

THE CRAFTSMAN, HAMILTON, 15th MAY, 1869.

FOR THE CRAFTSMAN.

THE CRUISE OF THE THETIS.

BY G. S.

CHAPTER III. THE G. H. S.

(Concluded.)

Captain Lynch's report was perfectly true. The second day after putting to sea the *Bordelaise* was made out to windward, and, ranging rapidly down, ran up the tri-color, firing a shotted gun across the *Thetis*' forefoot as an emphatic warning that it would be prudent to heave to. Garrett's reply was to crowd on all sail, train aft his nine-pounder, run out his carronades, and run up his ensign. Utterly disdainful of the schooner, the Frenchman made instant chase, the heavy round shot from her bow-chaser ploughing up the waves on either quarter. Under a whole cloud of canvas both vessels were now fairly racing through the blue water, while Fitzgerald walked cheerily forward among his men, encouraging them at their quarters, and bidding them mark how wide fell the enemy's metal, and how, now and then, their own told in the splinters of his bulwarks, or the sudden slackening of his upper braces. Bidding them, too, note how the little *Thetis* was steadily drawing ahead of her pursuer, and cheering them with the prospect of early escape from the terrors of death or of imprisonment which threatened them. Till, lo! there came a crash aloft and a tumbled mass of hamper on the deck, and there were groans and shrieks of wounded men, and the main topmast lay a wreck across the side, carrying with it gaff top-sail and top-gallant stay-sail, and letting the fore top-sail swing idly square, as the brigantine yawed off before the wind, and the loose spars clashed dangerously in chaos with the slow heavy rolling of the crippled vessel. Down the breeze rang faintly the *Bordelaise's* cheer, and the quick roll of her drums beating boarders to their stations. Even then, Garrett had no forgetfulness of his pluck, and, though the loss of his peak haulyards had drooped his ensign, it still floated clear in the sunshine with no impulse of the commander to bid it quail. "Axes aloft there, lads, to cut away the wreck!" was the curt order that sent a dozen hands up the ratlines, while round after round from the quarter-deck made its heavy mark on the fast approaching enemy. And, if ever those hands had worked in their lives they did so then, while nearer and nearer came on the cruel death behind them. It was to this much and no more that the *Borneo* could testify, but, in her eagerness to escape, it was enough to have seen to give her evil certainty of the issue. As the tangle of rigging went over the side, and parting, as though reluctantly, from the gay craft to which it had become an encumbrance, not an aid, slid slowly into the rippling wavelets, the barque was luffed aft three hundred yards astern, and the gleaming port fires of the gunners distinctly and luridly horrible, as they prepared to throw in a raking broadside. Once more came down the Frenchman's hail, but this time in menacing command, and with no tone of courtesy. "Strike!" shouted Marioncourt through the trumpet, standing by his own mizzen rigging, calm, resolute and terrible. "Death!" was Fitzgerald's savage

answer, echoed by the roar of the stern chaser, and the crash of bulwark and stanchion, and cries of men hurt mortally, as the Master's own hand laid the fire to the torch-hole. It was the inarticulate expression of rage against defeat, and recklessness in the last extremity. Such rage and such recklessness as, twenty years later, found utterance from the lips of Cambronne, at Waterloo, in that single untranslatable word, immortalized by Victor Hugo! The rejoinder came short and sharp and sufficiently appropriate, in the rain of grape that tore through taffrail and round-house, and stays and davits, and stained the white decks with the life-blood of their defenders. Garrett had five men killed, and seven more helpless, while he himself was badly hurt by a splinter of the main-boom, when sharper and clearer fell the rattle of the drums, and the *Bordelaise* lay fairly alongside. There was a dropping fire of musketry from her tops, and the helmsman had fallen by his side, and grappling irons were being made fast to the helpless *Thetis* as he recovered from the stinging, stunning pain of the blow that had momentarily disabled him. Marioncourt, sword in hand, faced him on his own gangway, seen plainly as the smoke slowly lifted, and the bright cheery sunlight gleamed on the pikes of the boarders. It was the last extremity—the supreme instant of peril. Another half minute, and the pause would have been broken by the clash of steel, and there would have been but scanty quarter to hope for from the maddened enemy. Then, in the awful breathing space, with death looking grimly out of the Rover's imp'acable eyes,—the Master slowly and solemnly gave the G. H. S. When all other hope had faded, when everything that cool nerve and dauntless courage could effect had been proved and had failed, when all individual resources had showed themselves inefficient for preservation or protection, and when every memory that made life dear, recurred with irresistible and unavailing tenderness—then, and not till then, the man whose manhood had been so sorely tried, remembered that he was also a Mason, and, acknowledging his own impotence, appealed to the talisman of his Craft for salvation!

"Cease firing! Call off boarders! Make fast there fore and aft! Back the main-yard!" were the first rapid orders that fell from the gallant privateer. The crews stared at each other in stupid amazement, and Garrett staggered backwards, faint with loss of blood and with the re-action of excitement, his hand instinctively seizing the signal haulyards in confession of the defeat that was too palpable. Before he could shake them loose the ships had closed, and Marioncourt was beside him single-handed, one arm supporting him under the shoulder, and the other gently forcing his grasp from the line.

"Let it float, my brother," he said softly; let it float, the flag of a brave man and a true Mason! And, while Charles Marie Marioncourt can say nay, the hand of no enemy who lives may haul it down!"

Garrett's hold loosened gratefully, and he was never afterwards ashamed to own that tears stood in his eyes as he returned the fraternal greeting. And I doubt if either of those men, while he lived, knew one moment of purer happiness, than