DICK RODNEY;

Or, The Adventures of An Eton Boy...

BY JAMES GRANT.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

"The poor lad is dying from lack of a doctor," said old Tom, who knelt beside Hislop, handling his wounds with the tenderness of a woman; "and if the whole British navy hove in sight, we haven't a rag of bunting to shake out as a signal, since that rascally picaroon, the Cubano, has cast every color and signal overboard."

"Well, Tom, he shan't die this bout,'" said Ned Carlton, hopefully. "Let us tie up his wounds as best we can, to belay the bleeding, and give him something as a reviver."

"It's a blessing his old mother in Scotland don't see all this," added rough Tom Lambourne, with a tear in his eye; "poor Mare Hislop is her only support, and a sister's, too."

I thought now, with compunction, how often his theories and pedantry had bored me, and I resolved to be unremitting in my care of him.

The united medical skill of those honest souls, our crew, was very small; however, the wounds were carefully washed in clean water; their best shirts were torn into bandages or folded into pads to stop the bleeding; and in this they were quite successful.

A beaker of New England rum was hoisted out of the forehold, and its head was instantly started. The liquor was very redolent of treacle, but a glass of it mixed with water—the readiest stimulant that occurred to the minds of the seamen—was poured between the parched lips of the sufferer, who at last slept, in the pleasant atmosphere formed by the awning which shaded him from the fierce sun, and in the breeze that whistled past the bows as the Eugenie still bore on her new course, close hauled, with all her fore-and-aft canvas set, and the white, glittering spray flying over her cat-heads and dolphin-striker.

The terrible Cubano still kept possession of the cabin. His two six-barreled revolvers gave him twelve shots, and we were but nine in all, as the captain, Roberts, and Will White had already perished by his hand, and Hyslop, to all appearances, was dying; thus Antonio kept us all in subjection by his weapons, just as half a dozen well-armed soldiers may control a mob of thousands.

So passed the night; the crew grouped forward, full of schemes for vengeance, and he aft, full of triumph, ferocity and cognac.

Next morning I was on the quarterdeck, and when day broke I became aware, by a splashing sound astern, that we were towing something in the dead water of the brig's wake. On looking over the taffrail, what were my emotions on beholding the body of my kind friend—our good and hospitable captain—towed by the neck at the end of a line!

Around the poor corpse, which was in its nightdress, the green waves danced merrily in the golden light of the morning sun that was now beaming over the sea, "refreshing the distant shores and reviving all but him." Antonio in the night had cast it from one of the cabin windows on the port side of the rudder-case, and through that aperture the line to which it was attached was now run.

By the smoke of a cigar, which ascended to the taffrail at times, I discovered that the atrocious Cuban was sitting at the open cabin window below me, watching and waiting to see the body devoured by the sharks; and I knew that he would shoot all who attempted to cross his purpose or who came within reach of his pistol. This prevented any man from lowering himself over the stern, either to haul in the line or cut it adrift.

"Demonio!" we heard him exclaim, when by a sudden lurch of the ship the line parted and the poor corpse went rolling and surging to leeward.

"There he goes, and God bless him, although he's cut adrift without a prayer or a sailor's winding-sheet," said Tom Lambourne, taking off his hat, as the body bobbed like a fisherman's float on the waves for a little space and then disappeared in the long, white track made by the Eugenie through the dark apple-green of the morning sea.

All the stories I had heard or read of Spanish revenge seemed eclipsed by the atrocities of this fiendish Cubano.

CHAPTER XXIII.
The Requital.

Three days and nights passed without finding us able to surprise or dislodge the demon who was in possession of the cabin; without our knowing where the ship was driving or drifting to, and without a sail appearing. A man-of-war belonging to any country we should have hailed as a protector; but on the wide waters of the Southern Atlantic ships are few and far between.

Hyslop rallied a little and was removed into one of the forecastle berths. He could tell us only that he had been surprised when asleep, and had been stabbed again and again—that he became insensible and remembered nothing more. His distress was great when we related the story of the captain's fate, the death of Will White, and that their destroyer was still in possession of the ship and the arbiter of all our lives.

He writhed on his bed of pain and sighed bitterly on finding how stiff and sore, how weak and almost blind he had become by loss of blood; but a crisis was now at hand with our Cubano.

The evening of the fourth day after we had saved Hyslop found the brig still lying on a westerly course; but whether in the latitude of Cape San Roque or of the Rio Grande, we knew not; and, I suppose, it was all the same to Antonio.

I was at the wheel. The sunset was gorgeously beautiful. The Eugenie was running with both tacks aft; and under the arched leech of her courses I could see the blood-red disk of the sun right ahead settling in the waves, which shone in all the colors of the dying dolphin; while against the flaming orb the black outline of the masts, the figure-head and the taper end of the jibboom, with its cap, guys and gear, were clearly and distinctly defined.

The waves ahead rose and fell between me and the sun, as slowly and imperceptibly he sank, at the flaming horizon, from a quarter circle to a segment; then the last vestige of that also disappeared, but the lingering rays of his glory played upward on the light clouds that floated above. Even they paled away and died out, and twilight stole over the sea, which changed from gold to a transparent blue.

With the increasing twilight came a change of wind, and before it a great bank of cloud rolled from the horizon on our starboard bow. Under its shadow the sea was darkened and its broken water flecked with white. The new breeze came first upon our quarter, then rapidly it was abeam and three great albatrosses were seen to whip the sea with their wings, while a whole shoal of brown porpoises surged past our bows, plunging joyously from wave to wave.

Tucks and braces were instantly manned and the sails were trimmed anew for our desultory course.

"Sail ho—to windward!" said one of the crew, in a low but excited voice, lest the sound might reach the cabin; and as the dense bank of purple clouds opened a large bark came out of it, and her form became more and more defined as she left the vapor astern. She was going free—that is, with her head further off the wind than close-hauled—and had a press of snow-white canvas, which shone in the last light of the west.

"She is four miles off," said Carlton.

"We must signal her," added Lambourne.

"With what?" asked Carlton, in the same sharp but low voice; "every color is overboard."

"Anything will do—a blue shirt at the foremast head; quick!—the sky will be quite dark in ten minutes. Run it up in a ball with a slipping loop, man-o'-war fashion," said Lambourne, in a loud whisper; "get ready a ship's lantern some of you, for the night darkens so fast that we shall scarcely be visible when she is abeam of us. Ned, get into the fore-channel and wave the light as a signal that we want a boat."

These orders were rapidly obeyed and preparations made to throw the brig in the wind. While one man hastily got the lantern from a little round house, in which certain stores and tools were kept on deck; Ned Carlton pulled off his shirt, and was in the act of binding it to the signal halyards, when the Spaniard, whose quick ears detected some commotion, sprang on deck, armed as usual.

On seeing Carlton busy with the halyards he looked round, caught sight of the ship, which was running with the white foam boiling under her forefoot, and thus in a moment divined what we were about.

Muttering a terrible imprecation in Spanish he fired at Carlton, but missed him as before, and shot dead a poor apprentice who was close by.

"'Tarnal thunder, flesh and blood can't bear this!" shouted Tom Lambourne, whose fury was boundless, and who snatched up a capstan-bar. "Bear down on him all hands; there is neither sea law no land law can help us here!"

Snatching whatever came nearest to hand, we all rushed upon the Cubano, who stood boldly at bay, and keeping the binnacle between us and him, fired over it five or six shots from his revolver with terrible rapidity; but so unsteady had his hand become in consequence of his free potations below, that every bullet missed, though one cut the knuckles of Tom Lambourne's right hand, and another tore away the rim of my straw hat.

He drew a second revolver from his sash, but Lambourne, by one lucky blow with the capstan-bar, knocked it out of his hand. It went twenty feet into the air and fell overboard.

Quick as lightning Antonio placed the other in his breast, drew his knife, stooped his head, and darting through us like an eel, gave Carlton a gash in the thigh as he passed.

He then made for the main rigging, and sprang on the bulwark, no doubt with the intention of running up aloft to some secure perch, where he might reload his remaining pistol, and shoot us all down at leisure; but he missed his hold of the rattlins, and fell overboard!

There was a shout of furious joy.

"The sea will rob the gallows of its due!" said Carlton; "but he'll be shark's meat, anyway."

But Antonio was not gone, yet, for in falling he caught one of the lower studding-sail booms, and clutched it with deadly tenacity, for he knew that if once he was fairly launched into the ocean his fate would be sealed.

His face was pale with combined fear and fury; his black eyes blazed with the fire of hatred; the perspiration oozed in drops from his temples. Tom Lambourne sprang forward to beat off his fingers; but at that moment the boom, a slender spar, broke from its lashings alongside, and swung out at a right angle from the brig, with the wretch at the extreme end of it, dangling over the waves, like a herring at the point of a ramrod.

Again and again he writhed his body upward in wild struggles to get astride the boom, or to reach it with his knees, but in vain!

Instead of exciting pity his terrible situation drew forth a shout of derision, mingled with expressions of hatred and satisfaction, from the line of avenging faces that surveyed him over the bulwark. He hung thus for fully five minutes, for he was a powerful man, of great strength, muscle and bulk.

I have no doubt this man was as brave as it is possible for a ruffian to be; but the prospect of an immediate death—a death, too, from which there was no escape—terrified him.

His glance of hate toward us turned to one of wild and earnest entreaty.

"Mercy!—pardon!—in the name and for the love of the Almighty!" he exclaimed in Spanish, in a tone of intense earnestness; but he was heard by us with fierce derision in that moment of just triumph and too long delayed vengeance.

Twice the Eugenie gave a lee lurch, and each time the feet and knees of the wretched Cubano were immersed in the waves.

Beneath him was the abyss of water that rushed past the side of the brig. He panted rather than breathed, and through the dusk we could see how his aching hands turned white as his face, and that the points of his fingers were blood-red. His eyes grew wild and haggard as terror chilled his coward heart and agonized his soul; and yet through the surge the fleet craft flew on!

Every moment increased the weight of his body and the weakness of his hands and wrists.

At last it was evident that his powers of endurance could be no longer taxed; he uttered a half-smothered shriek, and closed his eyes as he clung to that slender spar, and it swayed to and fro while the close-hauled brig flew on!

The iron hook in the bulwark on which the studding-sail boom was hung gave way under the double weight of the spar and of his body. There was a shrill cry of despair, like the parting shriek of an evil spirit, or the skirl of the gusty blast, as the boom, and the wretch who clung to it in blind desperation, vanished into the black trough of the sea, and, like a cork or a reed, were swept amid the salt foam to leeward.

The Eugenie rose like a duck upon the water, and, as if freed at that moment from a load of crime, seemed to fly forward with increased speed.

'Twas night now, and the ship which we had first seen upon our weather bow was a mile astern and to leeward of us.

(To be continued.)

THE MANCHUS.

Peculiarities of the Race That Has Long Governed China.

The Manchus, as a body, really do not care two straws about Confucius, though it is part of their policy to make a great fuss, just as Napoleon found it paid best to humor the popes. Of course, I am speaking of the genuine typical Manchus, who are fast dying out and become petticoated prigs of Chinamen, but without a Chinaman's suppleness and brains. The true Manchu has an honest contempt for "writing fellows;" he has long since forgotten his own language, and now speaks a rough, energetic, bastard Chinese, called Pekingese, with a good, honest country burr. It bears much the same relation to "literary Chinese" that Hindustani does to Sanskrit; or, better still, that the Viennese dialect does to German. The emperor of China on formal occasions, descanting on funerals, Confucius, filial piety, and so on, is like E. J. Dillon's French president, descanting on "right civilization and justice." The real human Manchu emperor making broad jokes in the coarse Peking brogue, cracking melon seeds and puffing at his water pipe withal, may be compared with his majesty, the Emperor Francis Joseph with a feather in his billycock and a pot of Pilsener beer before him, smoking a long, coarse, Italian Avana da quindici with a straw run through it, and exchanging repartees with his private cronies in piquant Viennese. The Manchus like sport, good living and fresh air; they neither care nor profess to care one little bit about the Chinese empire, except in so far as it is a big elastic sponge out of which can be squeezed at suitable intervals a rich nutriment. The one exception is, or was, the emperor, who during the first four reigns took a keen pleasure, as well as a pride, in running the vast machine as economically and as uprightly as possible, and even now there is a considerable quantity of good manly leaven in Manchu mankind, just as there is in any other mankind, and it is this minority of good men which keeps things going, not to speak of the leaven of good in the Chinese or Confucian element, which combines with the excellence on the Manchu side, even as in the United States the under stratum of solid worth in party life keeps things sufficiently afloat in the Serbonian bogs of populism and Tammany hall.—Gentlemen's Magazine.

A BALLOON UNDER FIRE.

Immediate Collapse Does Not Follow, Even When the Mark Is Hit.

With regard to the effects of gunshots upon a balloon, the following experiments were made, says the Pall Mall Magazine. A shot was fired from a Lebel rifle at a balloon at an altitude of 500 feet. It only penetrated the fabric below the equator, and no appreciable result ensued. After this many shots were fired, several penetrating the balloon and passing out near the upper valve. After a lapse of six hours the balloon descended quietly to the ground, by reason of the loss of gas through the bullet holes. But it appeared that, whatever the number of shots, the loss of gas was never sufficient to cause the balloon to fall rapidly. On another occasion a shrapnel shell was fired from a seven-pounder Armstrong gun at a balloon having an altitude of 1,500 feet, but this being above the limit of elevation of the gun, it was impossible to hit it. In any case, had it been possible to do so, the shell would have penetrated the balloon below the equator and passed out again so low down as to cause no serious loss of gas. Indeed, a balloon loses but little of its lifting power—that is, little of its gas—if the hole is made below the equator. Once a gore was split up to within a few feet of the upper valve; at first the balloon fell rapidly, then the wind filled out the flapping fabric, and it sailed quietly to earth.

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WINNIPEGOSIS LETTER.

From Dennis Twohey Who Went From Austin, Minn., March, 1898.

Winnipegosis, Man., Jan. 23, 1899.

Benjamin Davies, Esq., Canadian Government Agent, St. Paul, Minn., Dear Sir:—I have great pleasure in writing you these few lines to let you know how I like my new location and how I have been getting along since I left Southern Minnesota. I like this country well, the climate agrees with me and my family at all seasons, and taken all around it is away ahead of Minnesota. I may say that we have not had one storm yet this winter. As regards the productives of the soil, I consider it beats Southern Minnesota. I am a practical farmer, but have never seen such vegetables in my life as I have seen raised here. As regards grain of all kinds, I have seen splendid yields, in fact any man who cannot get along here and make a good living cannot do it anywhere.

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(Signed) DENNIS TWOHEY.

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