

bottles were in readiness—spike-nails—in short, everything of an offensive nature that we could gather, was tied up in canvas of a dimension to enter the muzzles of the guns; and each man amongst us had his musket, a brace of pistols, a bayonet, and cutlass. I gave the American my musket and bayonet, reserving my other arms to myself: and thus we presented a formidable little band of fifteen, expecting an attack of probably more than seventy. But when I considered that

“Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,”

I felt but little apprehensions as to the result. The awning was spread over the quarter-deck, and I directed the stops to be cleverly stranded, so that a strong jerk would bring the whole of it down together. Our carronades were loaded, and secured in a-midships, just before the after-hatchway, so that we might, on seeing which side the pirate would take, bring them both to bear together. A shot from his long gun, that passed over us, was a warning to heave-to; but we still carried on, to gain as much time as possible, and induce him to believe that we were under great alarm.

“May I request a favour, Sir?” said Amos, in a tone of earnest solemnity.

“If it does not interfere with my arrangements, you may ask, and have all that I can do for you,” replied I.

“It’s only to let one of the men reeve a line through that block upon the mainstay, Sir,” said he, pointing aloft to the block at which his unfortunate brother had been suspended, and which still remained in its original position, though I had ordered its removal. “You may deem my request a strange one,” added he: “but grant it me, Sir; Jackson, here, will lend me a hand, and you shall see that retribution will have its day.”

I certainly did not much heed what his intentions were, for my thoughts were otherwise too busily engaged; but I told Jackson to get the rope rove, as much as anything to satisfy him, and as there seemed to be a sort of mysterious communing between them. Another shot from the schooner passed through both topsails; but as the weather began to thicken I still carried on, though without the smallest hope or expectation of getting away. In another quarter of an hour she ranged under our lee-quarter, and poured in a broadside, which, however, injured no one. My brave fellows had anticipated her movement, and the two carronades were promptly at the midship-ports, covered over with the boat’s sails.

“Ho—the ship, ahoy,” exclaimed a voice from the schooner; “heave-to, and send your boat aboard directly.”

“Ay, ay, Sir,” answered I, aloud; but whisperingly added—“Stand by, my men—square the main-yard lubberly-fashion;” and then aloud—“Back the main-top-sail.”

My orders were well obeyed—only a few of my men appearing; and the pirates, fancying that we had but little strength, and knowing that there were no guns when they were last on board, crowded the nettings and rigging to have a look at us; they were so close that we could hear even the tread of the men upon her deck; when suddenly luffing-up (as the schooner had forged a-head so as to be abreast the fore-channels), I gave the word “fire.” The carronades were admirably pointed, and the execution they did exceeded my most sanguine expectations. The schooner filled her topsail, and stood on till she brought us in a line with her stern, and then her long gun was pointed abaft, and cut us up most miserably—the shots ploughing the deck, and tearing and rending everything before them—but still without wounding a single individual; for, except myself and the man at the helm, every soul else was in the hold.

I concluded that she meant to sink us; and as some of the shots struck the ship below the breast-hooks, she made a good deal of water: but the men were prompt with such materials as they could find for plugs, and there was no immediate danger. Finding, however, that we made no further resistance, he got out two large boats, and going about, kept them out of sight to windward, and stood towards us till he got within half a cable’s length of our weather-bow, when he again tacked, and the boats, filled with men, shoved off to board us. Hastily scanning the armament with my glass, I distinctly saw the pirate chief in a black mask, and should have taken him for a negro, had not Amos exclaimed in a suppressed voice, “It is he—he comes—and the hour of retribution has arrived.”

My carronades had been reloaded, and my gallant fellows, with incredible speed, dragged them forward to the middle port, which was closed. It was a moment of fearful excitement—the boats were close to us, nearly under the bows—when open flew the port, and they got the full benefit of the discharge—killing, and crashing, and wounding. But we could only fire one gun before the wretches were scrambling up the head; and on to the fore-castle. I had retreated with my men to the larboard waist, so as to place the long-boat between us and the assailants, and directed them to be sure of their aim, and fire—they did so, and ten of the pirates fell to rise no more. “Now lads,” shouted I, “your pistols and cutlasses, and the day’s our own.” We made a desperate rush, a sharp hand-to-hand struggle ensued, and we were the victors, having the Black Bloodhound himself among the prisoners. In an instant the American darted at him, tore the mask from his face, and I beheld the handsome features of my coffee-house acquaintance at Havanna. I had not a moment, however, to bestow upon the recognition, so as to renew our intimacy, for about a dozen men had crowded back into one of the boats, and were making