

THE FROZEN REBEL.
BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.
[Continued.]
CHAPTER XXVIII.

I WISHED A BARGAIN WITH THE YANKEE.
The captain recommended that we should go on deck and set about transhipping while the weather held; for he was an old hand in these seas, and never trusted the sky longer than a quarter of an hour.

"This here list," says he, "an't one of the best, but it'll follow our estimate of the hold."

"Yes," said I, "and I should be mighty thankful if some of your men would see all clear aloft for me that we might start with running rigging that'll travel, capstans that'll revolve, and sails that'll spread."

"Oh, ye'll manage that for you, said he. "T'ry-ly she's been over frozen—very bad frozen. Durned if ever I see a worse frozen."

So saying, he called to Billy, who seemed the principal man of the boat's crew, and gave him some directions, and immediately afterwards all the men entered the boat and rowed away to the ship.

While they were absent I carried the captain into the hold and left him to overhaul it. I told him that all the sails, rigging, capstans, and masts were in the hold and lazarets, which was true enough—wanting to keep him out of the run—though, thanks to the precaution I had taken, I was in no fear even if he should penetrate so deep aft. Before he came out five-and-twenty stoves arrived in four boats from the ship, and when we went on deck we found them going the rounds of the vessel, scraping the guns to get a view of them, peering down the companion, overhauling the fore-castle-walk, as I call the hollow beyond the fore-castle, and staring aloft with their faces full of grinning wonder. The captain sang out to them, and they all muttered aft, "Now, lads," said he, "there's a big ab before you—a big job for Cape Horn, I mean; and you'll have to slip thought it as if you was green. 'When done there'll be a cruise, and I'll warrant you'll never see another pining through in the 'raction' of your mother's milk."

Having delivered this proface, he divided the men into two gangs—one, under the boatwain, to attend to the rigging, clearing the canvas, the lee, get the pumps and the capstans to work, and see all ready for getting aloft on the schooner; the other, under the second mate, to get tackles aloft and break out the cargo, taking care to trim ship while so doing.

They fell to their several jobs with a will. 'Tis the hardest countryman to meet at the American as sailors, affirming that if ever they win a battle at sea it is by the help of British rascals. But this I protest: after witnessing the smartness of those Yankee whalers, I would sooner charge the English than the Americans with laziness, some the martial merits of the two nations ever before me to decide upon. They had the hatchets open, tackles aloft, and men at work below while the mariners of other countries would have been standing looking on. The windrose was under the boats. Some overran the fabric aloft, clearing, cutting away, pouncing, making the ice fly in storms; others swatted the capstans till they clanked; others fell to the pumps, working with hammers and kettle of boiling water. The windrose old schooner was never busier—no, not in the heyday of her flag, when her guns were blazing and her people yelling.

I wished to help, but the captain would not let me do so; he kept me walking and talking, asking me scores of questions about the schooner, and most of all about the weather, which he seemed to be very much interested in. I was ready, I professed, to know my little. The great show of clothes puzzled him. He also asked if the crucifix in the cabin was silver. I said I believed it was, fetched it, and asked him to accept it, saying if he would give me the smallest of his boats for it I should be very much obliged.

"Oh, yes," says he, "you can have a boat. The men would not sail with you without a boat," and after weighing the crucifix without the least exhibition of veneration in his manner, he put it in his pocket, saying he knew a man who would give him a couple of hundred dollars for the thing.

He asked me if I had met with any money in her; and I answered evasively that in searching the dead man on the rocks, I had discovered a few pieces in his pocket, but that I had left them, being much too melancholy and convinced of my approaching and to meddle with such a useless commodity. Time to time he would quit me to go to the hatch and sit down orders to the second mate in the hold. How many calls he must to take I did not know, which he asked me how much I would give, he replied: "Leave me enough to keep me ballasted; that will satisfy me."

The high swell demanded caution, but they managed wonderfully well. They never swung more than three calls into a boat, and with this cargo she would row away to the ship that lay here-to-fore, and the men in her hoist-of the cables aboard.

The wind remained light till half-past three; it then freshened a bit. Though all hands had knuckled off at noon to get dinner—and a fine meal I gave them of ham, tongue, beef, biscuits, wine, and brandy—by half-past three they had snatched the hold of ten bundles of coals, heading blowing out the whole of the cloths from the fore-castle along with as much of the bedding as we did not require; and I began to think that my Yankee intended to leave me a clean ship to carry home, though I don't not remember. Yet was my turn handsomely served too. The pumps had been cleared and tried, and found to work well, and which was glad news to me—the well found dry. The running rigging had been overhauled, and it travelled handsomely. The sails had been drenched and hoisted and lowered again, and the canvas found in good condition. The jibboom had been run out, and the stays set up. The stock of fresh water had been examined and found plentiful, and the coals in the hold brought out and secured.

Children Cry for

oured on the main deck. In short, the American boatwain had worked with the judgment and care of a first-rate frigate, of a great artist in ropes, booms, and sails, and the schooner was left to my hands as fit for any navigation as the whaler that rose and fell on our quarter.

But, as I have said, at half-past three in the afternoon, the breeze blew from the west in dark curls upon the water, and in the loom of the shoulders of vapor in the dark-blue obscure there, to warrant a sackful of this capful presently.

"I reckon," says the captain to me, after looking into the west, "that we'd best knock off now. There's snow and wind yonder, and we'd better see all snug while there's time."

He called to one of the men to tell the second mate to come up from below and get the hatchets on, and bringing me to the rail, he pointed to a boat, "That's Mr. Rodney," said he, and thanked him heartily for the gift, which was handsome, I must say, the boat being a very good one, though to be sure, he had got many times its value out of the schooner; and a party of men were forthwith told off to get the boat hoisted aloft.

"Now, Mr. Rodney," said the captain, standing in the gangway, "how can I serve you further?"

"Sir," said I, "you are very obliging. Two things I stand sadly in need of: a chart of these waters and a chronometer."

"I'll send you a chart," said he, "that'll carry you as high as San Roque; but I've only got one chronometer, sir, and can't spare him."

"Well," said I, "if, when you get aboard, you'll give me the time by your chronometer, I'll set my watch by it; but I'll thank you very much for the chart. The tracings below are as shapeless as the moon setting in a fog."

"You shall have the chart," said he, and then called to Wilkinson and the two negroes.

"Here," said he, "you're quite content, I hope."

"That's answered 'Yes.'"

"You've all three a claim upon me for the amount of what's owing ye," said he, "and when you turn up at New Bedford you shall have it—that's good. I see fifteen hundred dollars a man on this job, if so be ye don't knock too thickly as ye go along."

Mr. Rodney, Joe here's a steady, respectable man, and I'll make you a good mate. Cromwell and Billy Pitt are black only in their hides; all else's as good as white."

He then shook me by the hand, and called, a farewell to Wilkinson and the negroes scrambled into the chains and dropped into his boat, very highly satisfied, I make no doubt, with the business he had done that day.

A boat's crew was left behind to help us to make sail. But the weather looked somewhat wild in the west, with the red light of the sun among the clouds there, and the dark heave of the swell running into a sickly crimson under the sun and then glowing out dusky again. I got then to trouble-reel the mainmast and hoist it, and then talking them, advised them to go off. Then putting Cromwell to the tiller, I went forward with the others and set the topmast and forestaysail (the spritsail lying furled), which would hold us enough of canvas till I saw what the weather was to be like. I kept the spritsail hoist, waiting for a boat to arrive with my chart, and in a few minutes the boat returned with what I wanted.

I holloed my hands, and, hailing the captain, who was on the whaler's quarter-deck, asked him for the time by his chronometer. He furnished his and disappeared, and presently returning, shouted to know if I was ready. I put the key in my watch and answered yes, and then he gave me the time. My watch, though antique, was a noble piece of mechanism, and I have little doubt, as trustworthy as his chronometer.

I turned to the three men: "My lads," said I, "you prove yourselves fine bold fellows by your volunteering. Do not fear; if God guides us home to my home, I mean—you shall find a handsome account in this business."

"Six more chops would have just had 'thole man bin within,'" said Wilkinson. "But best as it is, master, though she's a trifle short-handed."

"Why, yes," said I; "but being fore and aft, you know! It isn't as if we'd got courses to hand and topmasts to reef."

"Ay, say, dat's de troot," cried Billy Pitt. "I tort o' dat. Fore an' aft makes de difference. Don't you an't make it clear?"

"There are four of us," said I, "ye've my chief mate, Wilkinson. Choose your watch."

"I choose Cromwell," said he; "he was in my watch aboard the whaler."

"Very well," I exclaimed; and this being settled, and both negroes declaring themselves good cooks, we arranged that they should alternately have the dressing of our victuals, that Wilkinson should have the cabin next mine, and the negro who slept, one taking the other's place as he was relieved.

"I don't know how the whaler heading," said I, "but 'tis schooner's a case if we an't dropping her!"

Indeed she was scarce visible astern, a mere windy flicker hovering upon the pale flashings of the foam. It might be perhaps that the whaler was making a more northerly course than we, and under very snug canvas, though ours was snug enough; too; for he this or that may, I was mighty pleased with the slipping qualities of the whaler.

Cromwell being at the tiller, I told Billy Pitt to go below and get supper, instructing him what to dress and how much to melt for a bowl, for as you know there was nothing but spirits and wine to season our repasts with. I saw Cromwell grin wisely into the binnacle candle flame when he heard me talk of ham, tongue, sweetmeats, marmalade and the like for supper, together with a can of hot claret, and knowing sailor's nature muddling well, I did not doubt that the fare of the schooner would bring the three men more into love with the adventure than the reward that was to follow it. I had noticed that the bundles which

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had been sent from the whaler as belonging to the poor fellow who was moose enough and showed indeed like the end of a long voyage, and I detained Bill Pitt a minute whilst I told them that there was a handsome stock of clothes in the cabin, together with linen, boots, and other articles of that sort; that, though the coats, breeches, and waistcoats were of bright colour and old-fashioned, they would keep them as warm as if they had been cut by a tailor of to-day.

"These things," said I, "you can wear at sea, keeping your own clothes ready to slip on should we be spoken for to sea when we arrive in England. Tomorrow they shall be divided among you, and they will become your property. The suit you saw me in to-day is all that I shall need."

Both negroes burst into a most diverting laugh of joy on hearing this. Nothing delighted a black man more than coloured apparel. They had seen the clothes in the forecastle and guessed the kind of garments I meant to present them with.

Whilst supper was getting, I walked the deck with Wilkinson, both of us leaving a bright look-on it. It was blowing fresh. I talked to my companion very freely, being anxious to find out what kind of person he was, and I must say there was something in his conversation that impressed me very favorably. He told me that he had a wife at New Bedford, that he was married to the sea, and he hoped the money he would get by this adventure, added to his wife, would enable him to set up for himself ashore.

"Well," said I, "we will see to-morrow what Captain Tucker has left us. But that you may be under no apprehension, Wilkinson, if we are fortunate enough to bring the ship safely to England, I will enter into a bond to pay you five hundred pounds sterling for your share one week after date of our arrival."

He answered that if he could get that sum he would be a made man for life. "But it's too much to expect, sir," says he.

I told him that he had no idea of the cargo. The wines and spirits were of such a quality I would stake my interest in the schooner in their fetching a large sum of money.

And then we fell to other talk; in the course of which he told me he was an Englishman born, but having been pressed into a man-o-war, deserted here at Halifax and made several voyages in American ships. He was wrecked on the Persian coast and he was in the company, and then got a berth in the whaler. He married at New Bedford and sailed with Captain Tucker—this was his second whaling trip, he said, and he wanted no more. I told him I was glad to learn that he was a countryman of mine, but not surprised.

His conduct gratified me in showing that he already looked upon me as an shipmate to be trusted, and, as I have said, this first chat with the man left me strongly disposed to consider myself fortunate in having him as an associate.

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