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For the Bloomfield Times

MYSTERIOUS FRIEND.

A Story of Old Virginia ---:2:-

CHAPTER IX.

L ET us now return to our youthful hero whom we left just after his escape from the jail. The boat was rowed swiftly down the river, and though Orlando repeatedly asked to be informed whither they were conveying him they answered him not. At length, as the boat turned a point of land that projected into the stream, the youth caught sight of a heavy brig that lay at anchor only a short distance below, and in an instant the whole truth flashed across his mind, and springing from his seat he exclaimed, while his eyes flashed

"Put me ashore, or I will sink the boat, and you with it. You have betrayed me, villains, but you shall not succeed !"

"Keep quiet, my young sir," said Nolan. "We ain't going to hurt you.

"But do you mean to convey me on board that brig?' "Guess we shall stop there for the pres-

"Then turn your boat's head towards

the shore, or I'll jump and swim for it." "You can try it," coolly returned Nolan, as he drew a heavy pistol from his pocket and cooked it.

Orlando settled back upon the thwart with a groan, while Nolan laid the pistol tempt. down by his side and resumed his oar.

The youth had no weapon, and no means of procuring one, and from the manner of his companion he was assured that they would not hesitate to shoot him, if he attempted to escape. He was not feolish enough to risk his life without even a hope fully convinced that he had been cruelly

Shortly after Orlando had reseated himself he saw a boat put off from the brig and start up the river. The moon was yet shining, and as the boat came nearer our here thought he recognized the man who occupied the stern-sheets. Ere long the boats met and the young hunter saw, in the person of him who had caught his attention, Mr. Roswell Berkley! That gentleman nodded his head in a significant manner to Nolan, and a dark, lowering smile rested upon his countenance, as his glance fell upon the prisoner.

At that moment, Orlando could not have spoken if he would, for his soul was too full of indignation. He had no difficulty now in knowing into whose power he had fallen, and he really felt that his case was almost hopeless; yet he resolved to be quiet-to maintain a steady, unmoved demeanor, and not allow his anger, under any circumstances, to betray him into needless danger, hoping thereby to move the more kindly feelings of his guardians, and be the better able to take advantage of the first opportunity that might present itself for his escape.

When the boat at length hauled up under the gangway of the brig the youth was requested to step on board, and with a readiness which somewhat astonished his companions he obeyed. The men were already at the windlass, the gaskets and furling-lines were cast off, and the sails were banging loose in the buntlines.

"Mr. Chester, I believe," said the Captain, who stepped down from the raised quarter-deck, as the youth came on board.

"That's my name," returned Orlando, in a mild tone, at the same time casting his eyes about the deck. He was not much acquainted with marine tactics, but yet he knew from the appearance of things about bim that the vessel was being gotten under weigh.

"So we are to have you for a passenger," continued the Captain.

"I knew nothing of it, sir. I have been betrayed into my present position; and, as you see I am without the means of resistance, of course I must submit to the will of him who has brought this about."

"Better be here than on the gallows," said the Captain, with a tinge of sareasm in his voice.

"Whether my present position is for good or for evil to myself and those who depend on me, I trust that you will not taunt me or trifle with my feelings. I know, sir, why I am brought hither, and I know, too, at whose will. The gallows stood not in my path."

The captain's countenance assumed a less chilling tone as the youth thus spoke, and with more of forbearance in his manner, he

"All I know about the matter is, that you are put here to escape the gallows, and if that offends you, I can't help it."

"I am not offended at what you have said," replied Orlando. "I know that I am your prisoner, and that for the present I must obey the will of those who have only a physical power over me, but I only ask that I may be treated as a man."

"I'm glad you know so much, for I shan't have the disagreeable news to break to you," said the Captain, in a careless one. "So if you know you're a prisoner, of course you'll expect to be treated like

"If I treat others kindly I shall expect the same in return."

"Of course ; we sha'n't make you miserable, if we can help it."

"There is one question I should like to ask," said the youth.

"Well, what is it?"

"Where do you intend to carry me?" "Really, Mr. Chester, I couldn't tell

At that moment the anchor was reported to be a-peak, and the Captain started back to the quarter-deck to attend to making sail. Our hero, though but little acquainted with the world, could not fail to see that the commander of the brig was a man capable of any sort of villainy, and that he was a fit tool for the execution of Berkley's purposes, and in his heart he resolved that he would embrace the first opportunity to escape from his clutches, even though death stared him in the face upon the at-

The brig was seen on her way towards the mouth of the river, and shortly after the anchors had been stowed, Orlando was showed to a bed which had been prepared for him beneath the cover of the long-boat. The night passed slowly and heavily away, and from what our hero could hear of the conversation of the men, he found that it was the general impression among the crew that he was actually taken on board to save his neck from the gallows. At first he thought of making them understand his case, but he soon saw that such a course would only be likely to make his situation worse, and he at length resolved to keep his counsel to himself.

When the youth got out upon the deck in the morning the brig had cleared the bay, and Cape Henry bore upon the starboard quarter. He gazed back upon the land that just lifted its blue lines to view beyond the entrance of the bay, and he thought of those he was leaving behindof those from whom he was being thus separated, and perhaps forever ! He fancied he saw the tears coursing down the pale cheeks of his poor mother, and he could hear her piteous moans as she gradually should awake to the knowledge that she had no son! Then the form of his loved Ada rose to his view, and he found a new pang in his heart as he thought of her. Less and less distinct grew the inner shore, until at length it seemed to sink into the bosom of the ocean between the two capes; and when the youth could no longer gaze upon it, he turned back towards his rough resting-place. Again the picture of his mother came before his mind, and, with his heart almost rending with anguish, he gave away to his grief, and the bitter, burning tears of a soul without hope started forth from his eyes.

"Come, come, Mr. Chester, you'd better go to the galley and get some grub," said some one who came up and touched him upon the back.

Orlando turned and beheld Dick Nolan. "Nolan," said he, as he wiped the tears from his cheeks, "why did you deceive me

"How?" coolly returned the sailor. "By telling me that Chiron had sent for me, and that I was to be carried to my mother."

"O, I was only obeyin' orders, sir .couldn't make you budge without; so you Nolan said: won't blame me, sir."

"Nolan," said the youth, in a tone of anguish so touching, and melancholy, that the old sailor started, "suppose that you had a mother—one whom you loved as your own life, and whose every drop of joy was derived from you. Suppose that misfortune had shattered that mother's mind, and that you alone could give peace to her soul, or shed a ray of sunlight across her path, would you, when calling to mind that fond mother's bitter agony-when dwelling upon her tears and prayers, and picture her sad loneliness, blame him who had lent himself an instrument to tear you from her? Could you feel it in your heart to think he had been unkind?"

Dick Nolan could have withstood a torrent of curses and abuse with right good will, but this attack touched him at a defenceless point, and he turned away his head. In a moment, however, he turned back, and in a tone made tremulous by the calling up of his better feelings, he said :

"I'm sorry for you, but I couldn't help it; though perhaps if I had known all this before, I might have done differently. But it's too late now to cry for the milk, for it's all spilt. Come, you can have your breakfast now."

"No, Nolan, I have no appetite for food now."

The sailor gazed a moment into the sad, pensive features of the youth, and something like a shade of pitying sorrow passed over his features, as he silently turned

"Ah," murmured Orlando to himself, as he was left alone, "how easy a thing it is to touch the human heart, if there be one generous spark left within it. Now, had I given way to my passion, or berated that man for the part he had taken against me, he would have exulted in my downfall, and only returned me anger for anger; but now he pities me, and pity is surely generous. If I can make no friends, I will at least endeavor to make no new enemies."

For three days the brig stood on in an easterly direction, and during that time the young hunter had been constantly on the watch. There had been but little said to him, though he had been allowed a free range on the decks, and as yet he had been enabled to gain but little intelligence with regard to his destination. It was between nine and ten o'clock on the evening of the third day that Orlando turned into his bunk beneath the cover of the long-boat, and endeavored to compose himself to sleep. Nearly an hour had he lain thus, but no sleep had as yet visited his eyelids, though a sort of dreamy, troubled forgetthe sound of voices directly below him aroused him to a state of consciousness .-One of them be recognized as Nolan's, and as he heard his own name pronounced he placed his ear nearer to the edge of the

"I really pity the poor fellow," said Nolan, in reply to something that had been said, "and if I'd have known what they were goin' to do with him, blow me if I'd have anything to do with it."

"It's a curious affair, anyhow," remarked another. "I can't see why a quiet chap like him should trouble anybody. Why, he don't look as though he'd harm a mouse."

"O, as for that," returned Nolan, 'you'd find him a hard customer at a pinch-rather a dangerous man to trifle with on equal ground. But, you know, even a child may sometimes be in the way. I rather think the youngster knows too much for them shore chaps, and for that they want to get him out of the way."

"But where are they goin' to carry him ?" said a third speaker.

"Well, if I should just put this and that together, I think I could hit pretty near

the truth," answered Nolan. "Then put it together, Dick." "Well, I a'pose you know all our cargo of tobacco is shipped for England."

"And don't you see that we're steering off to the south'rd of that ?"

"Yes, I noticed it." "Well, now we have no earthly reason for such a course, unless it be to leave part of our cargo at some other port. I heard the Captain-you'll be mum, shipmates."

"Yes," replied three or four voices. "Then I heard the Captain sayin' some thing to the mate yesterday about the coast of Africa, and about white slaves .-Now can't you guess?"

For a few moments all was silent, but at length a low murmur of surprise, slightly to the deck, as he met the keen glance of ued next week.

tinged with disapprobation, fell from the That's what I was directed to tell you if I lips of the men, and in a moment more

"Now keep dark, and let things go on as they may. I'm sorry for the poor fellow, for if my suspicions are correct he'll have a hard time of it; but we can't help it now-it's none of our business. -sh ! Here comes the mate. Mum's the word."

Orlando Chester sank back upon his pillow, and an audible groan escaped from his lips. He had feared death, but now such a fate would have seemed comparatively light. He had no doubt, from what he had heard, that he was to be sold into slavery! All thoughts of sleep were banished from his mind, and long did he ponder upon what he had heard; but at length the feeling came over him that such a diabolical plan could not be carried out against him. Up through all his doubts and fears there then struggled a hope that a way of escape might yet be opened before him, and he gradually wrought his mind into a state of comparative calm .-He resolved that he would not, by a word or look, betray his knowledge of the fiendish purpose held against him, but that he would, by every means in his power, endeavor to cultivate the friendship and good will of the crew, and then, when the crisis should come, he would arm himself and stake his life for the result. God and right were on his side, and with a heart now bent to a firm purpose, the youth ere long passed into the land of dreams.

When Orlando awoke in the morning, the sun had been some time up, and the crew were all on deck. Near the wheel stood the Captain, with his spy-glass in his hand, and huddled around him were the two mates, and some half a dozen of the men. The brig was steering S. S. E., with the wind quite fresh from the westward, so that she took it full upon the quarter, and with her starboard studding-sails set she was dashing along through the water at a rapid rate.

"Is anything the matter?" asked our hero of one of the men who was passing along the gangway.

"There's a sail in sight, that's all," returned the man thus addressed.

As the sailor spoke he pointed with his finger over the weather beam, and after gazing in that direction a few moments the youth made out a small white speck just visible to the naked eye above the horizon. There seemed nothing strange about the circumstance, however, and without bestowing further thought upon it, he went to the galley after his breakfast. The forenoon passed away without any occurrence worthy of note; but shortly after dinner Orlando's attention was arrested by the strange manner of the Captain, who was evidently laboring under some powerful excitement, and walking aft he followed the commander's glass, and found that the sail he had seen in the morning was only about a quarter of a mile distant, coming down with all her canvass set. She was a brigantine, and for the first time the young man noticed that she carried guns.

"Chester," said the Captain, as he noticed the form of his prisoner, "step this way. Do you see that brigantine?"

" Yes sir."

"Well, what do you take her to be?" "Perhaps a pirate," said Oalaude, as for the first time the thought passed through

his mind. "And you are right. Now what do you intend to do?"

"If any one seeks to harm me I shall endeavor to defend myself," returned Orlan-

"May I be shot if you don't take it coolly," uttered the Captain, not a little surprised at the perfect coolness of the young man.

"And why should I not?" No benefit can result from any undue excitement; and besides, I know not that I have much to choose between my present situation, and the one that may be threatened by a capture of our vessel."

"But you will fight in behalf of the brig, will you not?" asked the Captain.

"I have no arms, sir."

"We have plenty on board, so you need not fear on that account."

"Then you may arm me, sir, and if my own judgment tells me that my portion of strength is necessary for the defence of your crew, I will use it. I have no desire to see these ocean robbers trample upon the rights of others, for human right, is sacred, and he who would abuse it deserves a just retribution."

The young hunter spoke in a low, mean-

the speaker. He read at once the meaning of the language, and though anything like repentance or sorrow might never enter his soul, yet be could not but realize his own baseness and shame in the presence of one like his prisoner. He did not care to encounter the gaze of the youth at that moment, so, raising his glass to his eye, he took another look at the approaching brig-

"Mr. Cowley," said the Captain to his first mate, "the pirates are aiming their long gun. Call the men aft and distribute the arms. Look well to the pistols."

"Then you are determined to resist them," said the mate, in a tone that betrayed considerable fear.

"We must do it," returned the Captain, exhibiting a quantity and quality of courage that must have cost a strong effort in its production. "I know the character of those men too well. They never leave live men to tell tales against them."

The mate shuddered as he thought of the coming conflict, but he strove hard to keep his fear to himself, and calling upon one or two of the men, he went below to bring up the guns.

The brig's crew consisted, all told, of eighteen men, Orlando making nineteen, and ere long each man was armed with a heavy cutlass and a brace of pistols. Our hero readily took the weapons which the mate handed to him, but he did it with no fixed purpose, only he felt that his own life should be sold as dearly as possible .-As soon as the men were all armed, the Captain call them aft and explained to them the situation in which they were placed-he knew that if the pirates captured the brig, the crew would be mercilessly put to death; and he appealed to his sailors to sell their lives at a dear cost. They could but die, and they had better die like men than be killed like dogs-and, they might drive the enemy off.

During the Captain's speech he seemed actually to have worked himself up to a pitch of real courage by the fearful picture he had drawn for the purpose of inciting his men to a bold resistance, and his new found fearlessness had considerable effect upon the crew.

The brig carried two carriage-guns upon her deck, each capable of throwing a twelve pound ball. They were lashed to the bulwarks, one on each side, and pointed fore and aft, the ports having not yet been opened, nor the guns cast loose. At length a wreath of smoke curled up from the deck of the brigantine, and on the next instant an eighteen pound ball came dashing along directly under the brig's

The pirate was yet at a considerable dising vantage rapidly, the latter vessel having kept steadily on her course, and the former only varying sufficiently to keep her head towards the object of her chase. As soon as all other matters had been arranged on board the brig, the two heavy guns were east from their lashings and drawn aft, where they were loaded half way to their muzzles with every sort of missile that could be procured, such as iron bolts, nuts, spikes, etc., and then they were both pointed towards the spot where the pirates would probably board, though if the point of attack should be varied they could be moved in a moment.

Again the long gun of the pirate sent forth her iron messenger; and it came with some effect, for it struck the brig's side just abaft the main chains, and went crashing and ploughing across the deck .-The splinters flew in every direction, one of them wounding Orlando slightly upon the leg. The youth started, as the felt the twinge of pain, and casting his eyes toward the brigantine, he uttered :

" If I had my trusty rifle here you'd not fire that gun again,"

The Captain heard the youth's exclamation, and stepping up to his side, he ask-

" Are you sure of your aim with a rifle ?" "With a good one I am."

"I have two on board."

"Then bring them to me," said our hero, as he stooped down and bound his handkerchief around his leg.

In a few moments the Captain produced two long, heavy rifles, and at the first glance the youth knew them to have been made for the best. They were speedily loaded, and taking one of them in his hand Orlando walked aft to where he could command a view of the pirate's long gun. He had not been long on the watch when he saw one of the enemy, with a match in his ing tone, and the eyes of the Captain fell band, approach the dreaded gun. Contin-