

A TALE OF THE SEA.

VII.

In the days in which Jeremy York flourished, the gibbet was a much less conventional detail of the civilisation of the century than the gallows now is. Pirates and blood-stained smugglers were, to be sure, hanged in chains upon gallows erected on Thames mud. Execution Dock and the lower reaches were fixed points in Jack Ketch's programme when it came to maritime tragedies or felonies committed in the home waters round about the coast within convenient distance; but the ordinary land-going felon was again and again "turned off" in places adjacent to the scene of his wrong-doing. There seemed to be the old-fashioned intelligence a sort of poetical justice in hanging a man within view of the spot where, according to the ferocious laws of those days, he had earned his bitter title to the halter.

In conformity, with this practice, it was decided that Jeremy York should be hanged on a gibbet erected within musket-shot of Sandown Castle; that is to say, within a mile or so of the old wooden structure on to which he had dragged the bleeding body of the hapless boatwain, and from which, with horrid secrecy, he had committed it to the sea.

It was a windy melancholy morning, sombre with the stoop of dusky weeping clouds sweeping out of the north-east, with an edge of frost in their occasional showering of wet. The sea ran a dark green under their shadow, with a ghastly glare of froth along the horizon where the surf was boiling upon the Goodwin Sands. The sandhills were dusky with crowds of people, who had assembled to witness the fine show of a hanged man; many full of curiosity, congregated close about the gibbet, that stood black and horrible like a hideous signpost pointing the road to death, with the rope swayed by the wind dangling from the extremity of it. But the mass of the mob seemed to give it a pretty wide berth, as though it was an object to be best admired from afar.

One might have noticed however, that amongst the people who lingered in the immediate vicinity of what used to be called the fatal tree was a knot of some eight or ten persons, whom the least observant eye might have suspected were present from a motive that had but little reference to curiosity. They were most of them young men, with a certain air of resolution in their manner; they conversed very earnestly; they might have been observed to measure the height of the gibbet, or to gaze from the ground, the length of the rope, and the space from where the noose would be when the end of it had been coiled about the neck to the sand beneath. Some time before the arrival of the felon, a woman of slight figure, in deep mourning, her face concealed by a veil, came to the scaffold group of men, conversed with them for a few minutes, then broke away sobbing passionately, and was seen to walk hurriedly in the direction of Sandown. It was whispered amongst the crowd that she was Jenny East, the murderer's sweetheart; and several females who recognized her as she walked away, explained that for all her mourning and veils, she could not be an unfeeling friend to come to witness the gibbet where her sweetheart was to be strangled, even if she had not made up her mind to witness the whole scene from behind one of those sandhills she was skirting in such a hurry.

A little before eleven o'clock, a murmur ran through the crowd like the cry of a wave breaking against a mile shore. The procession was in view a horse and cart, in which were seated York the malefactor, the chaplain of the jail exhorting him, and the hangman sitting behind, with his eyes over the edge, fortifying his spirit with a sly dram from time to time from a flat bottle which he drew from his pocket, for this was country pageant with nothing but rooks, and here and there a farmer, and a few boys, who crowded progress, such as that from Newgate to Tyburn or Newcastle jail to the town room. On one side of the cart walked the murderer's sister, three constables, one of whom was habited and a small detachment of helpers after the pattern of the one-eyed man. Jeremy York sat cold and silent, gray as tobacco ashes, habited in the clothes he wore when taken; he held his eyes bent downwards; his lips were compressed into two bloodless lines; he gave no heed to the chaplain, who mumbled in his ear; he had only spoken once since he had entered the cart, and that was to say to the ordinary: "Sir, before God I am innocent." All the while he lay waiting for the day of execution he had said no more.

The cart rolled up to the gibbet, and the constables and helpers drove the crowd into a circle round it. It was thought that the people would make a speech, but he held his peace, never looking up. His arms were pinioned; the hangman hitched the end of the rope round his neck; the chaplain prayed earnestly and devoutly; the crowd held their breath, and not a sound broke the dreary stillness saving the dreary sweep of the wind over the sandhills and the setting and hissing of the breakers rising and falling upon the shingles. The sheriff then gave the signal; the driver who held the horse's head started the animal, the cart rolled away, and left Jeremy York hanging; but scarce had he swung to an erect posture under the gibbet, when it was observed that the hangman had not allowed for his considerable stature; his toes touched the ground; but ere the crowd could well distinguish this the group of men whom the veiled woman in black had conversed with gathered round the suspended figure in such a way as partly to support it. The sheriff, conversing with the hangman, looked away; no notice was taken of the action of these people, for it was a common custom in those days for friends of a malefactor to gather about him after he had been turned off, to shore him up, and to do their best to keep him from strangling during the half-hour in which he dangled. The crowd looked on; what the group of men were trying to effect they might have guessed; but whether the criminal should be ultimately saved or immediately throttled was all the same to the mob, as it was apparently to the sheriff. It was an execution anyway; this was the sight that the people of Deal and Sandwich and adjacent hamlets had cov-

ered the sandhills to witness, and he thought it would be well to have the issue of the spectacle what it would, there was nothing to disappoint them in the presentation of it.

At the expiration of half an hour, time was called by one of the men who crowded round the motionless figure. The sheriff signed to the executioner, who, springing forward, severed the rope, and the body fell into the outstretched arms of those about it. A minute after a small cart, containing a shroud, was brought to the gibbet, the body was placed in it, five men of the group who had clustered about the pendent form sprang into the cart, and with a tremendous splash, the body was driven rapidly in the direction of Sandown.

Eight months have passed, and the scene now on the broad equinoctial ocean, with the fiery atmosphere of the Antilles in every cat's-paw that tarries the polished heaving mirror till the faint air blows whence it comes, of copper brightening in blinding dazzle round about the sun, that in the meridian shines almost directly over the mast-heads, and transforms the vast spread of sea into a sheet of white fire, reminding into the distance faint with the haze of heat.

There was a small West Indian named the City of Glasgow that had been laying sauntered on these ferried parallels for hard upon four days. There was no virtue in awnings, in wetted decks, in yawning skylights, in open portholes, and the heels of windsails to render the atmosphere of the ship, and the decks and cabin tolerable to the people aboard the ship. The air was sickly with the smell of blistered paint, the brass-work was fiery hot, and took the skin of the hand that for a moment unconsciously touched it; the pitch was like putty between the seams; the fresh water in the scuttle-butts was warm as newly drawn milk, but quite without any dairy fragrance. It was a hot day, and the wind to blow. The mere deflection was nothing in those pleasant times of groping. In cooler climates the mate would have been satisfied to whistle for the month, and to be below every time his watch was up with a feeling that he had done everything that was necessary, and that all was well. But the heat made an enforced resting-place off the Cuban heights insufferable.

It was half-past eight o'clock in the morning watch; the hands had come up from breakfast and were distributed on various parts about the deck. There was not a breath of air; but there was a run of glassy folds from the south-west, which within the past hour had somewhat increased in weight; and the air was heavy, and the ship, that was a mere tub in form, as all vessels were in those days, saving perhaps, the piratical barcos longos, rolled as regularly as a pendulum swings, swelling out her bows to one end, and only to bring it into the masts again at the next with sounds like the explosions of nine-pounders in the tops. The captain of the City of Glasgow was a small fiery-faced man, with deep-set eyes that glowed like cairngorms under the shaggy thatches of the brows, a nose that not a little resembled a small ear in shape and size, and a mouth with a set of the lips that indicated a highly peppery temper. He walked to the mate, who stood near the wheel fanning himself with a great straw hat.

"When is this going to end, sir?" "I don't know, sir."

"Blood, sir! is there no limit to this?" "Thunder and stings! If this goes on, we must tow—down sea, tow down sea, tow down sea, tow down sea, I say—get the long-boat over and crowd her with men. What though they frizzle? We must get out of this, or—"

He was probably about to launch into a piece of profane swearing, when he was interrupted by a cry coming down from aloft, delivered by a man who had been sent on to the mainyard to repair some defect that the vigilant eye of the boatswain had detected. "Sail ho!" The little fiery-faced captain started and looked as if he scarcely credited his hearing; then running to the rail, he thrust his head clear of the awning and bawled up to the fellow: "Where away?" "Right astern," was the answer of the man, swinging with one hand from the mast, and pointing with the other directly over the leeward to the gleaming haze of sea-line there.

"Well," said the skipper, "that should be a sign there's wind somewhere about."

HARD LIFE ON THE SEA. KILLING SEALS IN THE STRAITS OF BELLE ISLE.

Sleep in the Coal Bankers—Rougher of Rough Work in the Big Ice Floes—How Seals are Killed.

Capt. Asply, a young Newfoundland-er, has followed the sea during much the greater part of his life, and the incidents he describes are full of genuine interest.

He declares sealing to be the hardest work ever heard of, and anyone knowing will testify that the seaman's standard of hardness of work is not that of a man of fashion. No man dares attempt a sealing cruise until his endurance has been demonstrated beyond all question. Work is not the only consideration. A strong man need not dread labor so long as he is allowed time for the necessary restorative—sleep. But the conditions of a sealing cruise are such that this, in a great measure, must be denied. Add the rigour of constant exposure to the most extreme cold, and you have a partial summary of a sealer's discomforts.

In the latter part of February the great herd of about half a million seals has come south as far as the latitude of the Straits of Belle Isle. The region between the narrows and Notre Dame Bay is the seals' habitual breeding ground. It is among the ice of these waters that the steamship Mariposa of Montreal is supposed to have met her recent fate. The seals produce their young upon the ice floes, or "pans," within a few miles of the shore. The parent animals swim about in pursuit of fish, and contentedly follow the ice wherever it drifts. The young grow with surprising rapidity. At the age of three weeks they have attained about the size of a bulldog, and replaced the white fur of infancy with the dark coat.

CARRY BIG CHASE. Seal ships from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and the neighboring coasts sail early in March. By that time the ice is well on in the process of breaking up, or "spawning broad," and navigation has become possible. About the middle of March the killing begins. As the ships approach the sealing grounds the final preparations are completed. The long watch is begun, which is not relaxed until the active cruise is over. This watch, lasting from dawn till dark every day, is kept up by one man alone. His importance is recognized in his rank, which is next to that of the captain. From the shape of his station of observation at the masthead, this individual is known as "the barrel man." He is provided with as fine a telescope as possible, and skill in its use is one of his most important essentials.

Another part of the preparation is the division of the ship's crew, 200 or 300 number, into four watches. Each is put under command of a master of watch, and is organized into "boats" crews and other small divisions for the performance of the various duties aboard ship. It is the perfection of this organization, and the skill that brings a ship's work to the frictionless system that is a landsman's constant surprise.

When at length seals are sighted the work is passed down from the masthead as quickly as possible. Old seals may be disturbed by a shout at a distance of miles; further reason for caution exists if the observer is within hearing of other ships. In the latter case the first ship's crew, on seeing the seal, sets off by a circuitous route, intended to throw others off the track. Meantime orders are issued forbidding any one to show his head above the rail. The slightest carelessness will cause the game to disappear into the water. Perhaps the "pan" of seals is sighted by a rival ship. In that case all round-about tactics are dropped, and a race ensues. The long watches, armed with gaff-top-poles, clubs, and other weapons, are hurrying about their work of execution with energy, abated only after the last of the living seals has escaped into the water.

The victims are then skinned and the pelts heaped together in stacks, surmounted by the ensigns of their respective ownerships. These stacks by the way, are another of the "pan" objects designated by the useful term "pan." A "pan" of pelts, like a "pan" of seals, is the supporting flat cake of ice. We have the same usage of "pan of bacon." It is seldom that a pan marked by a flag is molested; feeling on the subject is prohibitively strong.

HARD, HARD, WORK. After stacking up the pelts as described, all hands hurry back to the ship to continue the search. After hours of rushing about "over" slippery footing, handling and skinning the heavy bodies of the game, and perhaps a scuffle with a rival's crew, it is only natural to think of rest. But at that point the hardship only begins. The seal laws limit the time for killing to a few weeks; in consequence, there is not the slightest relaxation of effort until the time is past. So, though the crew may not be hungry, they get even a cup of tea, if a second "pan" is sighted, it is attacked without delay.

At dark the ship returns over her day's course to collect the "pans" of pelts. A storm may have arisen. It only becomes the more urgent that the prize be brought aboard without delay. Through the rolling, crunching ice the men pick their way in boats, with the water freezing immediately on whatever it touches. At last all the pans have been visited and all the grease-laden skins laboriously stowed away.

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At such a day's end one is justified in looking forward to a comfortable bed. But to the sealer this is denied. The bunk, limited in number, are allotted to the men who have been with that ship on previous cruises. The remainder of the men are allowed the liberty of the ship, which offers two alternatives—either in one of the boats on decks or a less frigid bed burrowed among the coal in the hold. Considerations of temperature make the latter choice the more popular. Even the rest that a coal bunker affords is not ways liable to interruption to the call on deck to help the ship through the ice.

In the latter part of the season the seals, by that time well grown, spend most of the time in the water. It then becomes necessary to shoot them from boats, and the danger that a small boat undergoes in the midst of a field of grinding, broken ice needs no explanation. Sometimes a storm cuts off a watch from its ship for a day at a time.

PLAYING AT HOUSEKEEPING. The Queen Regent of Holland is a practical-minded German woman. She has caused her little daughter, Wilhelmina, who will be queen four years hence when she is twenty, to be carefully trained and educated. Her play is educational and has trained her to realize the ideal of Dutch women, a good housekeeper.

Her Loo, in Gelderland, is Queen Wilhelmina's favorite home. It is a lovely country estate not far from Apeldoorn. The house is a big old Dutch mansion on the edge of a wood, and the home park is her young Majesty's special playground.

Here she learned to ride and to drive and to row. She does all these things with skill. Here she was a truly royal playground for a portion of the park is hedged off for her particular diversions.

She has here a miniature farm, which she has learned to superintend for all the world as if she were destined to be a model Dutch housewife. She gives the produce of this little farm to the poor and to neighboring hospitals. She has a flower-garden which she tends during the residence term at Het Loo.

But chief of all she has her chalet, a pretty little house in the Swiss style, completely equipped and serving partly as a plaything and partly as a training-school for her lucky mistress. The chalet is well stocked with the toys that have accumulated during the last

dozen years, and which are now laid aside. Here, too, the young queen has learned to "keep house," and nowadays she manages her little "chalet estate" on her own responsibility, receiving her friends there, and cooking for the most favored ones some delectable Dutch dish.

A PLEASANT PROSPECT. She—Ma says she knows that when she is married we won't live so close to cats and dogs as she and pa do. He—No, indeed. Your ma is right. Yes, she says she is sure you'll be easier to manage than pa is.

THE PROPER METHOD. Brown—Have you read this article on how to tell a bad egg? Jones—No; but if you have anything to tell a bad egg, my advice is to keep it gently.

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