

LITTLE JARVIS.

A STORY FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS.

(CONTINUED.)

Nothing could be seen on deck except the constant deadly flash of the guns as they were rapidly fired. Up on his perch Jarvis could hear the frightful thunder of the guns, the hoarse orders of the officers, the fierce cheering of the men as every shot struck the Frenchman's hull, the sudden, wild shriek of a wounded man, and the cries of the Frenchmen, who fought their ship bravely and skilfully, but who found, as others did later, that there was no standing up against the matchless gunnery of the Americans.

"I allers said that 'ere little reefer didn't have no more dodge in him than the main-mast," said Jack Bell to the men in the top, watching little Jarvis, who couldn't do any fighting, but who was cheering as loud as anybody and waving his dirk frantically.

"Give it to her, men!" bawled Jarvis, entirely forgetting that there was no more chance of his chirp being heard than of a sea-gull's cry in the roar of battle. "Let her have it! Hooray, hooray!"

For three long hours of the moonlit night the battle raged. The Frenchmen had the loss of the Insurgente to avenge, and the Americans were inspired by remembering that, with the same ship and the same captain, they had been victorious in one of the greatest single-ship fights ever fought, and against one of the most gallant enemies in the world. Part of the time both ships were running free, side by side, exchanging broadsides, but at last the Constellation shot ahead, and, luffing up short under the bows of the Vengeance, was ready with every gun to rake her. The Frenchman, terribly disabled and his decks encumbered with his wounded, made a desperate effort to sheer off, but the Constellation only moved up closer for a yard-arm-and-yard-arm fight. One by one the guns of the Vengeance were being silenced, her decks were running with blood, and she rolled a helpless hulk in the trough of the sea. But the brave Frenchmen gave no sign of surrender and apparently were determined to go down with their ship. Three times had her ensign been shot away, and twice had a young French sailor sprung aloft, braving the fire of the American sharpshooters, to lash another tricolor to the mast, for there were no halyards left to run a flag up on. As he went up the first time, with the flag wrapped round his neck, the sulphurous smoke was drifted in a sudden gust of wind, and Jarvis, with all the men in the top, saw him plainly in bright moonlight. Jack Bell raised his musket to fire at him, but Jarvis laid his hand upon the sailor's shoulder.

"Don't, Bell! he's such a brave fellow," he said.

"It would be a pity to kill that 'ere chapnow," said Jack, nevertheless keeping his musket at his shoulder. "E'll be a sailor sure enough one o' these days, when he's growed up, if I let him be."

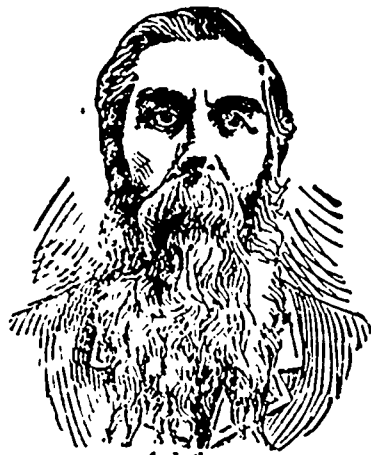
The young sailor, who saw Jack Bell deliberately taking aim at him, took off his cap and waved it defiantly before he lashed the flag to the mast, amid wild cheering from his comrades on the Vengeance. But when he saw Jarvis's gesture, and that Jack Bell did not fire, he lifted his cap, and bowed and smiled. Jarvis was delighted, and lifted his cap too.

"Lord, Lord!" said Jack Bell shaking his head solemnly, "may be we ain't a-fightin' for our lives and our countries, and these 'ere planks that is all we've got between we and Davy Jones. May be we're at a dancing-school, where we larns manners and sich."

The second time the ensign was shot away the young sailor climbed up

again to replace it. This time he waved the flag at Jarvis, and Jarvis took off his cap and waved it round and round a dozen times in response. The third time the flag disappeared there was no one to replace it. The young sailor lay dead in his blood on the deck of the Vengeance, and so many of her men were killed and wounded that there were scarcely enough left to work those of her guns that were not disabled. But the Frenchmen stood gallantly to their ship, the officers encouraging the men by word and by example. Little Jarvis saw a grizzled officer, bareheaded, his face grimed with blood and powder, and one epaulet gone, rush up to a gun, of which half the crew lay dead around it, and with the help of several other officers the gun was manned, and well manned, for an instant later a double shot came crashing through the Constellation's rigging and struck the mainmast. A shout went up from below as the mast tottered, and the men rushed aloft to secure it. But it was too late. As the tall mast swayed frantically, Jack Bell turned to little Jarvis and said, coolly:

"Mr. Jarvis, she's a-goin'!"
(TO BE CONTINUED.)



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