



"THE SHIP'S PET."

THE SLAVE CHASE.

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CHAPTER V.

A STERN CHASE.

ALL this time Lieutenant Vincent passed in and out among officers and men a changed man, but not a new man in Christ Jesus. He had suddenly developed from an open-rofligate, fast-living sinner to a cold, hard, self-righteous sinner.

Had the lesson of the storm been lost on him? Was it so, that the educated, refined, cultured, reasoning man had missed God's lesson, while the illiterate and poor common sailors, who peered the lower deck, saw God, and heard his voice, and knew his path even in the sea?

Yes, even so: "Nothing blinds a man more than self-righteousness," had to be the confession of Ralph Vincent when, weeks afterwards, he saw himself as God saw him.

This case puzzled the two Christian sailors. The feeling of caste between men and officers kept them from addressing him personally. They felt he was not "right" with God, and that he was either seeking peace, or had wrapped himself in a false peace.

On the Sunday morning following the squall the usual captain's inspection had been carried out, the hands, in white duck trousers, white drill frocks, and white caps, had been duly dismissed. The order had passed along the decks, "Rig church."

The men passed to and fro rapidly, carrying the stools onto the upper deck to form that quaint, but picturesque, sight, "Church at sea." There was no sense of reverence among them, the merry joke and light jest freely passing round.

"I say chums," said Jenkins, as, with a stool under his arm, he paused at a little group of men, "are you a good hand at riddles? If so, guess this: What is the difference between me and this moss stool?"

A hearty laugh went round, and they cried, "We give it up."

"Why, the stool has to be carried to church, and I have to be driven!"

This was the signal for renewed mirth; but by this time all is arranged on the quarter deck for service. The pulpit is fixed, covered with an immense union-jack; the books are placed on the stand; the bell tolls as it would in some quiet English parish. The men muster aft and fill the seats; the officers take the chairs arranged in the rear of the pulpit. The bell ceases, and, escorted by the ship's schoolmaster, who acts as clerk, the chaplain takes his place.

Opening his prayer book, he reads, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him

return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And thus, step by step, the service proceeds till they commence presently to sing, "I will arise and go to my Father."

There is something rich in the swell of this body of men's bass voices, and they are just repeating the refrain, "I will arise," when a voice, loud and clear, rings out from aloft, from the mast-head, where, seated upon the cross-trees, the lookout man watches.

"Deck ahoy!"
"Well," cried the officer of the watch, "what is it?"
"Dhow in sight, sir."
"Where away?"
"Just off the starboard bow, but she's a good many miles off, sir."

Then, in the quick, sharp tones so usual to naval officers of these times, the officer shouted,

"Boatswain's mate! Pipe down church." In a few moments all vestige of church was gone, and officers and men were full of intensest excitement. Their first dhow in sight! Every stitch of canvas was set, everything done to drive the vessel in swift pursuit.

"A stern chase is a long chase." The dhow had some miles' start, and, in common with that class of vessel, was built and rigged to sail like a witch, as sailors say. Hour after hour passed before they seemed to gain upon her at all, but at last she can be just seen from the deck, and now a new impulse is given to the excitement.

Then, about the middle of the afternoon, a captain's order is issued that all hands are to have an early tea, so that the coppers may be filled with fresh water, ready to wash the slaves when taken from the dhow.

At half-past four the captain thought they were within shot range and ordered the bow-chaser to be loaded with blank cartridge.

Very deafening was the sound of that blank fire amid the stillness of the tropical afternoon, and very anxious the glances of all who watched the dhow's movements, to see if she would shorten sail, or come round, but she still held her way.

After half-an-hour, which seemed to the excited men treble the time, the order was given to load with shot, and Sam Harper, who was a seaman gunner, and considered the very best shot in the ship, was asked if he thought he could take her mast out. This he seemed quite confident of doing. They were now fast gaining on the slaver.

Sam proceeded to train and lay the gun. Then, with his sharp little eye laid along the sights, while his left hand directed the movements of the gun's crew, with a sudden shout of, "Stand clear," at which every man sprang clear of the gun, he pulled the trigger line, and with wild, fierce hiss and whiz, and volumes of smoke, which belched forth amid the deafening explosion, the shot went forth on its deadly mission.

For a moment or two nothing could be seen or heard. Everyone waited for the smoke to clear, everyone was silent with expectancy; then, as the wreaths of smoke slowly rolled aside, a deafening cheer rose simultaneously from every throat. The mast of the dhow had gone by the board, literally shattered, about four feet from the deck.

"Well done, Harper," exclaimed Lieutenant Vincent, "that was a splendid shot," but before Harper could reply the captain was speaking.

"Lieutenant Vincent!"
"Yes, sir."
"Get the first, second, and third cutters ready for lowering; let the crew put on sword belts, and take their swords and revolvers; let the hands stand by ready to shorten sail."

"Yes, sir," and then, putting all these orders into execution, Lieutenant Vincent prepared himself to board the dhow.

Now, as they neared the slaver, they could smell her, and wildest joy as well as

excitement spread among the men, as they thought of a goodly slice of luck, in the form of prize money.

"My word, chums," said Jenkins, "she must be full of slaves, can't you smell 'em, poor nigs?" Then, as if he was already handling the slave's crew, he chuckled as he said, "All right, my beauties, we'll give you 'what cheer' when we get alongside." I guess you'll all be sorry you came out with your dear darkey brothers for this werry delightful yachting cruise."

The dhow was a large one, and as the boats drew near it became evident there would be a stubborn resistance. The Arabs and half breeds, a score in all, were bent on mischief. Mad with rage at being foiled in their enterprise, expecting nothing but death at the hands of their captors, they resolved to sell their lives at a dear rate. Wild to think that the hated English would actually get more as prize money than they would ever have realized, they were determined to spite and balk their "English tyrants" of at least some of the prize.

With this idea they commenced, in cold-blooded eagerness, to haul them overboard. The repeated splash, as body after body was thus despatched, soon attracted the attention of the crews, both of the vessel and of the boats, and if anything could have roused their fury, this last awful sight had surely done it. Regardless of all discipline, they sent up a terrible yell of execration, and, filled with furious eagerness, they bent to their oars, and were speedily alongside the dhow, thirsting for vengeance.

The greatest care and skill were now needed to save the lives of the impatient crew. The huge sail and dismantled mast, which hung over the side, hampered the dhow's movements, and completely hid the boats from the Arabs. Taking advantage of this, Lieutenant Vincent held a few moments' quiet consultation with the cock swains, and planned the attack. He, with his boat, would attack and board at the stern of the dhow; one of the other boats at the bow; a third, slipping between the dragging sail on the opposite quarter, just where it belied by the breeze, would thus completely surround the "villanous hold of hell."

All this was but the work of a few moments; and, as they approached the dhow's sides, suddenly the dark, swarthy, evil faces of the Arabs and half-breeds appeared above her gunwale, and a volley, but a badly-aimed one, was directed against two of the boats. Badly aimed, however, as it was, three shots took effect. Lieutenant Vincent's left hand was completely disabled, and, for a moment, the sickening pain made him reel; but, binding his handkerchief hastily around it, he cheered on the men with a new desperation visible in face and voice. One poor fellow was badly hurt in the other boat, and dropped to the bottom; while Jenkins was fairly mad—for a shot had inflicted just a slight flesh wound upon the shoulder—grinding his teeth in rage and pain.

For a brief moment all was suspense, for the heads of the Arabs had once more disappeared below their low gunwale. Then the clear voice of Vincent was heard—"Board the dhow! Keep cool; and stick to them, lads."

A wild rush was then made for her sides, and coming as it did from so many points at once, for a moment seemed to bewilder the dhow's crew.

Then the scene baffled description. The men of the *Bluster* had the advantage of the Arabs, since they had revolvers, and short carbines and swords; while the others were armed with the long Arab rifle, so difficult to use in a hand-to-hand fight. But they had their long knives, and these they used fiercely, and with awful effect. Several of the *Bluster's* men lay severely wounded. Already eleven of the dhow's crew were either dead or dying, and yet the remnant fought like tigers.

Jenkins, desperate with his wound, and the excitement of the attack, seemed more like a wild animal who had tasted blood, than the jocular, fun-loving fellow he generally appeared.

Reinforcements had now come from the ship, since the fight was seen to be so desperate, and in a few moments the remainder of the dhow's crew were secured.

The wounded men of the *Bluster* were

carefully transported to the ship for minute attention, while the lot of the dhow was brought alongside, and lashed securely, ready for the transhipping of the poor slaves.

The junior officers of the vessel, who had before been so thrilled with the stories of Cooper on that eventful day in the gun room—and who, on board the *Bluster*, had impatiently watched the result of the boarding and attack, could hardly restrain their furious indignation at the least thirsty, cruel atrocity of the Arabs upon the poor slaves, as the remnant of the former, hand-cuffed or bound, were brought on board. These were soon deposited in low iron cages; and then came the work of clearing the slave decks of their awful freight.

Some of the hatches had been removed by the Arabs to fetch up the feeble slaves upon whom they had wreaked such an awful vengeance, and now, as the remainder were removed, what an awful sight was displayed!

The dhow had been nearly a month at sea, as was afterwards ascertained, during the whole of the time this living mass of negroes, men and women, together with a score of children, had been prisoners below. Fastened securely to the slave deck with leg irons, they had sat, or lain, festering in dirt and vermin.

Reef had been served out in small quantities twice a day, but they were awfully lean, and gaunt, and weak, and as the sailors, with rough, but tender touch, lifted their nude bodies from the accumulated filth, and saw their terrible flesh sores, more than one of these rough seamen wept like children. The moans of the weakest, together with the groans of the strongest slaves, would move the coldest and hardest heart. But the work went steadily on till past eight o'clock, and so all were carefully housed and fed on the ship that had brought them salvation.

In less than ten days the vessel had made good her passage, and landed the freed slaves, nearly all of whom were now in good health, clean, and smiling. One chabby little fellow, about five years old, who was either an orphan, or had been torn from his parents' shore, and to whom all the sailors had taken a great fancy, with the captain's consent, was kept on board as "ship's pet."

(To be continued.)

THE POWER OF GENTLENESS.

It is related that a belated stranger stayed all night at a farmer's house. He noticed that a slender little girl, by her gentle ways, had a great influence in the house. She seemed to be a bringer of peace and good will to the rough ones in the household.

She had power over animals also, as the following shows. The farmer was going to town next morning, and agreed to take the stranger with him. The family came out to see them start. The farmer gathered up the reins, and with a jerk said, "Dick, go 'long!" But Dick didn't "go long." The whip cracked about the pony's ears, and he shouted, "Dick, you rascal, get up!" It availed not. Then came down the whip with a heavy hand, but the stubborn beast only shook his head slowly. A stout lad came out and seized the bridle, and pulled and yanked and kicked the rebellious pony but not a step would he move.

At this crisis a sweet voice said, "Willie, don't do so." The voice was quickly recognized. And now the magic hand was laid on the neck of the seemingly incorrigible animal, and a simple low word was spoken. Instantly the rigid muscles relaxed, and the air of stubbornness vanished. "Poor Dick," and she stroked and patted softly his neck with the child-like hand. "Now, go 'long you naughty fellow," in a half chiding, but in a tender voice, as she drew gently on the bridle. The pony turned and rubbed his nose against her arm for a moment, and started off at a cheerful trot, and there was no further trouble that day.

The stranger remarked to the farmer, "What wonderful power that hand possesses!" The reply was, "Oh, she's good. Everybody and everything loves her."