

THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man."—Thomas Jefferson

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TERMS:

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MISCELLANEOUS.

From the Boston Miscellany.

THE CHASE.

I had just turned over in my berth, in hopes to resume a very pleasant dream, the thread of which had been broken by some noise on deck, and was about closing my eyes to external objects when a cry of "Sail, ho!" caused me to jump up, and make haste on deck. I met Mr. Tomkins in the gangway coming down to tell me. Where is she, sir?"

"On the lee beam."

"A ship!"

"No, sir, I believe a schooner, but I can't make her out."

"Steward, hand up my glass."

The day had scarcely dawned, and by the grey and uncertain light, unassisted by the glass, I could only make out and object but the moment I put my telescope to her, I saw she was a schooner, with raking masts, standing to the Westward, with square sail set. We were heading South, close hauled, with a light air from the Eastward, momentarily expecting the Trade Wind. As the day dawned more perfectly and we were perceived by the stranger, his square sail came in and he hauled his wind with such celerity, that I did not hesitate to pronounce him a slaver or a pirate, which indeed are synonymous terms in blue water.

"Call all hands, Mr. Tomkins; hoist our colours!"

The stranger showed Portuguese colours in reply to ours. This did not relieve the anxiety which had seized on me the moment I had a fair view of the schooner, for that nation was still actively engaged in the slave trade; and we were just in the track of outward bound vessels to the coast of Africa, and the Cape de Verd Islands, also, where they often touch to refresh and refit. Our crew consisting of only ten men, besides officers, cook, and steward were soon mustered ast.

"I have called you, my boys," said I, to state my intention with regard to that vessel to leeward, which I suspect to be a rogue. We will prepare for as stout a resistance as possible. If he is honest, I shall still see by your actions which of you I can really depend upon, and there will be nothing lost and if a rogue, we must take it for granted, that if we give up like cowards, we shall have our throats cut; and as this is to be our fate whether we resist or not, if he boards us let us make up our minds to sell our lives as dearly as possible; and remember, men, one man devoted to a good cause is able to beat off a dozen engaged in robbery and murder. They gave a simultaneous approbation, and went forward again apparently in good spirits.

It was now broad daylight, and we could plainly perceive that the stranger gained to windward, though he dropped astern a little rendering it somewhat doubtful whether he was much superior to us in sailing. Our bonny bark was reputed a first rate sailer on the wind, when, in her best trim, but she was pretty deeply laden with a full cargo of cotton bale goods, and about one hundred thousand dollars in specie, and i

could sail with a clipper schooner on the wind, or in any other way. Our ship's armament consisted of six pounders, twelve muskets, and the same number of boarding pikes, and a brace or two of pistols, my private armament consisted of a good rifle, a large ducking gun, a double-barrel Joe Manton, a pair of duelling pistols, and a patent pistol capable of discharging six balls in as many seconds; and I accounted myself a good shot with all of them.

At eight o'clock it was nearly calm, the chase about two miles on the lee quarter, and heading directly for us.

Mr. Tomkins was a six-footer, a real down east Yankee, who had been mate of the Ark, for all I knew, and who was equal to any man in that capacity, although he might be taken for twenty years of age, if seen going aloft, there was people who had known him at least that time as chief mate.

He always obeyed orders promptly, never failed to have an answer ready, and exacted from all under him the same prompt and strict obedience that he paid to his superior officer. The second mate, Mr. Turner, was a young man of good education, looking forward to promotion, and promising to do honor to himself as a commander after a few years' more experience. My crew were all active young men, and the cook, (or Doctor, as he was called) was a real specimen of a first rate runaway Virginia slave; he could cook, as well as he could fiddle, and on a Saturday night, he would amuse all hands, by a tale of a possum hunt or a deer drive. Having now described our crew, our vessel, and all we knew of the stranger, I will hasten to put the patient reader in possession of the facts for which he is anxiously looking. My orders were as follows, and they were obeyed in as short time as I shall take to write to them: Mr. Tomkins, load the main-sail, one gun and four backshot in each, look to the flints also load the great guns with round and canister.

"Aye, aye sir."

"Doctor, put two iron bolts in the fire, and keep them red hot; and fill the copper with boiling water."

Mr. Turner, muster all the hats and pea jackets, and stick one on each handspike near about the ports; it will make him think that we are well manned; and trice up all the ports, sir and put a log of wood out of each, and give them a dab of paint. Mr. Tomkins, send old Brown to the helm, and tell him to 'steer small.'

"Aye, aye sir."

These arrangements being completed, I went down below, and loaded my arms, and on examining the Doctor, I found that he was quite familiar with that instrument of death the rifle; I accordingly gave him my flask and bag of balls, and other materials, telling him I should call upon him to load for me when the time came.

"Oh, never fear, Massa, gib us breeze, and him not catch us so easy," said he, grinning from ear to ear, and wetting his long knife on a stone.

I put a ball and four slugs into my double barrel, and a half handful of buckshot into my 'ducker,' and a *quantum sufficit* of balls into the pistols. I had scarcely made these arrangements when Tomkins called.

"He's awning now on, sir, and I reckon he's to slab 'long Tom' into us."

I jumped on deck, and as it was now dead calm, it was too evident this was his intention.

Down flat upon deck, every soul of you shouted I. All obeyed except Tomkins, who coolly looked through the glass.

"There she flashes, sir," and in another instant a heavy shot whistled through our main-top-gallant-sail.

"He shoots well, that's a fact," said Tomkins,

I looked as the smoke lazily curled away and saw that he had not the same flag flying. "Tomkins, what's that at her peak?"

"It look, sir, like a red shirt with the Doctor's head in it, and a couple of bones rigged across his chin."

Sure enough, it was a red flag, with a black Death's-head and marrow-bones painted on it. I cannot say that I felt relieved at these symptoms; yet my mind was made up that were lost, and it remained only for us to die game. There seemed nothing short of Providence to save us; if it remained calm, he would bore us through with his long gun; if it breezed up, he could cut sail us.

"Mr. Tomkins, keep an eye to him, and let me know of any movement: Mr. Turner, bend on the weather studding-sails, all ready to run out; perhaps we can outsail him off the wind when the breeze comes."

This order was scarcely obeyed, when Tomkins reported, "they are putting a tackle on the foreyard and another in the main riggin', sir, to hoist out their launch, and board us, by heavens!" "I like that, Mr. Tomkins for the rascally captain and half his crew will come in her, certain of an easy prey; but if my aim don't fail me, few of that boat's crew will return, be they more or less. Mr. Turner, hoist these two guns up on the deck at once, for if we want them at all, it will be over the stern. Are you a good shot, Mr. Tomkins?"

"When I was younger, sir, I was called a little the best shot in Kennebunk, and I guess I could fetch a turkey at a hundred yards now, with a straight rifle."

"Then, sir do you take charge of the twelve muskets, and let Jim lead for you, as fast you fire, while the Doctor and I will keep my own tools busy."

The pirate's launch was now manned, and pulling ten oars for us lustily, while a group of men were collected forwards and in the stern sheets of her, perhaps twenty or twenty-five altogether, scarcely a mile astern, and as we were almost entirely becalmed, gained rapidly on us.

no occasion to call the people ast to give my orders, for they were collected round the captain with anxious faces and blanched cheeks.

"We'll succeed in getting alongside, boys, said I, 'we will retreat with our arms to the cabin, and let them board us, and through the windows and cabin door we may clear the decks; if not, I shall reserve my last pistol for the powder magazine, which is at hand, and we will all go together, and disappoint the rascals. But I trust it will not be necessary to come to that. Nail down the fore cuttle, Mr. Turner, if they get alongside, mind every one retreat to the cabin, or die like a dog on deck, if he please.'

"There they shout, sir, and pull a head, as if after a whale," said the mate, "and here comes a little breeze, too perhaps it will strike us before the villains get near enough."

They are in range of the rifle, sir!"

"No, sir, wait until they get near enough to be sure of the leader—with in an hundred yards. There she breezes, thank God! Good luck, Brown, and nothing off. We have the breeze before the schooner, but its very light yet, and the launch gains fast. Now, now, Doctor, stand by, mind the patches. Stand by Tomkins, aim at the group in the bow, while I take the stern:—are you ready?"

"Yessir."

"Fire!" and down went the rascal at the tiller, and one also at the bow:

"Load her quick, Doctor and let me give them Joe Manton; in the meantime, fire away Tomkins, as fast as you please only take good aim—be cool."

"Cool as a cucumber, sir."

My double barreled gun dropped one ear in the water, and caused some confusion in the after part of the boat. "Put it into them sir, we have not lost a ball yet. Give me the rifle, Doctor."

"Yes, sir, he is ready. I spit on the bait for luck."

This discharge caused them, with the increased breeze, to lay on the oars an instant, and then pull round for the schooner, they had only six ears.

"Three cheers, my lads and fire as long as you can reach them."

There the schooner begins to feel the breeze Mr. Turner, run up the weather studding-sails, keeper off two points, for he must pick up his boat. There she breezes, thank Heaven Steady, Brown, steady."

"Steady, Sir."

"Keep her straight, for your life! Steward, give the lads a glass of grog at once."

By the time the schooner had picked up her boat and hoisted her on board, we had gained a mile or two, and we were going eight or nine knots with a free wind.

"Watch her close, Tomkins; let me know if she gains on us."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Mr. Turner, we are a little by the stern carry everything portable chock forward—carpenter's chest, harness cask; roll those two after cask forward—be lively, sir. Swab those guns out, Doctor, we'll have another dab at them yet I fear, for she sails like a witch."

"Yes, sir, him going to Africa for ivory and gold and dust—dai's what dey call nigger trading."

"She gains, sir, but slowly; he hasn't got the best of the breeze yet, perhaps."

"So that will do, Mr. Turner, now get a small pull of your weather top-sail and top-gallant braces. Well, sir—well all!"

"They are hosting that d—d great square sail, sir, and she springs to it like a tiger."

"Mr. Turner, slack a little of your topmast and top-gallant backstays to the windward—carefully, sir, not much—and then send all chock forward—every pound will help."

"Four bells, sir, hold the reel."

"Never, never mind the bells, no reel, Tomkins; what use is it to us now? Keep your eyes on the schooner, and let me know when the six pounders will tell on him; we may shoot away his topmast by good luck!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

Tomkins was wasso mechanical in every thing that could, no doubt, have succeeded in getting alongside, boys, said I, 'we will retreat with our arms to the cabin, and let them board us, and through the windows and cabin door we may clear the decks; if not, I shall reserve my last pistol for the powder magazine, which is at hand, and we will all go together, and disappoint the rascals. But I trust it will not be necessary to come to that. Nail down the fore cuttle, Mr. Turner, if they get alongside, mind every one retreat to the cabin, or die like a dog on deck, if he please.'

"He gains fast, sir; I can see the red cap on the rascal at the helm—let me give him a shot, sir!"

"Well, sir, fire away if you think you can reach him. Doctor, bring your loggerhead and when I give the word, touch her quick. So, lift her breech a little mite, Tom, so, so—stand by, give it to her! and away went our little shot and struck the water about two-thirds of the way to the schooner.

"Load up again, Tomkins, and leave out the cannister, and the shot will go straighter aim higher than before, say for the royal, now give it to him!"

"Plump into his square sail, sir; but forty thousand such wouldn't hit him hard. Oh if we only could borrow his long Tom for an hour or two! The Sarpint is sure of us or he would fire it himself!"

At this crisis the chase was only a mile or a mile and a half astern, and could easily have bored us through; but presume he was afraid to yaw his vessel enough to bring the gun to bear, and it would no doubt kill his was gaining perceptibly, he calculated to be along side of us long before night.

"Load up again, sir, and I will try my luck, for it must be a mere chance shot that does him any harm."

"All ready, sir."

"Stand by Doctor, and when I give the word touch her quick—Fire."

The shot struck the water just under her bow. "Now for the other gun: I shall do better, Ready!—Fire! His topmast totters! it falls, by heavens!"

A spontaneous cheer from our crew seemed to assure us of safety. "Give me the glass, boy.—They are cutting the wreck away as fast as possible, still determined to overhaul us. Keep off two points, round in the weather braces a full, run out that lower studding-sail,—be handy, lads! Watch

the rascal, Mr. Tomkins, with the glass, and let me know if we gain on him.

"Ay, ay, sir."

The breeze was now fresh, well on the quarter, and we were sure to gain on him until his topmast could be replaced, which with a large and active crew, bent on revenge, would cost him but an hour's work.

"She drops, sir, she drops! I can but just see that nigger's head on the flag; half an hour ago I could see the marrow-bones.

"Very well, sir, let the people now get a bite of dinner, for we shall have more to do yet, to get clear of him, if we do at all."

"I don't know what more we can do sir, unless we grease the bottom," said Tomkins with a smile.

"We have yet one principal resort, my dear sir, and will go at it the moment we get something to work upon, if he gain upon us."

Tomkins cut a new quid of tobacco, of which he had made uncommonly free use that morning, and by that only did he show any sign of anxiety. "Get your dinners, Mr. Tomkins and Mr. Turner, I can't go down to eat, while that fellow is doing us. Send me up a bit of biscuit, and a glass of wine."

"Ay, ay, sir."

It was now about one o'clock and the schooner dropping slowly, while the preparation to fit a new top-mast were actively progressing. In ten minutes all hands again on deck, anxiously watching. As Tomkins came on deck, I heard him say to Turner,

"Concern me, if I know what the old man is going at; we've done all human nature can do, and he's not given to praying."

"How long, Tomkins, will take him to catch us, when he makes all sail again, at longside before sunset, I recon."

By two o'clock, his top-sail and top-gallant were again set; and in twenty minutes more his studding-sail, royal and ringtail, and it was evident he began to gain spases, though now more than four miles astern.

"Mr. Tomkins, we will now try our last resort."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Break open the hatches, saw the rail and bulwarks off abreast them, and tumble up those bales as fast as possible."

This idea had evidently never entered into the head of any of the crew or officers, and the long faces with which they had seen the pirate gain on us, were instantly changed to faces full of hope. In ten minutes the cook and second mate had sawed off the rails and bulwarks, the hatches were off, and the bales coming up faster than any ever before come out of her, and overboard.

"Look well to your trim, Mr. Tomkins do not take too many from one side. Send boy Jim on the poop to keep an account of the number as they pass by. Over with them, boys, you are now working for your lives! But no encouragement was necessary for the men stripped to their trousers only worked like tigers."

"Mr. Tomkins, cut away this stern boat, that's it. These large bales will oblige him to steer wild or to run against them."

We continued this work for nearly an hour, before we began perceptibly to gain on the schooner. But by four o'clock he had dropped more than half a mile; yet to make sure, we did not abate our exertion until after five o'clock, when four hundred out of a thousand bales had been thrown over.

During the operation I could hardly refrain from laughing at the remarks which escaped from the men after we began to gain.

"Huzzas, boys!" said one, 'ever with them the underwriters are rich!'

"Watch there—watch!" cried another, as he rolled a bale over; 'them will do for him to buy niggers with.'