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DANISH JUSTICE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

A war was raging between England and France.—Bonaparte had broken the treaty of Amiens. All the Englishmen living in India were perplexed and anxious; some for the fate of their richly laden vessels, and some on the subject of their safe return to their native land.

Among the last I found myself. I sought a long time for some vessel belonging to a neutral power, in which I might sail, and at length was so fortunate as to engage a passage in a Danish ship.

In all points where luxury was the question, this ship appeared to me far behind those belonging to the East India Company; but it was a better sailer, and in discipline was equal to an English man-of-war.

I could not have believed so much order, regularity, and blind obedience, could have been enforced in a merchant ship.

The first lieutenant was one of the finest looking men I have ever seen. For the rank to which he had been promoted, without the ordinary previous steps, he owed less to the circumstance of his being the son of the owner than to his uncommon fitness for the place.

The only bad man we had on board was the cook, a Portuguese by birth, sun-burned and of a dark and lowering aspect, and his greatest delight seemed to be in breeding dissensions among the crew. His malignity of character had often brought punishment upon him, and one evening, about the middle of the voyage, he had been condemned by the first lieutenant to be put in irons for attempting to poison one of the crew.

No positive proof of the poisoning could be found, and although all were well convinced of his guilt, he was released without further punishment; but his malignant character was highly exasperated, and he swore to be revenged on the lieutenant.

One fine evening, the lieutenant came up with his beautiful young wife, to walk on the quarter-deck. They stopped to watch the flying-fish, and admire the serene water and bright blue sky, when suddenly, before any one was aware of his intention, the cook rushed forward and plunged his knife deep into the heart of the young husband. He sank dead on the deck, and the Portuguese sent forth a shrill, fiendish laugh.

The bereaved bride sank fainting beside the murdered body, and the warm blood from his heart streamed over her marble neck and face.

The captain had been called, and came rushing to the quarter-deck. When he saw the body of the lieutenant he wept like a child, for he loved him like a son.

The crew were fearfully incensed, and would have torn the murderer in pieces, if the captain had not interfered, and ordered him to be laid in chains and kept for a fair trial.

The corpse was carried to the hold, and the young widow was carried to her berth without the least returning consciousness.

At eight o'clock in the evening I received an invitation to the quarter-deck. I followed the messenger, and found the officers, passengers, and crew of the vessel assembled. The sailors, all dressed in their Sunday clothes, were ranged on each side of the deck. The captain, surrounded by his officers, stood on the poop. The corpse of the murdered man, stretched on a board, lay before them, covered with a national flag. The silence of death reigned around. The sun, near the horizon, lighted the group with its parting rays. The sails hung on the masts without motion.—I joined the group of passengers. No one spoke a word.

The silence at length was broken by the sound of feet, and the larboard watch appeared marching slowly to the quarter-deck, holding their short sabres in their hands. They were the escort of the murderer. The officers formed two lines with the captain at the head, facing the approaching procession.

We looked at each other without speaking a word. What was about to be done? We looked one after another up to the highest mast, expecting to see a noose prepared for executing the criminal; for we knew that in the Danish criminal process no time is lost, but condemnation and execution are very near each other.

The second lieutenant read the regulations, by which a captain of a ship had full power to try, condemn, and punish the sailors, for crimes committed on board, during the voyage.

He asked the criminal if his trial should be conducted in the Danish language. He made no objection, and the court was opened.

Previous to examining the witness the flag was removed from the corpse, and a visible shudder shook the murderer when he saw the calm, almost heavenly, expression of the victim's face.

The trial was conducted in the simplest manner possible.—There were many witnesses of the murder, and the crime was fully proved.

The blood ran cold in my veins when the knife was produced, and the criminal sent forth another of his fiendish laughs at sight of his victim's blood, which covered it from point to handle.

After the witness had been examined, the officers declared the cook guilty of murder, and the captain covered his head and read the sentence.