

Select Tale.

A THRILLING SEA STORY.

BY AN EYE WITNESS.

It was at the close of a stormy day, in the year 1835, when the gallant frigate Constitution, under the command of Captain Elliot, having on board the late Edward Livingston, then minister at the Court of France, and family, and manned by nearly five hundred souls, drew near the "chop" of English Channel. For four days she had been beating down from Plymouth, and on the fifth evening, she made her tack for the French coast.

The watch was set at 8 P. M., the captain came on deck soon after, and having ascertained the bearing of Scilly, gave orders to keep the ship "full and bye," remarking at the same time to the officer of the deck, that he might make the light on the lee beam; at, he stated, he thought it more than probable that he would pass it without seeing it. He then "turned in," as did most of the idlers, and the starboard watch.

At a quarter past nine, P. M., the ship called west by compass, when the call of "light ho!" was heard from the foretop-sail yard.

"Where away?" asked the officer of the deck?
"Three points to the lee bow," replied the skout man, which the unprofessional reader will understand to mean very nearly straight ahead.

At this moment the captain appeared and took the trumpet.

"Call all hands!" was his immediate order. "All hands!" whistled the boatswain, with a long, shrill summons, familiar to the ears of all who have ever been on board a man-of-war.

"All hands!" screamed the boatswain's mate, and ere the echo died away, all but the sick were on deck.

The ship was staggering through a heavy swell from the Bay of Biscay; the gale, which had been blowing several days, had increased to a severity that was not to be made light of. The breakers, where Sir Cloudesly Shovel and his fleet were destroyed in the days of Queen Ann, sang their song of death before, and the Dead Man's Ledge replied in hoarser notes behind us. To go ahead, seemed to be death, and to go about was sure destruction. The first thing that caught the eye of the captain was the furled mainsail, which he had ordered to be carried throughout the evening—that hauling up of which, contrary to the last order he had given on leaving the deck, had caused the ship to fall off to leeward two points, and had thus led her into a position on a lee shore, upon which a strong gale was blowing her, in which the chance of safety appeared to the stoutest nerves almost hopeless. That sole chance consisted in standing on, to carry us through the breakers of Scilly, or by a close graze along their outer edge. Was this destiny to be the end of the gallant old ship, consecrated by many a prayer and blessing from the heart of a nation.

"Why is the mainsail up, when I ordered it set?" cried the captain, in a tremendous voice.

"Finding that she pitched her bows under, I took it in, under your general order, sir, that the officer of the deck should carry sail according to his discretion," replied the lieutenant in command.

"Heave the log," was the prompt command to the master's mate.

The log was thrown.

"How fast does she go?"

"Five knots and a half, sir."

"Board the main tack, sir."

"She will not bear it, sir," said the officer of the deck.

"Board the main tack!" thundered the captain, "keep her full and bye, quarter-master!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The tack was boarded.

"Haul aft the main sheet!" shouted the captain; and aft it went, like the spreading of a sea-bird's wing, giving the huge sail to the gale.

"Give her the lee helm when she goes into the sea!" cried the captain.

"Aye, aye, sir!" she has it," growled out the old sea-dog at the binnacle.

"Right your helm; keep her full and bye!"

"Aye, aye, sir, full and bye she is," was the prompt answer from the helm.

"How fast does she go?"

"Nine knots and a half, sir."

"How bears the light?"

"Nearly abeam, sir."

"Keep her away half a point."

"How fast does she go?"

"Nine knots, sir."

"Steady so!" returned the captain.

"Steady!" answered the helmsman, and all

was silent as the gale upon the crowded deck, except the howling of the storms, for the space of time that seemed to the imagination almost an age.

It was a trying hour to us; unless we could carry sail, so as to go at the rate of nine knots an hour, we must of necessity dash Scilly; and who ever touched upon those rocks and lived during a storm?

The sea ran very high, the rain fell in sheets, the sky was one black curtain, illuminated only by the faint light which was to mark our deliverance, or stand a monument of our destruction. The wind had got shore whistling—it came in puffs that flattened the waves, and made our old frigate settle to her bearings while everything on board seemed to be cracking into pieces. At this moment the carpenter reported that the left bolt of the fore shroud had drawn.

"Get on the luffs, and set them all on the weather shrouds. Keep her at small helm quarter-master, and ease her in the sea," were the orders of the captain.

The luffs were soon put upon the weather shrouds, which of course relieved the chains and channels, but many an anxious eye was turned towards the remaining bolts, for upon them depended the masts; and upon the masts depended the safety of the ship—for with one foot of canvass less she could not live fifteen minutes.

Onward plunged the over-laden frigate, and at every surge she seemed bent upon making the deep the sailor's grave, and her live oak sides his coffin of glory. She had been fitted out at Boston when the thermometer was below zero. Her shrouds of course, therefore, slackened at every strain, and her unwieldy masts—for she had those designed for the frigate Cumberland, a much larger ship—seemed ready to jump out of her.

And now, while all was apprehension, another bolt drew—and then another—until at last our whole stay was placed upon a single bolt less than a man's wrist in circumference. Still the iron clung to the solid wood, and bore us alongside the breakers, though in a most frightful proximity to them. This trifling incident has never, I believe, been noticed in public, but is the literal fact—which I make not the slightest attempt to embellish.

As we galloped on—for I can compare our vessels leaping to nothing else—the rocks seemed very near us. Dark was the night, the white foam scowled around their black heads, while the spray fell over us, and the thunder of the dashing surge sounded like the awful knell that ocean was singing for the victims it was eager to engulf.

At length the light bore upon our quarter, and the bold Atlantic rolled its caps before us. During this time all was silent, each officer and man was at his post, and the bearing and countenance of the captain seemed to give encouragement to every person on board. With but a bare possibility of saving the ship and those on-board, he relied on his nautical skill and courage, and by carrying the mainsail which in any other situation would have been considered a suicidal act, he weathered the lee shore, and saved the Constitution!

The mainsail was now hauled up, by light hearts and strong hands, the jib and spanker taken in, and from the light of the Scilly, the gallant vessel, under close reefed topsails, took her departure, and danced merrily over the deep towards the United States.

"Pipe down!" said the captain to the first lieutenant, "and splice the main brace."

"Pipe down!" echoed the first lieutenant to the boatswain.

"Pipe down!" whistled the boatswain to the crew, and "pipe down" it was.

"How near the rocks did we go?" said I to one of the master's mates, the next morning.

He made no reply, but taking down a chart showed me a pencil line between the outside shoal and the Light House Island, which must have been a small strait for a fisherman to run his smack through in good weather by daylight.

For what is the noble and dear old frigate reserved!

I went upon deck; the sea was calm, a gentle breeze was swelling our canvass from our mainsail to royal, the isles of Scilly had sunk in the eastern waters, and the clouds of the dying storm were rolling off in broken masses to the northward, like the flying columns of a beaten army.

I have been in many a gale of wind, and have passed through scenes of great danger, but never before nor since, have I experienced an hour so terrible as that when the Constitution was laboring, with the lives of five hundred men hanging on a single small iron bolt, to weather Scilly on the night of the 11th of May, 1835.

During the gale, Mrs. Livingston enquired of the captain if we were in great danger, to which he replied, as soon as we had passed

Scilly, 'You are as safe as you would be in the aisle of a church.'

It is singular that the frigate Boston, Captain McNeal, about the close of the Revolution, escaped a similar danger while employed in carrying out to France Chancellor Livingston, a relative of Edward's, and also Minister to the Court of St. Cloud. He likewise had his wife on board, and while the vessel was weathering a lee shore, Mrs. Livingston asked the Captain—a rough but gallant old fire enter—if they were not in great danger; to which he replied—"You had better, madam, get down upon your knees, and pray God to forgive your numerous sins, for if we do not carry by this point, we shall go down in five minutes."

Humorous.

A GHOST STORY.

"Talk'n' of sperits' reminds me of my experience in that line," said Suttler, gravely shaking the ashes from his pipe.

"Let us hear it," I said.

"With the greatest pleasure, Cap'n. My father, you see, had been under the turf for a good many years. He wasn't a bad man, by no means; a kinder heart never beat nor his; but he was uncommon fond o' terbaker. He'd smoke the day out and the day in. He hadn't an equal in that way except old Sam Flint, our nearest neighbor, and he was just about his match; and they would tell their tough stories evenin' after evenin'; but that was afore my father died.

"My natural susceptibilities bein' fine, I felt rather bad when the old gentlemen stepped out. I used to lay awake night arter night and think on't: One night in the first of the evenin', arter I had turned in, I heard a strang knocking on the winder sill, and didn't know what on earth to make on't.

"Who's there?" says I.

"Your father," says a voice.

"It can't be possible," says I.

"It's nothin' shorter," says he.

"How do you like as fur as you've got?" says I.

"I'm not over and above pleased," says he.

"I'm sorry to hear it," says I. "What's the trouble?"

"It's o'namost impossible to get any good smoking terbaker," says he, in a dejected voice.

"That's melanchully," says I. "Can't I do anything for ye?"

"Nuthin' to brag on," says he; "but you will oblige me by layin' a good piece of pigtail on the winder-sill nights when you go to bed."

"I'll do it," says I.

"I'll feel obleeged," says he.

"Not at all," says I; but if it's a fair question, I'd like to know how you pass your time there?"

"It's no offence at all sonny. I set upon a sunbeam most of the time playin' on the jewsharp."

"It must be very amusin'," says I. "Have you got the old thing with ye?"

"I aint got nothin' else," says he.

"Play us up a tune then," I continued.

"With pleasure," says he and so he struck up.

"That's rather melanchully," says I.

"I know it," says he; "but it's all on account of the terbaker."

"I'll get ye some of the raal pigtail," says I.

"So do, and I'll give ye something livelier next time. Good night, sonny," he added in a more cheerful tone.

"Come again," says I.

"You may rely on't," says he.

"Good night, then," says I. "Don't hurt yourself doing the miscellaneous work, and I would recomend you to bring a better instrument when you come again." And with that the old gentleman hurried away.

"Did you place the pigtail on the window sill?" I asked.

"In course I did, the raal ginewine."

"And did he come after it?"

"As regular as night came. I never knew him to fail, and an uncommon sight of the stuff he made way with. If all my relations had come back, and used as much of the weed as he did, I should have been dead broke."

"And what kind of tobacco did Sam Flint smoke at that time?" I continued.

"Pigtail—nothing but pigtail, just like that used by the old gentleman," said Suttler, with a look irresistibly comical.

"How was it about his father's ghost?" I said one day to Suttler, as we were alone.

"The fact o' the case was," he replied, "I found it took off the change like all natur' to keep my father in terbaker: so I told Flint all about it, and axed him if he couldn't supply the old gentlemen with a pig or

two occasionally for old acquaintance sake."

"I couldn't think of it," said he, "I've got a large family to support, and I use an awful sprinklin' of the weed myself. But I've got a good pound or two that I'll sell you cheap."

"What kind is it?" I asked.

"Pigtail," said he.

"Bring-it over," says I.

"With pleasure," says he. And so the next day he brought it over and I bought it.

Well when I come to look it over, I found some of the identical plugs which I had laid on the winder sill for the old gentleman.—upon careful inquiry, I found he had sold several pounds of the stuff to the neighbors, and seemed to have plenty of the same sort although, afore that, he used to be hard upon terbaker, for he was as poor as Job and an uncommon smoker. Arter that time I didn't lay any more terbaker on the winder sill, thinking it best to let the old gentleman depend upon his own exertions for a supply o' pigtail."

SPOON FASHION.

Nearly a dozen years ago I was on my return to the old homestead, in the good State of Connecticut, having just completed my studies as a student of medicine. In company with a goodly number of people, I stopped for the night at a country inn in the town of B——, not being able to resume my journey until a late hour the next day. Having always been an admirer of the country, I was not at all dissatisfied with the arrangement, and my pleasure was enhanced by finding, at the well laid supper table, two young ladies of surpassing loveliness, the younger of whom I thought the most bewitching little creature in existence. The ladies were accompanied by a young gentleman about my own age, with whom I could not but feel considerably annoyed. He not only engrossed all their attention, but, lucky dog, as he was, seemed determined that no other person should participate in the amusement. An offer of some little delicacy by myself to the younger of the two ladies was frustrated by a nice sort of politeness on his part that effectually chilled any further attempts at intimacy. I soon left the table, but I could not drive the image of the lovely being from my mind. Something whispered that we should become acquainted at some future time, but in the interval I felt more than usually uneasy. I longed to be not only an intimate acquaintance, but an accepted lover, and had I possessed the wealth of Croesus, I would unhesitatingly have poured it into her lap.

In the excitement under which I was then laboring, I thought a walk might do me good, but on opening the door for that purpose, I found the night had set in as dark as Erebus, and being an entire stranger, there was no knowing what mischief I might encounter; so I made up mind to compromise the matter by taking up my candle and going to bed.

I retired, but for a long time I rolled and tossed about sadly; now, one plan by which I might make the acquaintance of the young lady would suggest itself, and then another, until at last I found myself in a state of dreamy languor, neither fairly asleep, nor quite awake.

I fancied I had heard for the last few moments a sort of light bustle going on near my bed, but it gave me no uneasiness until some one sprang into the bed, and clasping her arms about me, whispered:

"Ugh! how dreadful cold it is, to be sure, I say, Julia, we shall have to lay spoon fashion, or else we shall freeze!"

Here was an incident. What to say, or how to act was a question not easily solved. At last I mustered courage enough to ejaculate:

"Dear madam, here is some mistake, I'll—"

The lady did not wait for me to say more.

With a sharp, quick scream, she sprang from the bed and bolted from the apartment. I was wondering what the deuce it could all mean, when a servant brought a lamp into my room and picked up what ladies' apparel she could find about the premises, and left the apartment. You can well believe, gentlemen, that my slumbers for that evening were far from quiet.

In the morning, I know not how it was, but I was vividly impressed with the idea that my nocturnal visitor was one of the two ladies who had supped with me the evening previous, but which, I could not conjecture. I resolved, however, to ascertain on the first favorable opportunity which might present itself, and satisfy myself beyond a doubt.

On taking my seat at the breakfast table the next morning, I placed myself opposite the ladies, and was revolving in my mind the incident of the previous evening, when the younger of the two passed her plate and begged me to favor her with the oysters near me.

"Certainly, ma'am," said I, and as the

thought sprang into my mind that she might be the lady in question, I added, "will you take them spoon fashion?"

Eureka! what an explosion. The lady's face instantly assumed the hue of the crimson dahlia, while her companion's seemed as cold and passionless as I could desire. I was satisfied that she had kept her own counsel—I scraped an acquaintance—fell deeply in love—and when I reached home, I had the pleasure of presenting to the old folks my estimable lady, the present Mrs. Maddox.

A young clerical gentleman relates the following anecdote of one of his Dutch brethren. The old fellow was about commencing his spiritual exercises one evening, when to his being a little near sighted was added the dim light of the country church.—After clearing his throat and giving out the hymn, prefacing it with the apology—

The light ish bad, mine eyes ish dim,
I scarce can see to read dish hymn.

The clerk supposing it was the first stanza of the hymn, struck up the tune in common metre.

The old fellow taken somewhat aback by this turn of affairs, corrected his mistake by saying:

I didn't mean to sing dish hymn,
I only meant mine eyes ish dim.

The clerk still thinking it a completion of the couplet, finished in the preceding strain.

The old man at this, waxed wroth and exclaimed at the top of his voice:

I think the devil's in you all,
Dat vash no hymn to sing at all.

At a show down East, the audience were suddenly involved in total darkness by an accidental putting out of the lights.—Among the rest was a newly married country Jonathan and his pretty bride; and on the same bench—a stranger to both—sat a gentleman, who profiting by the darkness, fell to kissing the bride. She whispered to her husband—John, John! this ere feller's a kisser on me! "Tell him to quit," said John; for John, it seems probable, stood a little in awe of the philosopher from the city, and found himself, therefore, in perplexing circumstances. "No, I can't," whispered the bride, "you can tell him." "Make him quit!" said John, now getting quite excited. "I don't like to," whispered the bride, "he's a perfect stranger to me!"

Two boys among the blackberry bushes, some mile or two out of town, saw a cloud rising and heard a sound like thunder. One who was a little timid, said to the other, "come Fred, let's go home—it thunders." The other not wishing to return home so soon, denied that it thundered at all.—Directly the rumbling noise was again borne on the freshnig breeze. "What's that then?" inquired the other.

"Why, Fred don't you know what that is? If you don't I'll tell you. You know it has been dry weather for a long time. What clouds there are floating about 'are as dry as old sheepskins, and when the wind blows it rattles them."

A WEAK STOMACH.—In Gunning's Reminiscences, we find the following: On one occasion the Vice-Chancellor, Dean Miller, said to me very abruptly, "You have been looking at me some time, I know what you are thinking on; you think I eat a confounded deal!" "No, sir," I said; "I am surprised that you eat of such a variety of dishes." "The truth is," said he, "I have a very weak stomach, and when it has digested as much as it can of one kind of food, it will go to work and digest some other." I observed to him, "That the weakness of his stomach resembled that of Dr. Topping, a physician at Colchester, who, when a gentleman with whom he was dining expressed some dissatisfaction at his not taking claret, which had been provided expressly for him, answered, 'I have no objection to take a bottle, or a couple, of claret, but I have so weak a stomach, I am obliged to drink a bottle of port first!'"

A PRECOCIOUS NATIVE.—The Hartford Times furnishes the following striking incident:

Irish Mother—"Arrah, Johnny, and where have yees bin, so long?"

Native Son—"Why, me and the rest of the boys have been lickin' an Irishman."

Mother—"Wait, ye spalpeen, till yer daddy gets home—you'll be afther catchin' it!"

Son—"Oh, you'll be blowed! That's the man we've licked!"

[Exit Mother, with upraised eyes and hands, and half-smothered "Och hone!"—while Johnny stalks off whistling "Hail Columbia!"]

HEAVY PUNISHMENT.—An editor became martial and was created a captain. On parade instead of two paces in front—advance, he unconsciously exclaimed "Cash—two dollars a year in advance." He was court-martialed and sentenced to read his own paper.