



LIEUT. VINCENT TOOK IN THE SITUATION AT ONCE.

## THE SLAVE CHASE.

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### CHAPTER VI.

#### LIEUTENANT VINCENT'S DISCOVERY.

THE success of the chase only made officers and men more eager for another cruise, and as soon as possible the vessel got back upon the old ground; a stricter watch than ever was kept, and everything done to ensure a capture.

At certain places along the coast of Africa, near to which the slave gangs from the interior would be likely to strike the coast on the completion of their toilsome, deadly march, there were temporary barracoons, or sheds, where the slaves are kept ready till the coast was clear for the show to stand in to shore, and load up with her living freight. It often happened that a shipment could be stopped, and many slaves liberated, and Arabs made prisoners, by a little circumvention at these stations. Thus a cruiser would drop a boat, loaded with every necessary for a month's cruise. Three days' sail from one of these stations the boat's crew, getting close into land or up some coast river, would then, by careful survey and silent march, often surprise and make a good haul.

This was the plan the captain now decided upon. The largest of the ship's cutters was well prepared, all her water breakers filled with fresh water; biscuit, beef, pork, etc. were stowed carefully in the boat's bins; a portable cooking stove, ammunition, rifles, revolvers, and last, carefully and securely fixed, a boat's gun and carriage, made secure and ready for working, in the bow of the boat.

Early on Tuesday morning the cutter, fully manned, with Lieutenant Vincent in charge, Sam Harper coxswain of the boat, and Joo Richards carpenter for the cruise, left the ship's side amid the cheers and good wishes of the crew.

"Vincent!" shouted the captain, "you understand fully where we will pick you up, all being well, three weeks to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have taken the bearings all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

What a strange experience, to be afloat on the mighty ocean in so small a craft, to see that which has been your home for nearly two years passing rapidly out of sight! It was a strange life—rough, coarse, free, full of discomforts and yet with a strange fascination for many of these young fellows. One thing was inevitable

in such a life, the "caste" separation between officer and men was soon, and almost imperceptibly, broken down, and Ralph Vincent found a certain comfort in the conversations carried on in quiet tones between Sam Harper, Joo Richards, and himself.

One evening, during one of these bivouacs ashore, most of the men had gone off for a stroll, and he found himself alone with our two friends, so he said,

"How long have you been a Christian, Richard?"

"Nearly five years now, sir. It was about three years before I joined this ship."

"And do your religious duties give you any pleasure? You always seem so singularly free and joyous, and so does your chum, Harper, and I cannot quite understand it."

"Well, no, sir, I do not think that my religious duties give me pleasure, or make me happy."

"Then, my dear fellow, what is it that you have, that makes you so joyous, that I have not, and do not even understand?"

"Well, sir, I must speak plainly if I am to help you at all; and this comes to me to be such an awfully important matter that I pray God to help me, and to help you to understand it."

"My dear fellow, you cannot think how anxious I am about this matter, and, as you say, it is important. I am very glad we happen to be away from the ship; we can talk more freely, and there is not so much to distract attention. Do not hesitate to speak quite freely; you know near about all that has happened since I have been with you in the ship, and, unless I am very much mistaken, you and Harper have been watching me for some time."

"Yes, sir, that we have, and more than watching you, we've been praying for you. We saw you were not happy, and we wanted to see you right with God, for once a man is right with God he is happy."

"That is what I don't understand, Richards—what do you mean by being right with God? What am I to do more than I am doing to be right with God? You know how recklessly I carried on, till I was laid down with fever in Trincomalee; and, when I was getting better, I made up my mind to prepare myself for death, whenever it might come, by living right for the future. This I have been doing ever since, but every day I grow more puzzled, and confused, and unhappy, I believe. Now, if I am on the wrong tack, where am I wrong? Which is the right tack, and how am I to get there?"

There was a quiet smile on the face of both the seamen as they quietly listened to this confession.

Then Richards said, slowly and deliberately, "Supposing, sir, that all your living to-day was pleasing in the sight of God, what about all your past sins—the sins of all the years before you were ill, and made up your mind to be good—how do you propose to get rid of them?"

"Well, that is strange, Richards; I do not remember that thought ever once crossing my mind. I have been taken up with a constant effort to live what I thought right. What do I need to see God, do you think?"

"Well, sir," replied Richards, "are you willing to take the sinner's place? Of course, there is a great difference between your position in life and mine, and yet I know something about the heart's unwillingness to take the sinner's place. When I was converted to God, during a fortnight's mission in South London, I was a respectable young man, an apprentice, nearly out of my time, always attended a place of worship, was a teetotaler, and generally looked upon as a most religious young fellow because of these things; but, like Nicodemus, I had never been 'born again,' and on the particular night that I sought and found mercy with God, through Jesus,

the missionary had taken for his text, 'There is no difference,' and with many illustrations, and very straight talk, he showed plainly that sin unforgiven was sin in God's sight, whether it was open or secret, gilded or rough. Now when God's Spirit passed the truth upon me, that I was trusting in my own life of morality, my own righteousness, that was dead, and I wanted life, I just passed into the empty room, at the invitation of the missionary, and, kneeling weeping at one of the forms, I cried to God to save me from myself.

"Now at this very moment one of the workers drew near me to help, and opening his Bible he said, 'See what God says,' when just at the moment I became conscious of another form pressing against me, as he knelt between me and the next enquirer. At the same time a mingled odour of drink, tobacco, old rags and bones, and skins, became very plain even amid my anxiety. I glanced round at my companion, recognized at once, with a certain feeling of wounded pride and disgust, a drunken rag and bone man, who lived in our own street. He was crying aloud for mercy. 'Oh, God, be merciful to me a sinner!' He cried again and again, and there and then the Spirit pressed home the sermon with mighty power to me, and I thought, 'I came here to seek God as a sinner, it's my only plea,' and though I felt a momentary dislike and disgust of my companion, yet there we were on the same level: he called himself a sinner, and so did I. In a moment I said aloud, 'Yes, Lord, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am a sinner, he came to save me,' and the worker at my opposite side said, 'Yes, that's it; you have taken the lost sinner's place, now take the lost sinner's Saviour. Jesus said, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' Now you have come as the lost sinner to the Saviour, do you believe he takes you in, or does he cast you out? Listen once more, 'He that believeth on the Son shall everlasting life.' Do you—' But I tell you what it is, sir: before the friend could say another word, I was on my feet with all the burden rolled right away, knowing my sins were forgiven, because I had come as Jesus asked me, and believed he was true; and from that day to this, all the God has ever said to my soul, or done for me, has come through the first great truth, the basis of all the others, believing God's Word about his Son."

"Thank you very much, Richard; this seems all simple and plain enough, but I cannot say I quite see just how to use these 'steps,' but I've no doubt—"

At this moment a shout in the distance fell upon the ears of officer and men. The former sprang to his feet and listened for a moment, then said,—

"Follow me, men! What's the matter, I wonder?"

Following the sound of the voices, they soon came upon the others, who were surrounding a poor, gaunt-looking black, with the heavy wooden slave stick or collar upon his neck, and his right wrist and ankle encircled with iron clasps, attached to each of which was a strong chain of iron links, which, though hanging loosely, made it impossible to do much with either arm or leg. Lieutenant Vincent took in the situation at once. The man was one of a gang of slaves who, on the march, had succeeded in escaping, probably at night, and that, hampered with his slave stick and the chained wrist and ankle, his fancied liberty was as bad if not worse than his former slavery. Making him understand by signs that they were his friends, they led him along to their little camp.

On the slow journey back, the lieutenant urged Richards to hurry forward to get some tools out ready to relieve the poor black of his bonds, and in little more than half an hour, great swelling tears rolled down the face of this poor negro, as he stood up and waved his arms, and leaped as well as his weakened frame would let him, free now in the fullest sense of the word, and, as Richards left the group of excited sailors, who were watching the freed man eat some limited pea soup, which had been warmed up for him, he noticed Lieutenant Vincent with a puzzled, anxious look upon his face, standing right away from them all, though watching the scene.

Seized with a sudden impulse Joo laid his tools down, and crossing over to the officer, he asked him, saying,—

"I beg your pardon, sir, but here seems to me God's word to you in your soul difficulty."

"Why, how do you mean, Richards?"

"Well, sir, you were like that slave once was, you were bound to a whole gang of sin—drink, and gambling, and lots of other things—but you broke away from them all, just as that poor black seems to have broken away from the slave gang. But he hasn't been happy, sir. He could look up into the cocoa-nut palm, and see their fruit at the top, but he couldn't climb, he couldn't eat the fruit, because of his collar and chain; and if he had died, he would have died bound and starved amid plenty."

"Go on, Richards, go on," said the officer with intense eagerness.

"You have broken away from the slave gang to which you were once bound, sir, but there are the bonds of self, and self-effort, and it will only be by another hand that you can ever be freed; it's a Pierced Hand that must snap your chains, 'tis Jesus' hand alone can do this, and God asks you to believe, and expect him to do it for you. Now, there is nothing you can do; Christ alone can save."

Putting out his hand to Richards, the officer said, as they clasped hands,—

"It is clear as daylight to me now, why have I been so blinded? My self-righteousness has been as scales to my eyes. May God bless you, Richards. God not only used you with your tools in the physical deliverance of that poor black slave, but he used you by your plain stating of simple truth to the snapping of my spiritual bonds. God bless you."

And after a little more conversation, Joo took up his tools and went off to put them away, and to tell Sam the good news, and together, behind a clump of bush, they knelt and thanked God for his work accomplished in the new born soul.

(To be continued.)

#### BOOKS MADE OF CLAY.

FAR away beyond the plains of Mesopotamia, on the banks of the river Tigris, lie the ruins of the ancient city of Nineveh. Not long since huge mounds of earth and stone marked the place where the palaces and walls of the proud capital of the great Assyrian empire stood. The spade of the Frenchman, then of the Englishman, has cleared the earth away and laid bare all that remains of the old streets and palaces where the princes of Assyria walked and lived. The gods they worshipped and the books they read have all been revealed to the sight of a wondering world.

The most curious of all the curious things preserved in this wonderful manner are the clay books of Nineveh. The chief library of Nineveh was contained in the palace of Konyunjik. The clay books which it contains are composed of sets of tablets covered with very small writing. The tablets are oblong in shape; and when several of them were used for one book. The first line of the tablet following was written at the end of the one preceding it.

The writing on the tablets was of course done when the clay was soft; and then it was baked to harden it. Then each tablet or book was numbered, and assigned to a place in the library with a corresponding number, so that the librarian could readily find it, just as our books are numbered to-day under the books we read.

Among these books are to be found collections of hymns to the gods, descriptions of animals and birds, stones and vegetables, as well as of history, travels, etc. Perhaps the little Ninevite children of long ago took the same delight that the young folks of to-day do in stories of the birds, beasts, and insects of Assyria.

The Assyrians and Babylonians were great students of astronomy. The method of telling time by the sun, and of marking it by the instrument called a sun-dial, was invented by the latter nation. None of our modern clocks and watches can be compared to the sun-dial for accuracy. Indeed, we have to regulate our modern inventions by the old Babylonian one.—*Harper's Young People.*