

Adventures on a Man of War.

IT was in 1793 that I lay in the ship Panther at Londonderry. Ireland was then in a state of commotion with the famous rebellion of the period, and the city was full of English soldiers. I was much interested in the old historic town which, from time to time, had given the Sassenagh (the Gaelic for Englishman) such abundant trouble.

One day while the ship was waiting freight, I had opportunity to walk upon the great wall which encompasses the place. A group of remarkable faces here attracted my attention. They were those of a middle-aged woman, a girl of seventeen, and a boy of fifteen. The appearance of all three was interesting, but the face and figure of the young girl were the most beautiful that I had ever looked upon.

The group conversed in animated tones, speaking, however, the ancient Irish, with which I was totally unacquainted. Their gestures and apparently indignant though partially suppressed sentences, on the appearance of a squad of English soldiers near the wall, led me to suppose them touched with the calamities of their nation, and deeply in sympathy with the rebellion. Presently there passed near them a British officer. It seemed probable that they did not suppose him to understand the Irish language, for their conversation continued while the officer drew very near them. I heard from the boy the term "Sassenagh," coupled apparently with an expression of patriotic or incensed feeling, though of this I could judge only by what followed.

Instantly the officer halted in his walk, and then starting violently towards the young lad, struck him with the flat of his sword, almost felling him to the flinty wall. Surprised as he was, the youth immediately recovered his balance, and though helpless before an armed enemy, he seemed ready with his naked hand to return the blow of the sword. His face had a brave defying look; yet what a mere mite he would have been to the burly Englishman. The latter incensed at the lad's unconquered attitude, seemed about to repeat the blow, while the mother and sister lifted their supplicating arms. I stood within twenty feet of the group.

"You mean miserable coward!" I cried; "another blow and you go off the wall!"

I was stout and quick. I had hauled out many an earring, and steered a ship in a gale. Nevertheless, as the English officer rushed upon me with his sword, I must have fallen beneath it had not the Celtic lad, by grasping the legs of my adversary, caused him to stumble. Ere he recovered, I grasped his sword arm and struck him in the face. As he reeled backward, I succeeded in wrenching the weapon from his grasp. Confused, yet raging, he felt frantically for a pistol, when suddenly up went his arms and legs at once. An instant's struggle to regain his poise, a quick flutter of his scarlet coat, and then backward and downward; he was gone—right off the wall of Londonderry!

My heart leaped up with fright. What was I but a murderer? I looked down. I saw his red coat and his buff knee-breeches. He had struck upon a wide-spread bramble which broke his fall. Right lustily he bestirred himself to clear his garments and to pick up his "at." His round English curses fell soothingly upon my conscience, for as yet I had done no murder. I threw his sword after him and bade him good-by.

My new-made Irish friends were aware of the dangerous position in which all of us were now placed, and together we hurried away.

It happened that no soldier or partisan of England had witnessed the transaction, and thus we regained the city streets unmolested. The mother, who, together with her children, spoke good English, though most at home in the Irish, thanked me for my interference in behalf of her boy. She had suffered much from the "Sassenagh," as had her unhappy country, and would be glad to seek refuge beyond the sea. Her husband, Captain O'Hara, was about to sail for America, in command of a merchant vessel, and thither herself and children were to accompany him. Should circumstances so direct, they might permanently reside there; but, at the least, the voyage would secure them for a time from the perils they must otherwise encounter at home.

Near the water-side we met Captain O'Hara. I must accompany him on board his vessel, the fine brave lad that I was, for he would talk with me. Never had I seen a finer representative of old Erin's sons. In addressing his daughter, his "Cathleen astors," his strong face so lighted up with tenderness, that I could not wonder at the expressive beauty of one descended from such a stock.

Next morning, at sunrise, the chorus of "O heave ho!" came lustily over the harbor, as the topsail-yards of the brig St. Patrick went slowly up to the topmast-heads. Her anchor was hove to the bow, her topgallant-sails were set, and she stood out to sea.

I dared scarcely hope that a delicate handkerchief, momentarily waved above the bulwarks as she passed our ship, had aught of encouragement for the feeling I had most at heart. That handkerchief,

"spotted with strawberries"—how white the hand beneath it!

The St. Patrick was gone and Cathleen; but all my heart was changed, and I was no more the careless sea-boy of the day previous. As if to increase my melancholy, an Irish sailor at evening sang a sweet but tragic ballad. It swept along the waters like a prophecy of sorrow:

"Thy lover will share thy death slumber with thee,
O Cathleen Mavourneen, anachis machree!"

We sailed soon after for home. France and the United States were then virtually at war with each other, although hostilities were never formally declared, and a very notable incident of our passage was an engagement with a French privateer. She attacked us in what was almost a gale, and so heavy a swell was running that hardly a shot touched the ship. I think we fired better than the enemy, for although the Hirondele carried sixteen guns, we beat her off with two old rusty six-pounders.

Upon arriving home, I learned that the brig St. Patrick had not reached the port for which she sailed. It is needless to dwell upon my disappointment. I remained long waiting, but it was finally announced, by a neutral vessel, that the Irish brig had fallen a prey to the Hirondele, the very privateer which had engaged our ship, and I doubted not that the bright face of Cathleen was in the Frenchman's cabin at the very moment we were firing upon him.

Never again, I mused, could the daughter of Erin become a reality in my experience; yet my nightly dreams were gladdened by her presence, and it seemed strange that they always resulted favorably. I have ever had faith in dreams. The night before our engagement with the Hirondele, I had dreamed of Cathleen as dressed in the blue, white and scarlet of France.

The elder Adams was now president, and although no lover of French republicanism, he would gladly have avoided war with the ambitious Gauls. Yet something must be done to protect our commerce, and soon the names of vessels fitting out against the French became familiar to all mariners.

I shipped in the Constellation frigate, rating thirty-eight guns, and commanded by Captain Truxton. A nobler object than this American ship of war, as under her three topsails, topgallant-sails and royals, with her broad courses heavily swelling, her sparker, staysails, jib and flying-jib all taking the quartering breeze, as she stood out of the Chesapeake, it would not be easy to conceive.

Many of our tars regretted that it was not the English instead of the French of whom we were sent in quest; for the deeds of the previous thirty years had given our countrymen as great dislike for the former as gratitude toward the latter. Besides, the capture of a French ship could by no means be regarded as so notable an achievement as the capture of an Englishman of the same rate. If any of my readers who are careless of historical information should doubt that we were ever in a state of actual war with France, the records of '98 and '99 will enlighten them. Nothing is more interesting than a file of old newspapers of that stirring period.

Crossing the Gulf Stream, the Constellation bore away for the West Indies, where the French were carrying things with a high hand. Never had a ship a finer crew than ours, or a better commander. From the rough old salts in the round-tops to the powder-boys of the gundeck, every soul on board loved and respected Captain Truxton.

For some time we cruised off the Windward Islands without falling in with an enemy. Once we ran as far south as Martinique, then returned to the neighborhood of Montserrat and Guadalupe. At length, on the ninth of February, 1799, while off Montserrat, we espied a sail to the leeward. The Constellation immediately bore down for her, while the stranger, who was hauled close on the wind, appeared perfectly willing to meet us. We soon perceived her to be a frigate of equal force with the Constellation; that is to say, she rated thirty-eight guns, but carried forty-nine. All ships of war at that period carried more than their rate. The stranger had, like ourselves, twenty-eight eighteen-pounders on her gundeck, and twenty-one on her spar-deck, one of the latter being a shifting gun.

Whether she were French or English we knew not, but many of us guessed her to be the French frigate Insurgente, a ship of which we had heard—a remarkably fast sailer, and a very active depredator upon American commerce. At all events, she was a fine-looking vessel.

We were quite close upon the strange ship when the Constellation sent up a large ensign at the mizzen, and immediately after a smaller one at the fore. The last the stranger could see plainly, but the other was hidden by the sails ahead of it. Instantly the French tri-color floated from the opposing ship, and suspense was ended.

I recall at this moment the opening of the battle with all its incidents. First of all, the Frenchman poured a fire from his quarter-deck, then section by section, came his entire broad side. I remember the thick smoke, and how his sails and spars grew indistinct, as if in a fog. Then a deep concussion shook our decks, as the Constellation, from her long eighteens, gave back the compliment.

As the battle went on, my nerves of hearing seemed torn and distracted by the tremendous roar.

At intervals a fresher breeze would somewhat clear the air; then we would see our grim enemy, with his black and active muzzles, his torn rigging and spars. Here were shrouds hanging loose; there, yards shattered and braces cut away. Still the tri-color, dusky in the battle cloud, waved at his mizzen; for the Frenchman was no coward, and he made a gallant fight.

On board the Constellation, in working both ship and guns, there was the utmost regularity. The mariners from the poop-deck kept up a ceaseless fire of musketry, and the long eighteens in the broadside an unbroken roar. The Frenchman, with all his courage, being at length so disabled as to manoeuvre with difficulty, we took a position on his weather-bow, raking him fore and aft. At last he struck his colors. He had fought nobly, but he was only a Frenchman.

Three cheers went up from the Constellation's deck. Our loss was comparatively slight, and the damage to the ship could be soon repaired; but the Insurgente (for we had correctly guessed the name of our antagonist) presented a sorrowful spectacle.

Our first lieutenant went on board to take possession, but I was not of his boat's crew. I remember distinctly the appearance of the French officers who came to us in the returning boat. They were very few, for most of the brave fellows were beyond the grasp of captivity.

After a time a man was sent to us who had been a prisoner to the French, and whom I recognized before he came over the gangway. He was Captain O'Hara, once of the brig St. Patrick.

It is not my purpose to relate surprises, with all their accompanying ejaculations. Sun, and storm, and anxiety had written their story in the face of the Celtic captain. Captured by the Hirondele, he had witnessed the passage at arms between that vessel and the Panther. We killed, he said, three of the Frenchmen and wounded eight.

A short time subsequent to this, the Hirondele fell in with a British privateer, called the Cinque Ports. The latter was of inferior force, yet, in the battle which ensued, the sons of Albion were, as a matter of course, triumphant. The Frenchman seemed to have a passion for engaging his enemies in a gale of wind, for now, as in his brush with the Panther, it was blowing very hard, and the swell was heavy. The English carried the Hirondele by boarding, but immediately after the battle the latter shipped a sea, which swept almost every man from her decks, and at the same time drove her clear from the Englishman, whose maintopmast in the meantime went overboard. Some half-dozen of the English were lost, but the remainder, being carried by the sea directly against their own vessel, succeeded in getting on board of her. Captain O'Hara and young Cathal, the boy whom I had protected in Londonderry, having at that moment been liberated, were swept by the sea, the former overboard and the latter into the Hirondele's rigging.

Scrambling on board the British brig, upon whose decks the sea itself had well nigh carried him, the Irish captain saw himself separated from his family. To make matters worse, the wind now blew with much increased violence that it was utterly impossible for the English, in the disabled condition of their vessel, to regain possession of their prize. They had the mortification to see the vertical stripes of scarlet, white and azure once more go up to the peak of the Hirondele, as, shattered by sea and riddled by shot, yet still quite manageable, she stood off under her courses and topsails.

Vainly the captain of the Cinque Ports cursed the loss of his maintopmast, as without it he could keep nowhere near the wind, but was obliged to head three or four points a-lee of the chase. The feelings of Capt. O'Hara, with his wife and children still in the hands of the enemy, found their only relief in the reflection that the latter had thus far treated them kindly, and would probably continue to do so, as the French republicans had always a sympathy for *les Irlandais*, however such sympathy might be unequal to pecuniary temptation.

With her spare rigging and spars, the Cinque Ports was soon repaired. She had lost no less than four prize captains, and her commander, previously acquainted with Captain O'Hara, whom he had met in the West Indies, appointed him master of the first prize which fell prey to the privateer after her adventure with the Hirondele.

"We had six prize masters," said the English captain, "when we left Jamaica. Two were sent off in prizes, two killed in fight, and two washed off the deck of that blasted Frenchman."

Captain O'Hara proceeded to Jamaica with his prize, where the proceeds of his share placed him above immediate want. He now spent several weeks in the endeavor to learn something of the Hirondele, and the situation of his wife and children. He was unable, however, to ascertain more than that the French privateer was not, as yet, known to have arrived at any port. The suspense was dreadful, but he had no means of hastening the result. His chief

dependence was upon the kind offices of the various British officials at the French ports, who were informed of the circumstances.

In the meantime he had visited Barbadoes, and soon after, embarking thence on the return to Jamaica, he was captured by the Insurgente. She stood northward to Montserrat, where the guns of the Constellation put a full stop to her mischievous enterprises.

While listening to Captain O'Hara's story, I felt for him more sympathy than I could well express—he was so earnest, so honest, and withal he so stout-heartedly bore up. Nothing he yet knew of the Hirondele, his wife, or Cathal, or bright-eyed Cathleen. And now, the possibility of their having gone down in the battle-torn barque of the Frenchman became more and more apparent.

Standing to the northward, we were nearly up with Hatteras, when the Constellation made prize of a merchant ship from New Orleans (then a French port), for Bordeaux. I was of the number sent to take possession of her. It was evening, and, in going up the side, our midshipman dropped the prize papers which Captain Truxton had given him, a mishap that left the young officer in command with no written authority. For three days we had that kind of weather which one is apt to encounter off Cape Hatteras, cutting off all communication with the frigate, until finally we lost sight of her for good.

The storm at last subsiding, we stood on out of the Gulf Stream and headed for Chesapeake Bay. Within two hours' sail of Cape Henry, we were brought to by the Eurydice frigate. Her captain could have hung us all handsomely, for we had no papers, but he chose to act differently. Taking advantage of our position, he claimed three other men and myself as British subjects. Protestation availed nothing, and in sight of Cape Henry, with the Chesapeake opening before us, we were transferred to his ship.

Had not accident left us at his mercy, he would not, perhaps, have ventured to impress American man-of-war's men; but though he doubted not the truth of our story, inasmuch as he allowed the midshipman to proceed with the prize, he knew that the strict letter of maritime law was against us, and that, therefore, he would not be called to account for this outrage on our navy.

On recovering from the despair of my impressment from the American ship, I had at first anticipated some excitement from expected contests with the French; but such contests were not as frequent as the romantic admirer of naval prowess may suppose. The French, sure to suffer defeat, had learned to give British ships a wide berth; and thus the six months of my service on board the Eurydice had given no opportunity for battle.

But it was now that off Barbadoes, in company with the Agamemnon, seventy-four, commanded by Sir Edward Berry, we fell in with four ships, mounting respectively, sixty, forty-six, forty and thirty-two guns. The Agamemnon, although rating but seventy-four, carried eighty-six guns; while the Eurydice, rating but thirty-six, carried forty-four. Thus, we had two ships mounting one hundred and thirty guns, against four ships mounting one hundred and seventy-eight guns.

This battle afforded a spectacle worth all the six months of enforced servitude. There was some maneuvering for advantage of position, and the ships became somewhat scattered, the Agamemnon, with two opponents, getting a mile from us. She engaged the Vantour, sixty, and the Hector, forty-six; the two antagonists which closed with the Eurydice being the Republique, forty, and the Aigle, thirty-two. Our enemies endeavored to keep both on the same side of the Eurydice, in order to divide our broadside, but we had crew enough to man all our guns at once, though somewhat scantily; and, therefore, the old British sea-dog, our commander insisted on getting between the Frenchman. Then with the one on the starboard and the other on the larboard, we poured a full broadside into each. And such a roar, such smoke and flame!

Meanwhile the Agamemnon, a mile distant, was thundering from her castle-like sides on the two heavy ships opposed to her, her huge spars rocking to and fro with the recoil of her loud batteries, and the blood-red cross flaming out at her mizzen.

The Eurydice suffered heavily; for the heroic courage of our two antagonists almost redeemed their want of skill. They fired faster than ourselves, but with less accuracy, and their discharges were confused; so that they exemplified the proverb, "the more haste the less speed." Still, the great disparity of force would have rendered us fearful of the result, but for the reflection that the opposing force was French while our own was English.

In half an hour the forty gun ship struck to the Eurydice, while her consort endeavored to get off. A brief pursuit, however, brought her to, but it was only to fight with a desperation that surprised us. The Eurydice laid her on board, but the French captain seemed to have gone insane, and he communicated his frenzy to his men. Seldom has naval warfare witnessed such a conflict. From stern to stern the decks

were strewn with dead, and the ship swam in blood. At last the brave captain fell by a sword thrust from our first lieutenant, and then, as if the honor of the French had hung upon his life, his men threw down their weapons.

Ere this the forty-six gun frigate opposed to the Agamemnon had lost her foremast by the board, her mainmast-head, and about half of her mizzen-topmast. The British seventy-four had abandoned her to pursue the ship of sixty guns, which terribly crippled, was making a running fight, under her fore-topmast and jib, the only sails she could set. The Briton soon closed with his foe, and when the smoke of the Agamemnon's broadside had rolled to leeward, uncovering the tall spars of the Frenchman, we saw that the Republicane ensign had done homage to the mistress of the deep. The forty-six gun ship, already helpless, was soon after taken possession of, as was also that of forty guns, which we had left astern in chasing the thirty-two.

Washing the bloody decks and casting overboard the dead, we at once commenced repairing damages. Jury-masts were set up in the prizes, and stays, shrouds and running rigging replaced on board the victors. Our sails looked as if they had all served for targets. The enemy must have fired very high, for one of their shot had carried away our main-royal-yard.

The day passed, and it was two bells (or nine o'clock) in the evening watch. We were slowly standing in for Barbadoes. The Eurydice had reached a position close a-beam of the Vantour, the prize of sixty guns. Some of our watch, in high spirits, were singing a grand old song of the sea fight of La Hogue, in 1692:

I was leaning over our bulwarks listening to the full strong notes of the song, and gazing up at the lofty spars of the French ship, as if she had been poor Tourville's Royal Sun, when, at the last line, an explosion occurred on board of her, followed by a dense smoke. Our officer of the deck was in the act of halting, to learn the extent of the injury or danger, when every soul was killed by a roar that shook the sea. The Eurydice herself felt the shock. It passed like an earthquake under our keel, and resounded in the air like ten thousand bolts of thunder.

The Vantour had blown up! There was a vivid flame that seemed to throw the whole night into the clouds. Upon its wild and streaming arms went decks, guns and masts, till lost in the dark arch above. The blackness which then settled upon the scene was as impenetrable as a plank. A suffocating smoke rolled all about us, and we could hear the rapid rain of splinters, spars, guns and dead bodies, that, falling a-starboard and a-larboard, splashed into the water.

The boats of the squadron, rowing about in the dark, found only one human being alive or dead, and he a lad picked up by the cutter of the Eurydice. He belonged to the Agamemnon, having been put on board the Vantour as one of the prize crew. The squadron lay by the spot all night, but the dawn of day revealed nothing more of life.

My duties had left me no opportunity to closely observe the rescued youth; but now, as he stood on deck under the broadening light, I felt my blood start quickly as I looked at him. And the voice, too—had I not heard it at Londonderry? Concluded next week.

Mixed up Darkey.

"Uncle Chew," a venerable negro preacher of Jersey City, who was formerly a slave and now unites his professional duties with those appertaining to the white-washin' business, cherishes the old delusion that women have only seven devils. "For," says Uncle Chew, "as Mary Magdalen was the only woman who ever had them cast out, all the rest, consequently have them! He thinks the preaching of the present day is shocking." "Why," says he, "dey don't say nuffin' 'bout hell now-a-days, and what's religion for without hell and de debil? Guess dey find out fo' demselves by and by, shuh." Uncle Chew quotes, "If a man steals one grain of wheat and plant it, in the fall when gathered the whole is stolen." "So," says Uncle Chew, "when dey stole de first darkey from Africa de whole product are stoled, and as the prosperity of the country was made by stoled labor, it rightfully belongs to the culled folks." Uncle Chews theory would sadly interfere with the plans of some people.

A Louisville lawyer lately met with a singular mishap. His wife wanted waste paper for the manufacture of a certain article of her dress, which may or may not be properly called by us a bustle. Newspapers being scarce in that house, Mrs. Attorney seized upon certain important legal documents which she found in her husband's office, and with them constructed the desired appendage. The case in which these papers were to be used came on for trial, but in consequence of Madam's little theft they couldn't try it a bit. An inquiry was instituted—in short there was a row about it; and the ingenious culprit confessed, restored the depositions and so forth, and we suppose took such a lecture on grand larceny from her husband as she never before had in her life.