

frail chance had that noble captain, in the hands of the bold desperado; but fortunately for Portugal, and for *Vasco de Gama*—for he indeed it was—the report of the pistol had roused the sailors, and they came rushing up from their sleeping places, to find the cause of the disturbance. Pietro, who, from their fear of his betraying them, had not been trusted by the mutineers with their plans, was foremost, and as he dashed headlong into the cabin, from which his practised ear told him the sounds proceeded, he overturned one or two of the shrinking confederates of Fernando and Miguel, and at one glance saw his commander's danger. The pistol which had wounded Miguel was on the floor; seizing it, with a well aimed blow, he laid Fernando, who was still struggling with the captain, by the side of his dying companion.

All was confusion, till the calm voice of De Gama was heard bidding the sailors remove the bodies of the senseless men, and giving the necessary orders for the confinement of the two or three who had come to sanction this iniquitous attempt by their presence, though they had not the courage to aid their companions.

The ball had passed through Miguel's heart, and short shiving and short funeral service had he; he was borne out from the cabin; a heavy plunge was heard, and the waters received into their unquiet bosom the body of the traitorous sailor.

The morning dawned brightly, and no trace was seen in the vessel of the disturbance of the night. Another filled Miguel's place at the helm and on the yards; Fernando was hand-cuffed below, and all went quietly on in the caravel; but the day passed heavily; the sailors were alarmed and weary, the captain sad at the deferring of his hopes,—his charts told him he ought to have been long ere this at the "Tempest Cape," which Diaz, twenty years before, had discovered; and he began to fear he had trusted too implicitly to his compass, and had taken the wrong direction. He could not wonder at the discontent of his followers, for they were ignorant men, and could not understand the sources of his confidence; they were unused to anything but coasting along shore,—not one of them had ever before passed Cape Bojador, and now they had been many weeks out of sight of land. They knew, too, that their provisions were getting low, and there was no place to turn to for aid.

Long after the night watch was set, did Vasco de Gama walk the deck, trying to arrange his plans, praying with fervent and still hopeful heart, to Saint James, and all the saints in the calendar, for aid and counsel. The wind was favorable, and they were making rapid way

through the waste of waters. He stood leaning over the side of the vessel, now watching the stars in their silent but ceaseless course, which he, alas! could not comprehend,—for the Copernican light was but just dawning upon the world; the mighty master who unravelled the mazes of the planetary system, and confuted the long established Ptolemeian creed, was still a stripling loiterer in his native village of Thorne, all unconscious of the latent power within, which was to call down the curses of his own generation, but was at the same time to raise to him a never crumbling monument, on which each succeeding age should delight to heap its tribute of gratitude. As Vasco thus stood gazing upon the heavenly world, or straining his eyes in eager search of that land which never for one moment left his mind, he thought he saw at a distance the dim twinkling of a light; his heart beat quick, and he almost feared to breathe, lest he should lose it; at times it was gone, and then it would flash forth again, and each moment hope strengthened in his heart; soon he could distinguish what seemed a dark cloud rising up at the edge of the horizon. "What call you that, captain?" said a rough voice at his side.

Roused from his intent gaze, Vasco de Gama turned quickly round, and found his mate standing by his side, watching the dim distance.

"Thank God! it is land; say you not so, Diego?" and he grasped the rough hand of the sailor.

"I do believe this time we are not deceived; but perhaps it were better not to give the signal till morning's light records the truth, for it may be only an illusion, though Holy Mary forbid."

"It cannot, cannot be!" said De Gama; "the good God of Heaven would not so mock me; He has answered my prayers, and I vow to present a couple of golden candlesticks to the church of Santa Maria in Lines, as soon as I return to Portugal, in humble commemoration of this blessed hour, and the *light* which came to cheer my *darkness*."

Till dawn of day the two sailors watched the growing cloud, and with the first red streak of morning, the cheering sound of "land ahead!" uttered by the captain, and echoed by his mate, rang through the ship and summoned the sailors from their night's repose. As they rushed on deck and saw once more land before them, they dropped involuntarily upon their knees, and uttered a brief but heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving. None but those who have been tossed for weary weeks upon the ocean, hopeless and far from home, can estimate the feelings of these mariners.

By his charts Vasco de Gama soon made out