

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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MISCELLANEOUS.

From Boston Evening Journal.

Salt-Water Bubbles.

BY HAWSER MARTINGALE,

SCENE ON THE OCEAN—FEMALE HEROISM.

A number of years have passed away since the occurrence which I am now about to relate took place. But how many strange events—how many scenes of guilt, iniquity and bloodshed have been enacted on the broad ocean, and have never been recorded! The history of the sea has never been, and never can be, written.

The ship Astolfo, belonging to a port in New England, was on her passage from Bristol, in England, to Havana. One morning, as the ship was running off under the influence of a fine trade wind in the latitude about 26 degrees North, and longitude 70 degrees West; intending to make the Cape in the Wall,—as the gloom of night dispersed by the rising sun, the cry of "ho!" was heard from a man on the fore-deck, and immediately the attention of the officer of the deck was directed to a schooner bearing two or three points on the larboard bow. This vessel presented a singular and quite a suspicious appearance. She was lying to, but her sails were clumsy set, some of them clued up, and others were blowing in the wind, the sheets loose. The sails braced in different directions, and every thing connected with her appearance, showed that some extraordinary circumstance had occurred on board that vessel. Before these signs of distress, an American flag was hoisted in the shrouds union with a sight, which, always denoting warning danger, can never be witnessed by a sailor without emotion.

The captain of the Astolfo, whose name was Atkins, was immediately called. After surveying the schooner through his perspective glass, he ordered all hand to be summoned, the studding sails and other light sails to be taken in, and preparations to be made to lay the main-top sail aback. He ordered the small arms to be got in readiness for the service, being ignorant of the cause of the difficulties on board the schooner, but determined to render all the assistance in his power. As the ship approached the schooner, Captain Atkins was surprised to behold the fluttering of a female garment—and soon ascertained that there were only two persons on deck—one was a woman—the other a boy, apparently only twelve or fourteen years of age!

Astonished at the circumstances, he ranged along side and hove to, with the main-top sail to the mast.—He then hailed the schooner, and inquired respecting the fate of the crew and the cause of her present abandoned condition. The woman in a tremulous and weak voice replied stating that the captain and mate had been murdered—that the pirates were now confined in the fore-cabin—and in the most urgent language implored us to send assistance promptly on board. It was then remarked that the woman held a pistol in her hand—her dress in great disorder; and her whole appearance, as well as that of the boy who stood by her side, denoted that some terrible had occurred.

Captain Atkins ordered the quarter boat to be lowered and manned, and arming himself with pistols and sword, and giving to each of the boat's crew a cutlass, he resolved to visit the schooner himself, and ascertain the meaning of these strange appearances and to protect and assist the innocent and to punish or capture the guilty.

In a few minutes the boat was alongside the schooner. Captain Atkins sprang on board, followed by his men; but as he stepped on deck he was startled with the sight of the body of a man, who had evidently been shot through the head. At this moment the woman came toward him and seized his hand; and poured out her feelings of gratitude for his aid. She was young of a graceful form, and exceedingly lovely, notwithstanding her cheeks were deadly pale, and her costume in great disorder. She had evidently suffered much for mental agony was stamped on her countenance; her eyes were red with weeping, and she trembled in every limb, through nervous excitement.

Captain Atkins was at once convinced that the woman, who had been the wife of Captain Howard, the late master of the schooner, had told him the truth.—He learned that the pirates, two in number were confined in the fore-cabin. They were immediately taken out. Their looks were enough to convict them of any crime and they were pinioned and sent on board the ship. Mrs. Howard was also sent on board in a state of insensibility, for she fainted soon after the schooner was boarded. The strength and courage, almost superhuman, which had supported her through trials and perils, which few of either sex could have borne, failed her when they seemed to be no longer required.

The boy spoke of some boxes of money which were in the captain's state room. They took them out—also the writing desks, trunk, and either property belonging to the murdered captain and his wife, and then the schooner was set on fire. The pirates were put in irons on board the Astolfo. Mrs. Howard was placed in a convenient state-room, and made as comfortable as the circumstances would permit, sail was made on the ship, and after an unpleasant interruption of a few hours, the Astolfo again proceeded gallantly on her way toward her destined port.

On recovering her senses, Mrs. Howard received with much astonishment and disappointment the intelligence that she had been removed from the schooner Arion and was now on board the ship Astolfo; and she reflected that she could not again embrace the body or gaze upon the pallid countenance of her murdered husband. Several days elapsed before her energies were sufficiently restored to enable her to relate the particulars of the events which had caused her sorrows; and the tale of the beautiful but unhappy woman sank deep into the hearts of the listeners—for there is nothing calculated in a great degree to enlist the sympathies of a true sailor, than an act of outrage or oppression upon weak and defenceless woman.

It appears that this lady was the daughter of respectable parents, residing in one of the New England states. Her marriage with Captain Howard was the result of deep seated affection on the part of both; and at the time when the marriage took place a few months previous to the occurrences of the events recorded above, he had become the principal owner as well as master of a fine schooner, the Arion, nearly ready for sea, bound to St. Thomas and a market, with a cargo of lumber, dry goods, and Yankee notions.

The idea of leaving Caroline, his bride behind him during the few months which he expected to be absent, never once entered his head, and she, with cheerfulness and alacrity, agreed to his proposition that she should accompany her husband on the voyage, and be, on the ocean as well as on the land, his constant companion, his helpmeet and the participator of his joys and his sorrows. The cabin was fitted up accordingly, and the Arion, with her fair freight

left port but a few days after the joyous celebration of her marriage.

The passage to St. Thomas was propitious. The weather was pleasant, and the winds were favorable, and after a couple enjoyed true happiness at a distance from their home, and on the bosom of the stormy sea, that couple was Johnathan Howard and his lovely wife. A new world of happiness seemed open to them, and fancy painted gorgeous scenes of enjoyment in the distance; and evenings as they paced the deck they loved to talk of their own dear home in their native land, and to conjure up pictures of domestic happiness, equalling in vivid coloring a poet's dream.

The Arion arrived at St. Thomas after a passage of twenty days. Capt. Howard succeeded in selling his lumber to advantage but concluded to proceed with his remaining cargo, consisting chiefly of dry goods, to St. John, in the Spanish island of Porto Rico. The yellow fever was prevailing at St. Thomas when he left, and the fear lest his life might become a victim to this dreadful disease, doubtless hastened his departure from the island. But on the day on which the Arion arrived at St. John two his crew, both young American seamen, were attacked with that dreadful fever, and died on the following day. The remainder consisting of two seamen, and one green hand, who secretly resolved to leave the schooner with the first opportunity, on the following night stowed themselves away in the brig Jerusalem, bound to N. York and were far enough off in the offing, before their desertion was known.—Besides the captain and mate, the cabin boy, an American lad, named Edward Jones, about four teen years old, was the only persons belonging to the vessel left on board.

When the Arion was ready for sea, it became necessary to procure a supply of seamen—but no American or English seamen were to be had, and Capt. in Howard was compelled to ship three ferocious looking Spaniard, who came on board the schooner one morning and offered to engage by the run. He had some doubts of the seamanship of the savage looking rascals, although they declared that they had performed many voyages, but he consoled himself with the reflection, that a few weeks would terminate the voyage; and with regard to their character, he did not conceive it necessary to make any particular inquiries—they would doubtless succeed in enabling him and his mate, Mr. Newton, to navigate his vessel to a New England port, and more he did not require of them. On the second day after the Arion left port, the Spaniards were observed by Mr. Newton to hold some whispering conversation together, which seemed rather suspicious.—Caroline told her husband that she did not like the looks of those swarthy Spaniards—that one of them in particular, by the name of Garcia, whose low stature, broad shoulders and low forehead, gave him a peculiar and sinister appearance was a dangerous man. She bade her husband beware of him. She did not tell him however, that this man as he passed her that morning, had given her an impudent wink; and with a savage grin, had asked her, in broken English, how she would like to be the wife of a Spaniard.

Captain Howard did not altogether like the appearance of his crew. Besides, he had a few thousand dollars in specie on board, which might prove a temptation to men of depraved character. But he possessed undoubted courage and was never in the habit of brooding over imaginary dangers. He laughed at the fears of his wife, and bade her not to be alarmed as there was not the slightest symptom of danger. Nevertheless, he thought proper to advise Mr. Newton to watch the action of the Spaniards; he also loaded a pair of pistols, and placed them in his state room by the side of his berth. A pinard also he took from his trunk, where it had been lying for years, and concealed it beneath his vest. He was a man endowed with much determination of character, and he resolved that on the instant he saw any

conduct which would justify him in suspecting the Spaniards of entertaining any improper design, he would put them in irons, or shoot them down on the spot.

But nothing passed during that day to confirm the suspicions of Mr. Newton—the Spaniards were obedient and respectful, and conversed but little with each other. But there was a fierce malignant expression in their eyes, which reminded one of the venomous serpent, just as he is about to plant his deadly fangs in his unsuspecting victim. Mrs. Howard could not look upon these men without shuddering, although they were respectful to her, and smiled as they passed her. In the performance of their various duties. But Captain Howard saw nothing to excite alarm. He hardly deemed it possible that his men would dare plan and execute a scheme for mutiny and murder.—But he knew little of the character of the men who were on board.

The succeeding evening was remarkably pleasant. The wind was light, and hardly ruffled the surface of the ocean—the sky a rich canopy, thickly studded with sparkling gems, never looked more lovely—the air was soft and balmy—the schooner glided gently on her way, leaving behind her a brilliant and illuminated wake, which the eye could follow to a great distance. The whole scene was of a tranquilizing character, and furnished a rich source of enjoyment to the happy pair who took possession of the quarter deck that evening; for it was Capt. Howard's first watch and Caroline would not suffer her husband to remain on deck, solitary and alone, on such a night as that.

At twelve o'clock the larboard watch was called, and Mr. Newton came on deck. Howard after he had communicated some instructions to his mate, retired to his state-room, with his wife hanging on his arm. It was about three o'clock in the morning, when this couple were aroused from sleep by a noise on deck, as of the fall of a heavy body—at the same time a cry of "murder" was heard, intermingled with supplications for mercy. Captain Howard sprang from his berth. A light was burning in the cabin. He seized a pistol in one hand and his pinard in the other, passed through the steerage and rushed up the companion stair-way, followed by his faithful wife, who, although much alarmed; determined to remain by the side of her husband in danger as well as in security. But one of the Spaniards was stationed at the head of the steps as a guard, and the moment the unfortunate Captain Howard thrust his head above the companion-way, he received a blow from a handspike, which shattered his skull, and he fell bleeding and senseless into the arms of his wife, who was at the bottom of the stairs!

Few women could have retained their courage and presence of mind at such a time. Caroline Howard was in a moment made sensible of the horrors of her situation. She knew then that pirates had possession of the vessel—that they had murdered the mate—and that her husband whom she so dearly loved, was also a victim to the treachery and cruelty of these sanguinary monsters. She knew too, for she felt it instinctively, that her life must also be sacrificed and perhaps, what was far dearer, her honor—for the words of Garcia, in living characters, appeared blazoned on her memory.—How would she like to be a Spaniard's wife! But her resolution did not fail her in that dread hour; although her cup of happiness, which, a few minutes before, was filled to the brim, was dashed to the earth; although infamy and death stared her in the face, yet she did not give way to despair and irresolutely resign herself to her terrible fate. The instinct of self-preservation braced her nerves in that dreadful hour, and gentle kind and affectionate woman as she was she felt stimulated by a stranger; and till then, unknown feeling to avenge, if possible, her husband's death.

The pirates were busy in throwing overboard the body of poor Newton, and did

not immediately proceed below. In the mean time, Caroline called Edward, the cabin boy. Alarmed at the strange noise, which had awakened him, he had just stepped into the steerage, and was standing terrified and amazed at the entrance of the cabin. Edward loved and respected Mrs. Howard and her husband. They had ever treated him with kindness—and when he heard the sound of her voice calling upon him for aid and saw her wild and pallid features deeply agitated with the contending passions that raged within, he shook off the convulsive fears, which had almost paralyzed his energies, and with a courage and manliness which could hardly be expected from one so young & feeble, he told his mistress that his life was at her service—that what ever orders she might give he would obey.

As the body of her husband lay on the floor of the cabin, the rays of light from the cabin lamp fell on his changed features, and confirmed the terrible conviction that he was dead. But she knew there was no time for vain laments and wailings. She took from her husband's relaxed grasp pistol, and handed it to Edward.—She picked up the pinard from the floor and placed it within the folds of her garment then, taking another pistol from the racks, she bade the cabin boy to follow, and boldly went upon deck.

The pirates were then standing in a group near the companion way, consulting with regard to the best step to be taken, and were much started at the sudden appearance of Mrs. Howard among them. The moon had risen hours before, and threw a bright and silver light over the scene of iniquity—and her pure and holy rays never illuminated features where villainy was stamped in more legible characters than of those of the Spaniard Garcia and swarthy accomplices. By that light, too, the beautiful features of Caroline Howard—the mingled expression of wo, fear and revenge—and the compressed lips, denoting stern resolution, were distinctly visible.

She stood upon deck clad in an airy costume of dazzling white with her hair loose and disheveled, and resembling a Pythoness of olden times, who urged by preternatural excitement, and the spirit of prophecy uttered the oracles of fate. For a moment, the hearts of the pirates quailed and they forgot that the distracted being before them was a woman—a young, weak delicate woman—unable to contend, but who deficient in physical strength, must submit almost without a struggle, to what ever terrible fate they might design her.

The wretch Garcia, with a frown and a horrible oath, moved toward her with the intention of compelling her to return to the cabin; but with a menacing gesture she warned him to keep off. With a scornful laugh the villain continued to approach, uttering language of insult and rebaldry. But ere he could lay his unhallowed hand upon her, she presented her pistol at his head—and fired! The ball performed its mission well; it penetrated his brain, and stretched him upon the deck. His comrades beheld the act; they saw their leader killed, and towards, as they were, they began to tremble for their own safety.—Caroline saw them falter, and snatching a pistol from the boy who stood by her side in a firm voice ordered them to go forward under the pain of instant death: They saw before them undoubted proof of her determined spirit; they knew that she had the means to execute her threats, and the cowardly wretches after hesitating a moment and remonstrating in vain took warning by the fate of their comrade and leader and eluctantly obeyed her mandate. They went forward; they did more; awed by her unearthly appearance, and repeated manaces, they decended into the fore-cabin! With the assistance of Edward, she instantly shut down the scuttle placed upon it at ledge anchor and several other heavy articles to prevent the possibility of opening it and then believing herself safe she threw herself on the deck and indulged in all the extravagance of grief. And when a