of this kind of tin is used for corners and edge pieces on a low grade of trunks, while many people use it for flushings on roofs. The dealer is obliged to melt the solder off, straighten the cans out into flat sheets, pack the pieces in flat bundles for shipment and only gets about \$10 per ton for his trouble.

A BOTTLE of turpentine should be kept in every house, for its uses are numerous. A few drops sprinkled where cockroaches congregate will exterminate them at once, also ants, red or black. Moths will flee from the odor of it. Besides it is an excellent application for a burn or cut. It will take ink stains out of white muslin when added to soap and will help to whiten clothes if added to them while boiling.

CREAM PIE.—First bake a puff paste in a pie-plate; then make a custard of the yolks of four eggs, a little more than a pint of milk, one tablespoonful of corn starch, six table spoonfuls of sugar. Save out two spoonfuls of sugar and beat to a stiff froth with the whites of the eggs. Flavor the custard with vanilla, put it into the crusts spread the whites over the tops, and put them into the stove to brown.

COCONUT CAKE.—Two cups of sugar three cups of flour, two-thirds of a cup of butter, one cup of sweet milk, the whites of five eggs, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Bake in layers. Filling for the above cake: Take one pint of sweet milk, half a cup of sugar, one egg, three teaspoonfuls of corn starch and cook thoroughly. Stir in this one grated coconut, and spread between the cakes.

WALL pockets for holding a supply of pocket handkerchiefs to be reached without the trouble of pulling open a drawer, are a sensible invention. They are made of plush or leather, and have a flap that keeps the contents of this pocket free from dust. Any shape that may be fancied will serve, and if the pocket is cut with a rather high backing, a tiny pouch for holding the watch at night may be added.

TOMATO TOAST.—Run a pint of stewed ripe or canned tomatoes through a colander, place in a porcelain stewpan, season with butter, pepper and salt and a very little sugar; cut slices of stale bread thin, brown on both sides, butter and lay on a platter; just before serving add one cupful of milk and a little pinch of soda stirred into the tomatoes, and pour them over toast.

HARICOT MUTTON.—Make a good gravy by boiling trimmings, seasoning with pepper and salt. Strain and add carrots, parsnips and onions previously boiled tender. Slice them in, then pepper and salt the mutton. Broil it brown and put it into the gravy along with the vegetables, and stew all together ten minutes.

TRANSPARENT PUDDING.—Beat eight eggs very light, add half a pound of sugar, the same of fresh butter melted, and half a nutmeg, grated; set this on the stove and keep stirring until it is thick as buttered eggs; put a puff-paste in a pie-plate and bake in a moderate oven. The quantity will make two pies.

1859-1887.

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