

COLONIAL PEARL.

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION.

Published every Friday evening, at 17s. 6d. per Annum.

VOLUME THREE.

FRIDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1899.

NUMBER THIRTY-EIGHT.

FIGHT BETWEEN A TURKISH AND GREEK VESSEL.

Miaulis gave the word to clear for action, and two nine-pounders on the fore-castle were brought to bear upon the Turk. He did not seem, however, to relish these distant hostilities, or the ignominy of retreating; but seeing that he was fully equal to us, and that there was no prospect of his being overpowered by the other vessels of the Greeks coming up; as the breeze was dying away, and they far astern, he gallantly hauled to the wind, clewed up his courses, hoisting at the same time his blood-red ensign, calmly awaited our approach.

Miaulis now briefly but emphatically addressed his men; they were mostly islanders, natives of Hydra and Ipsara, good seamen and brave fellows, and they answered him with cheers. It was evident, however, from the equality of force, and the gallant bearing of the Turk, that the action would be obstinate and bloody. We still kept bearing steadily down, the guns were cast loose, the boarding-pikes were arranged, and the men stood silently at their quarters, while old Miaulis, firm and collected, kept pacing slowly the quarter-deck, the captain, an old follower, and a lieutenant, standing by to execute his orders. Topmen were now sent aloft to roeve double lifts, and preventer braces, and thus secure the yards. We were now within range of the ordinary metal of a sloop of war, and Miaulis immediately trimmed sails and altered his course, so as to traverse the enemy's course in a slanting direction. We had no sooner done this, than the Turk, who had evidently only reserved his fire till he thought he could do more execution, fired an ill-directed broadside, which did us little or no mischief. Our courses were now hauled up, and as the smoke rolled away, we had an uninterrupted view of our antagonist. She was a fine-looking corvette, apparently with a flush deck, presenting ten glittering brass cannon at a side; there was also a long brass swivel-piece amidships; her decks were densely crowded—indeed her crew must have outnumbered ours by more than half—their sabres and boarding-pikes glittered in the sun, and Miaulis felt certain that, with such a force, the infidels would try to carry us by the board, for which the Turks are nearly as formidable as the English, and therefore had invited us to close action.

Miaulis now determined on his tactics; the larboard guns were instantly loaded with grape and canister; and, with the starboard, the men were told to take steady aim at the masts and rigging. We were now within half cable's length, and Miaulis gave the word, "Fire!" At the same moment we received the broadside of the infidel, which killed a man at the gun I was standing near, and gave severe splinter wounds to several; a few suppressed groans were alone heard. The smoke rolled away, and Miaulis had the satisfaction of seeing that our fire had brought down the enemy's fore-topsail yard, which hung in the slings. In a moment he was up in the wind, and taken aback, and the confusion of the Turks was extreme.

"Ready about!" cried old Miaulis, leaping from the carronade slide, on which he had raised himself, and perceiving in an instant the situation of the enemy; "round with her, and stand steady to give the infidels a taste of our Grecian grape."

We ranged across the bows of the Turk, and ere he could recover himself, raked him with a broadside of these destructive missiles: the yell which rose from his crowded deck told its deadly effect. The Turk now managed to pay off, and gave us a partial broadside; but from the want of head-sail he broached to again next minute; and, once more, with a terrible discharge of grape and canister, we raked his decks fore and aft. We hove-to, and taking up our position on his bow, poured in broadside after broadside in quick succession. The main topmast of the infidels now fell over the side; but she fell off from the wind at the same time his broadside was brought to bear, and he obstinately renewed the engagement, and kept up a very heavy fire for some time; but our vessel had suffered but little in her rigging, so that we were in a condition to work round our antagonist, and we soon had dismounted several of his guns: the rest were but ill directed and badly served, and we soon had reduced him to a few random shots. He was at last silenced, and lay upon the waters a helpless and disabled wreck. Still he made no signs of striking; the Turkish ensign yet hung, though rent in ribbons from the peak; and as Miaulis did not think himself justified in daring to board, we continued to pour in broadside after broadside, without calling forth any further notice from the Turks. At last we observed a small Greek flag waving over the hammock nettings; and taking this for a signal of surrender, Miaulis steered closer to our antagonist, who was now evidently sinking, and a

boat being lowered down, the lieutenant and myself, with about a dozen men, leaped into it, and rowed on board the corvette.

On reaching her deck, a sight the most revolting and terrible I ever beheld was presented to me; the skippers literally ran with blood; the bulwarks were bespattered with brains and pieces of scalp; severed limbs were strewn about, and the entire decks covered with the dead or dying. The few wretches, not more than a dozen, who survived this carnage, rushed below as we gained the deck, with the exception of a haughty Mussulman, who stood aft, waving with fierce gestures his scimitar, while with the other hand he held the line by which the ensign was suspended; his rich garb and jewelled ataghan bespoke him the commander; and I was rushing forward with the rest, to contend for the honour of taking him, and hauling down the Turkish ensign, when a low moaning caught my ear, and stumbling over the prostrate bodies of the slain, my leg was clasped by some one lying amongst them. With a blow of my sabre I was about to shake off the encumbrance, when looking downward, who do I behold!—my lost preserver and faithful servant, Nicolo Vasi, blackened and disfigured, lying amongst a group of captive Greeks, chained to a dismantled gun; the small Greek flag which we had seen was in his grasp. To seize a handspike, prise up the gun-carriage, and loose the fetters of the unhappy boy, was about the work of a moment; he was free, and I was turning to look aft, where the desperate Mussulman, with his back to the taffrail, was engaged in a fierce encounter, keeping at bay all his assailants, when Nicolo seized me by the hand, and pulled me to the gangway. "Save yourself—O save yourself!" cried the boy, as with a violent effort he flung me overboard with himself; the next moment I was struggling in the sea, just as, with a terrific explosion, the Turkish corvette blew up.

It appeared, the Turks who survived the action, in consequence of a previous resolution, had blown themselves up sooner than surrender—a practice which, however desperate, is by no means uncommon in their naval history, and thus, for the second time, was the faithful Nicolo the preserver of my life.

* Numbers of Greek captives were found in this condition on board the Turkish ships at Navarino.

ST. EUSTACHE.

BY CAPTAIN MARRYAT.

Captain Marryat happened to be in Canada at the breaking out of the late miserable insurrection, and he accompanied our troops to St. Eustache. The account of his short campaign is dreadful.

On the morning of the — the ice on the branch of the Ottawa river which we had to cross, being considered sufficiently strong to bear the weight of the artillery, the whole force marched out, under the command of Sir John Colborne in person, to reduce the insurgents, who had fortified themselves at St. Eustache and St. Benoit, two towns of some magnitude in the district of Bois Brulé. The snow, as I before observed, lay very deep; but by the time we started, the road had been well beaten down by the multitude which had preceded us.

The effect of the whole line of troops, in their fur caps and great coats, with the trains of artillery, ammunition, and baggage-waggons, as they wound along the snow-white road, was very beautiful. It is astonishing how much more numerous the force, and how much larger the men and horses appeared to be, from the strong contrast of their colours with the wide expanse of snow.

As we passed one of the branches of the Ottawa, one of the ammunition waggons falling through the ice, the horses were immediately all but choaked by the drivers—a precaution which was novel to me, and a singular method of saving their lives: but such was the case: the air within them, rarified by heat, inflated their bodies like balloons, and they floated high on the water. In this state they were easily disengaged from their traces, and hauled out upon the ice; the cords which had nearly strangled them were then removed, and, in a few minutes, they recovered sufficiently to be led to the shore.

Let it not be supposed that I am about to write a regular despatch. I went out with the troops, but was of about as much use as the fifth wheel of a coach; with the exception, that as I rode one of Sir John Colborne's horses, I was, perhaps, so far supplying the place of a groom who was better employed.

The town of St. Eustache is very prettily situated on the high banks of the river, the most remarkable object being the Catholic church, a very large massive building, raised about two hundred yards from the river side, upon a commanding situation. This

church the insurgents had turned into a fortress, and perhaps, for a fortress "d'occasion," there never was one so well calculated for a vigorous defence, it being flanked by two long stone-built houses, and protected in the rear by several lines of high and strong palisades, running down into the river. The troops halted about three hundred yards from the town, to reconnoitre; the artillery were drawn up and opened their fire, but chiefly with a view that the enemy, by returning the fire, might demonstrate their force and position. These being ascertained, orders were given by Sir John Colborne, so that in a short time the whole town would be invested by the troops. The insurgents perceiving this, many of them escaped, some through the town, others by the frozen river. Those who crossed on the ice were chased by the volunteer dragoons, and the slipping and tumbling of the pursued and the pursuers, afforded as much merriment as interest; so true it is, that anything ludicrous will make one laugh, in opposition to the feelings of sympathy, anxiety, and fear. Some of the runaways were cut down, and many more taken prisoners.

As soon as that portion of the troops which had entered the town and marched up the main street toward the church, arrived within half-musket shot, they were received with a smart volley, which was fired from the large windows of the church, and which wounded a few of the men. The soldiers were then ordered to make their approaches under cover of the houses; and the artillery being brought up, commenced firing upon the church: but the walls of the building were much too solid for the shot to make any impression, and had the insurgents stood firm they certainly might have given a great deal of trouble, and probably have occasioned a severe loss of men; but they became alarmed, and fired one of the houses which abutted upon and flanked the church,—this they did with the view of escaping under cover of the smoke. In a few minutes the church itself was obscured by the volumes of smoke thrown out; and at the same time that the insurgents were escaping, the troops marched up and surrounded the church. The poor wretches attempted to get away, either singly or by twos and threes; but the moment they appeared, a volley was discharged, and they fell. Every attempt was made by the officers to make prisoners, but with indifferent success; indeed, such was the exasperation of the troops at the murder of Lieut Weir, that it was a service of danger to attempt to save the life of one of these poor deluded creatures. The fire from the house soon communicated to the church. Chenier, the leader, with ten others, the remnant of the insurgents who were in the church, rushed out; there was one tremendous volley, and all was over.

By this time many other parts of the town were on fire, and there was every prospect of the whole of it being burnt down, leaving no quarters for the soldiers to protect them during the night. The attention of everybody was therefore turned to prevent the progress of the flames. Some houses were pulled down, so as to cut off the communication with the houses in the centre of the town, and in these houses the troops were billeted off. The insurgents had removed their families, and most of their valuables and furniture, before our arrival; but in one house were the commissariat stores, consisting of carcasses of all the cattle, sheep, pigs, &c., which they had taken from the loyal farmers; there was a very large supply, and the soldiers were soon cooking in all directions. The roll was called, men mustered, and order established.

The night was bitterly cold: the sky was clear, and the moon near to her full: houses were still burning in every direction, but they were as mere satellites to the lofty church, which was now one blaze of fire, and throwing out volumes of smoke, which passed over the face of the bright moon, and gave to her a lurid reddish tinge, as if she too had assisted in these deeds of blood. The distant fires scattered over the whole landscape, which was one snow-wreath; the whirling of the smoke from the houses which were burning close to us, and which, from the melting of the snow, were surrounded by pools of water, reflecting the fierce yellow flames, mingled with the pale beams of the bright moon—this, altogether, presented a beautiful, novel, yet melancholy panorama. I thought it might represent, in miniature, the burning of Moscow.

About midnight, when all was quiet, I walked up to the church, in company with one of Sir John Colborne's aides-de-camp: the roof had fallen, and the flames had subsided for want of further aliment. As we passed by a house which had just taken fire, we heard a cry, and, on going up, found a poor wounded Canadian, utterly incapable of moving, whom the flames had just reached in a few minutes he would have been burned alive: we dragged him out, and gave him in charge of the soldiers, who carried him to the hospital.