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THE HOPE OF LEASCOMBE;
OR,
THE CONSTANT ONE.

A TALE OF THE SEA.

(From the N. Y. Metropolitan Record.)

CHAPTER III.

Next day, a room adjacent to that of Mrs. Desmond—a charming room beautifully furnished—was given to Sophy, or Miss Lester, as she was usually called. She had, too, a lady's maid placed entirely at her orders. Her mother's apartment was selected as near to her as possible. Mrs. Lester felt as if in a dream. She could hardly be brought to understand the truth at first, so bewildered were the circumstances. But how the poor widow rejoiced when she became a little calmer? Her dearest hopes were more than realized, and the future of her Sophy was now brilliant indeed.

Mrs. Desmond herself undertook the finishing of Sophy's education. They devoted nearly the whole day to study in common; and the widow was surprised to find, that if she could teach Sophy some things, she in return could teach her many others. In return for music and singing, she imparted to her a taste for certain authors, which had hitherto been to her as sealed books. It was doubly delightful to read them since they were Henry's!

Another letter came from him, dated Calcutta, saying that he was going a voyage as second mate to the South Seas; and in this there occurred the following singular passage: 'Should you have an opportunity, make inquiries as to the health of a Sir Edward and Lady Templeton, and their daughter, Mrs. Desmond. But as you love my peace and happiness do not betray my having evidenced any interest in them. They were kind to me when I was young; but I shall never see them again, for reasons known only to myself. Still, I should be glad to know that they are well.' This paragraph caused deep grief to all—to Sophy more than any one, as it seemed to denote a feeling somewhat difficult to be conquered, and a headstrong character of rather unpromising tone. Still, they all lived in hope.

Sophy pursued her accomplishments with activity, taking a great delight especially in music, for which she had an excellent ear. She did not neglect the children, although they had, for form's sake, another governess. They were in a great degree a happy and united family, though anxiety for the return of the young Hope of Leascombe caused many moments of pain and sorrow; the more that from that day they had no more letters, nor any tidings of the vessel in which Henry sailed from Calcutta. They made every inquiry—they wrote to merchants and agents; and then, at the end of sixteen months, the ship was reported missing. Again there were sorrow and mourning in that house. No one gave up all hope, but they could not have much faith in the future. They began to fear at last, that either Henry was lost, or that he was captured by some of the roving privateers of the French.

CHAPTER IV.

The schooner *William Pitt* left Calcutta with an assorted cargo, to trade in the South Seas. It was not a large vessel, and had few hands. There was the skipper, a mate, a second mate, and four men, a boy serving as steward and cook. They were well armed as they expected to deal with the natives, who were then very apt to take violent possession of articles intended for barter. Besides, they intended to do a little smuggling on the South American coast, if possible—this being in fact the real, the other rather the ostensible object of the voyage. But this was known only to the skipper and an illiterate sailor, who owed his post of first mate to his being the skipper's brother. Harvey had been taken more for his scientific knowledge than for anything else. His place, therefore, was pleasant enough; as the others, having to trust their movements entirely to him, showed him great deference and attention. He had none of the hard labor of the ship-board duties, being, in fact, more like the captain than the owner himself.

They sailed from Calcutta just after the April monsoon, along the coast of Sumatra and Java, worked round by Borneo and then made for New Zealand, touching at all these places; they afterwards visited the Tonga and Marquesas Islands—the whole occupying about five months. At this juncture—they were about to sail from one of the Society Islands—the skipper called a solemn cabinet council; present himself, his brother, and William Harvey, as he was here called.

'Now, messmates,' said he, 'fill your pannikins, and stand by for a bit of a yarn. You see, we've been knocking about these five months, a doing just nothing at all—but that's neither here nor there. It ain't cost much for victuals, as

I've done a pretty good trade with the savages. But now I've got fresh ground. I'm a going to do a stroke of serious business. The Spaniards ain't easy to trade with, because they have laws and a lingo I don't understand; but I've got a good cargo below of tobacco, silks, tea, coffee—things as will do, some for one place, and some for another. But if I goes and pays duty for these things, it ain't worth my while, I might as well sail for Lunnun. But now, my boys, I once was a mate in a slaver—but that's not now—and I learned a deal at that trade. I know one or two nice little bays, where we can run in and lie snug, and do a little business. Here is my brother speaks Spanish better than e'er a Don of them. So what say you, William?—Will you go with us, and lead the men?'

'I will go myself, and answer for the men,' replied Harvey, quickly. 'I'm not fond of any governments; and I can see no harm in doing business against the laws of Spain.'

'Spoken like a man, say I!' exclaimed the skipper, by name Red Thorn. 'But why are you so confident about the men?'

'Because they would follow me anywhere.—Didn't I pick the crew myself? They'd throw you overboard if I told them to do so,' said William Harvey, quietly.

'The duce they would!' cried the startled skipper. 'Ha, ha, ha! I like that though; hang me if I don't. You're the sort of a chap for us. So, now, just push off the course to Valdivia. Hanged if I know where it is; but I know it when I see it.'

'Very good, sir,' said William Harvey quietly. 'I'll see exactly to-morrow. How's her head?' This was shouted to the man at the wheel.

'Sou-west, sir.'

'Put her at south until midnight, and then south east,' replied William Harvey.

'What a head he has got!' exclaimed the skipper, holding up his hands in amazement, and opening his eyes wide; for he himself, Harvey was already aware, knew nothing of navigation. This was his first voyage; and how he ventured out under such circumstances was a mystery.—Harvey had shipped mysteriously. He had left his own vessel from some difference with his captain, and was doing nothing, when one night a man called upon him, and declared himself to be in want of a second mate who knew navigation well, and could, in fact, take charge of a vessel at need. He had heard that William Harvey was his man, and offered him good wages for himself and any four men who would join.—He wished, he said, to sail secretly, to avoid certain formalities and dues; so he lay concealed in a creek, known only to himself. If, then, the young man accepted his offer, he must come on board at midnight.

Harvey agreed at once. The affair pleased him. He was pleased at the secrecy, and even by the suspicious aspect of the whole matter, it looked piratical. But since the young man, in a fit of passion, had thrown off the yoke of discipline, he tried to blind himself to his own errors, by throwing the blame on the captain, the government, the laws—on anything rather than his own headstrongness. He took a kind of fierce delight in defying the law. At midnight, he was at the boat with four of his comrades, whom he had tempted away from the ship he had himself left. They found the skipper waiting for them. No words passed; they entered the boat, and pushed off. The four men began at once to pull, while the stranger steered. Harvey, who had taken a brace of pistols under his top coat, sat near the skipper. It was a dark and windy night; but the man seemed to know his way. For four hours he advanced, until at last he bade them pull gently, and suddenly entered a narrow creek, the entrance of which was all but invisible. It was very narrow indeed.—They did not proceed far before they saw a light and then heard a cry.

'Who goes there?'

'Red Thorn,' replied the skipper, 'with a jolly crew. All right.'

In an instant they were alongside a schooner, which rode with bare poles in that secluded spot, surrounded by trees and jungle. They were glad enough to get on board; and as soon as they had enjoyed a hearty supper, they retired to rest. At a very early hour, however, they were roused up to haul the vessel out of its strange dock. This was effected with some difficulty; but all was happily got over, and at length they were in the open sea.

The ship boy was about sixteen, and a greater slave never trod a deck. The captain was brutish in his manners, but evidently a coward; so he lavished his ferocity on the poor lad, who was driven bitter and thither by his master like a patient dog. He worked night and day, and never grumbled. The captain would constantly threaten to shoot him like a dog. William Harvey pitied him; but he knew himself. He knew that if he interfered, and the captain hesitated to acquiesce in his desires there would be a scene and a quarrel, and he could not trust his

own temper; so he shut his eyes to the other's bad conduct, and contented himself with the feeling, that he was exercising a laudable self-denial in not interfering with the captain, whom he had no right to school. He was himself uniformly kind to the lad, by whom he was beloved as by the men.

This was the state of affairs at the moment when they turned their heads towards Valdivia, a place they were never destined to reach.

CHAPTER V.

A few days later, the wind suddenly increased to a gale, and they found themselves obliged to take in nearly all sail. It was clear to William Harvey from the first, that they were about to pass through a severe storm—and he told the skipper so. Thorn turned very pale. Although an old sailor, he was obviously a coward, at least, although he had scarcely ever shown any unmanly fear before, during the whole of this voyage he seemed to be afflicted by a sudden and unaccountable timidity. 'I leave it all in your hands,' he said quickly.

'I will do what is in my power,' replied Harvey.

Thorn did not reply, but went below with his brother, drank with him nervously whole goblets of raw rum, and then they both turned in, leaving everything to our young hero, the four men, and the boy.

'A bad-looking sky, sir,' said the boy timidly. He was standing by Harvey on the quarter-deck.

'Very bad, Bob: I don't half like it; but please God, we'll get over it.'

'I don't know. I never thought we'd ever end this voyage well,' mused the boy.

'Why so, Bob?'

'I don't know. I suppose it's only an idea. But I never did.'

'Nonsense. Because you got blowed up a bit, you think it must end badly. Mind your helm, Peters; keep her straight before it.'

The gust increased, grew more violent every moment, and soon became almost a hurricane.—The sky was black as night, although lurid flashes of lightning illumined the scene every five minutes, seeming to burst from clouds over their heads. The sea came rolling on now in vast billows, then breaking in short waves. Some of these swept the deck, and forced all to lay hold of the first ropes they could catch to preserve their footing. The wind howled demoniacally in the rigging, and came with sudden gusts or blasts that threatened to lay the schooner every moment on her beam ends.

William Harvey kept his eye about him everywhere, and looked anxiously now at the masts working wildly in their sockets, now at the shrouds and stays. 'We must lie to close haul,' he said to Peters. At that instant, a wave of vast dimensions came rushing in, dashed against the starboard bulwarks, broke and fell with awful force on the deck, binding Harvey for a moment, and forcing him to look only to his own preservation. He shook himself, and stood erect to view the evil done. The mainmast was over the side; the vessel had been almost submerged by the mere weight of the wave; and Bob lay senseless in a flood of water by the lee-scuppers. Having raised him up, his next act was to rush with an ax to the larboard rigging, which he cut away, so that the mast lay completely free overboard, dragging behind.—He then turned to Bob, who was recovering from the stunning blow he had received. He laid him down on a spare sail, and examined his wound. It was simply a great bruise, but not likely to be dangerous.

'I know'd it, I know'd it,' he muttered, as he recovered himself. 'We shall never get home; murder never prospers!'

'Murder! what mean you?' cried Harvey in a low tone.

'I don't care if he does kill me—I will tell,' groaned the boy. 'I've always wished to, but he swore he'd murder me too.'

'Peters, keep a sharp look-out. That puff was, I think, the worst of it. I shall go below for half an hour with Bob in the fore-castle.—Call me if there's the least change.'

'Ay, ay, sir!' said Peters. Harvey saw at once that the worst of the gale was over. He wished to have taken measures to have saved the mainmast, but he deferred that until he had heard the boy's confession. He aided him, then, below, and laying him in his berth, bade him speak. And this was the boy's story.

The real name of the schooner, *William Pitt* was the *Ganges*, and she was usually devoted to the coasting trade. She had been built for commerce between Calcutta and Bombay, and was the property of one Matthew Finlayson, who also, like a thrifty Scotchman, commanded his own vessel. He had made in his time much money, and purposed retiring shortly from active business, and giving up the concern to Thorn, the mate. But it seemed this did not suit both worthy's purposes. He knew that Finlayson always kept his cash about him, and conceived a

desire to obtain possession not only of the other's vessel, but his fortune. For this purpose, he allied himself with his brother, who was always his companion, and together they determined to effect their purpose, no matter by what means. The *Ganges* was fitted out for the voyage to Bombay in the creek already alluded to—her conduct not being exactly within the strict letter of the law—and her crew was already chosen, and had received orders to join their vessel at a certain fixed date. Three days before, Thorn rose early one morning and went ashore, accompanied by his brother. They made for the cabin inhabited by Matthew Finlayson, and knocking were admitted. The boy rose himself and let them in, while the skipper asked them what they wanted.

'You!' said Thorn giving him a sudden blow upon the head with a heavy stick, that stretched him lifeless on the floor. The brother gave him a second blow as severe, and the victim never moved afterwards.

'Let us kill the youngster,' said the brother. 'No! I want him. He's a good cook,' said Thorn. 'Now, you young rascal,' added he, 'none of your nonsense. If ever you speak of this, I'll serve you as I have served him.'

The boy vowed to be true and faithful, frightened as he was, and then went on board with them. Thorn set out immediately for Calcutta, while his brother remained behind to guard the ship and the boy. The next night the new skipper returned with her crew, and the schooner sailed.

CHAPTER VI.

William Harvey sat like one in a dream when the boy had finished his story. And this was the end of his youthful career? His headstrong folly had brought him in league with robbers and assassins. He was liable at any moment to be taken up, not only for being in a ship without papers, sailing under a false name, but as a pirate and thief. His whole life flashed before him; his foolish defiance of his venerable and really kind superior officer—his quarrel with his father—his abandonment of home—his second quarrel with the merchant captain; and he felt sick.—But he resolved now, right or wrong—and here he acted with his usual impetuosity—to have no future connection with such ruffians as those by whom he was now commanded.

'Come on deck, Bob,' he said to the boy.—'You feel better now. But tell me, if I defend you against this man, will you be true to me?'

'Mr. Harvey, I will be your slave,' began Bob.

'I don't want a slave: I want a good and obedient boy,' said Harvey. 'Now follow me and go call the captain.'

The young man went on deck, followed by the trembling boy. Shortly after, Harvey went quietly below, and armed himself with a cutlass and a pair of pistols. He then sternly bade the men go do the same. They asked no questions, but all, save the man at the wheel, did as they were bid.

'Tell the skipper and his brother,' said William, 'that they must come on deck instantly.'

The storm still raged, but with somewhat less fury than before, the wind having abated somewhat, but not the waves. The sky was still dark and gloomy, clouds still coursed along the heavens, and lightning occasionally flashed.—Nowhere was there the slightest sign of land or of human aid, and the schooner was all but disabled.

At this juncture, the skipper and his brother, uttering horrid oaths, came tumbling up the companion-way.

'Why, what's the matter now, that a fellow must be roused out of his sleep?' began Thorn.

'The matter is, that I arrest you both as murderers and pirates!' said Harvey, collaring the skipper, and clapping a pistol to his breast, while the men instinctively imitated him.

'That's you, you young serpent!' exclaimed Thorn, who turned ghastly pale but offered no resistance. 'Jack was right—I should have cracked your head too.'

'There, master, you bear,' said Bob retreating.

'What you have said,' continued William Harvey sternly, 'is proof enough of what I arrest you for. My men, I take these two fellows into custody for the wilful murder of Matthew Finlayson, and for running away piratically with his ship. And me first to secure them, and I will then explain all.'

They made no resistance; they held down their heads, and suffered themselves to be manacled without a word. William Harvey, capturing them thus on the high seas, after so many months, in a fearful storm, seemed a kind of judgment upon them for their sins; and they felt already as if they had the fatal rope round their necks.

They were placed in a small open space in the hold, where Bob and one of the men had previously lain, while Harvey took possession of their cabin. He first addressed the crew in a

brief speech, told the terrible tale that Bob had communicated to him, and then warned them of the fearful consequences that might have ensued had they rendered themselves in any way the accomplices of the criminals. He undertook to take them home to Calcutta, there to throw themselves on the mercy of the law, and to give up the guilty to justice.

The men with one accord agreed to trust entirely to him, and to follow him, if need be, to the end of the world.

Harvey thanked them, and expressed his conviction that they would be rewarded instead of punished for their conduct. He then directed the mast, the storm having now completely abated, to be fished up from alongside, so that they might try and replace it in some fashion.—For this purpose, he proposed to put into one of the islands they had left behind them, and there refit and prepare in every way for the journey home. The unfortunate schooner was accordingly fitted with jury-masts, and turned in the direction of the nearest island that its young commander found on the map.

The breeze was now warm and genial, and brought to them pleasing feelings after the excitement of the last few days. The prisoners were allowed to come on deck, with a strict injunction to confine their conversation to one another, as Harvey feared that, with their wily tongues and stores of gold, they might tamper with the men.

This order was obeyed with reluctance, as the society of fellow criminals is never very pleasant or agreeable. But William Harvey felt no merciful feelings towards them. He could not but feel ashamed of much in the past, but he still laid more to the fault of others than to himself.

They were but seven days' easy sail from the island selected, and accordingly on the sixth they began keeping strict watch. It had been agreed that two men should keep watch in turn, although, in the event of rough weather, the prisoners, under careful precautions, were to be called on to work for their lives. There were many necessary things, too, to do, that Harvey ordered them to perform, under the penalty of stopping their meals. They sullenly acquiesced, utterly subjugated by the commanding tones of the young officer.

He was on deck with one man and the boy on the morning of the seventh day, and had announced that about twelve he expected to see land. At that hour, Peters came up with his watch to dinner, which Bob was diligently preparing.

'Bob!' exclaimed the captain suddenly, who had a telescope in his hand—'go aloft.'

The boy ran up the fore-rigging with extreme agility.

'Now look out about north-west!' cried Harvey, pointing in that direction with his glass.

'Ay, ay, sir.'

'Do you see anything?'

'The men come crowding up in a state of great anxiety.'

'No, sir.'

'Look again.'

'Land, ho! I see it—a little bill popping up like a cloud out of the water!' screamed the boy with delight, while the three men whistled their admiration of their young commander's accuracy and ability.

'Excellent, Bob! Now, come down, and give us dinner, after which, we'll splice the mainbrace.'

Bob came down quite elated, handed out the boiled fish and peas, which they were about to eat on the deck, took the prisoners their portion, who sat amidships, smoking sullenly, and then relieved the man at the wheel, a task he was always fond of. Harvey gave him strict injunctions to keep steadily his course, and then sat quietly down to his dinner. He added a bottle or two of some good wine that had been usually drunk at the captain's table, and thus cautiously helping himself and the men, kept them talking and chatting for a couple of hours. He then rose to his feet.

'There! the island, my boys,' he said, as they followed his example. About five miles distant, lay a small island, green grassy, but not very elevated out of the water. There was a hill in the middle, but not a lofty one, and this was covered with trees. It looked pleasant, cheerful and welcome enough; so the men hailed their arrival with three cheers. 'I don't know about its inhabitants,' continued Harvey; 'so arm yourselves, and uncover the swivel, of which I declare Bob is the captain. But, now, mark me—no bad conduct with the natives, or we shall get the worst of it. We are few in number, and must be very cautious. You have behaved like men, and I hope I shall be able to report the same at home.'

The crew cheered him heartily, promising to obey him still, and Harvey felt the advantage of having selected four steady, well-behaved, docile men. He had chosen them because they were