

were disposed to act in the matter. The cowardly curs had thrown themselves flat down on the deck and refused to stir. Michael Bland, though no one but the captain ever thought of calling him that—he was always known as Mike—and Tom Choate were sent forward to man the guns at the bow, and in passing they slyly dealt a few hearty kicks to the Chinese, by way of encouragement. Jack volunteered to see to the working of one gun, and the mate took charge of the other. The officers stood with their swords in their hands and their revolvers, ready for action. The engineer and his assistant carried powder and shot from below, and in a few moments the two cannons were been worked briskly, considerably to the injury of three huge junks, which had beaten their way round the points of the neighbouring islands and were now bearing down on the steamer. The fight raged sharply for fifteen or twenty minutes, till the junks got out of the line of fire and then poured several volleys, chiefly into the rigging of the steamer, whose raft-like inertness made her an easy prey. Then the Chinese ran alongside, and swarms of brigands clambered aboard, many to fall round the ring of Englishmen before they reached it and many afterwards. For sword met dirk and oftener life's blood stained silk and cotton, than good English serge. But bravery was of no avail. The mates lay dead, the captain and lieutenant were badly wounded, and Mike was seen dolefully wrapping a rag around his arm. Harry had received a slash in the shoulder and lay white and motionless. But where was Jack? He soon appeared, carried along baggage-like and was dropped on the deck.

"Where have you been?" enquired Captain Wilton. "I did not see you after you and Tom came back from the guns; but where's Tom?" in a still more surprised tone.

"I will tell you again. Some of those fellows speak English," was the only reply, and Jack sat up, anxiously looking for Harry to satisfy himself he was still alive.

"Untie my hands," he said in Chinese to the guards, who were watching their prisoners with an occasional look towards the cargo being busily brought from the hold and transferred to

the piratical junks. "Look here," to the nearest guard, "I will give you this and these," as he produced a revolver and cartridges from under his coat. "Untie my hands, and be quick or I will let the rest know and these will go to one of your chiefs, for they are too valuable for you. Quick." His bonds were cut and he handed the weapon and ammunition to the man, then quietly worked his way to Harry. A few drops of brandy from the captain's flask restored him to consciousness, and he sat up to have his wound bound. A similar kind office was performed for the rest and they sat moodily waiting.

"Well," growled the captain, "of all traitors preserve me again from Chinese. Look, Lee Foo—and there's another—why all our crew are carrying for the pirates. They have grown wonderfully spry, and look jollier under their new masters than under us. But lay to a bit, for if I'm not altogether out of my reckoning they'll be suitably paid for this." So they continued waiting. In a space of time remarkably short the Dyaks and Siamese had transferred the bales of cotton stuffs, which was the principal item of the cargo, and the rest of the consignment, from the hold of the Britisher to the decks and cabins of the native craft. Then a council of war was held, and Lee Foo seemed to be urging some request, in which his comrades warmly seconded him. He apparently was not succeeding, when a petty chief rose and made a short harangue. The leader gave some orders in a sharp tone. The prisoners were bundled over the sides, the two boys and one of the lieutenants into one boat, the captain, the other lieutenant and Mike into the other. The engineer and his mate were left behind. The moorings were cast loose and the Chinese crew was left in possession of the *Golden Pheasant*. They were exceedingly jubilant, but the pirates had no intention of leaving them so merry. One of the fireships was towed alongside, for the length of the rope had allowed them to drift astern, a bale or two of inflammable goods were cast into the cabins and lighted. Then the fiends, delighted with their work and the consternation of their allies, hoisted their lateen sails and made off towards the north.

(To be continued.)