

***BRANTZ MAYER,  
THEODORE CANOT***



***CAPTAIN  
CANOT; OR,  
TWENTY YEARS  
OF AN AFRICAN  
SLAVER***

**Brantz Mayer, Theodore Canot**

# **Captain Canot; Or, Twenty Years of an African Slaver**

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# CHAPTER I.

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Whilst Bonaparte was busy conquering Italy, my excellent father, Louis Canot, a captain and paymaster in the French army, thought fit to pursue his fortunes among the gentler sex of that fascinating country, and luckily won the heart and hand of a blooming Piedmontese, to whom I owe my birth in the capital of Tuscany.

My father was faithful to the Emperor as well as the Consul. He followed his sovereign in his disasters as well as glory: nor did he falter in allegiance until death closed his career on the field of Waterloo.

Soldiers' wives are seldom rich, and my mother was no exception to the rule. She was left in very moderate circumstances, with six children to support; but the widow of an old campaigner, who had partaken the sufferings of many a long and dreary march with her husband, was neither disheartened by the calamity, nor at a loss for thrifty expedients to educate her younger offspring. Accordingly, I was kept at school, studying geography, arithmetic, history and the languages, until near twelve years old, when it was thought time for me to choose a profession. At school, and in my leisure hours, I had always been a greedy devourer of books of travel, or historical narratives full of stirring incidents, so that when I avowed my preference for a sea-faring life, no one was surprised. Indeed, my fancy was rather applauded, as two of my mother's brothers had served in the Neapolitan navy, under Murat. Proper inquiries were quickly made at Leghorn; and, in a few weeks, I found

myself on the *mole* of that noble seaport, comfortably equipped, with a liberal outfit, ready to embark, as an apprentice, upon the American ship *Galatea*, of Boston.

It was in the year 1819, that I first saluted the element upon which it has been my destiny to pass so much of my life. The reader will readily imagine the discomforts to which I was subjected on this voyage. Born and bred in the interior of Italy, I had only the most romantic ideas of the sea. My opinions had been formed from the lives of men in loftier rank and under more interesting circumstances. My career was necessarily one of great hardship; and, to add to my misfortunes, I had neither companion nor language to vent my grief and demand sympathy. For the first three months, I was the butt of every joker in the ship. I was the scape-goat of every accident and of every one's sins or carelessness. As I lived in the cabin, each plate, glass, or utensil that fell to leeward in a gale, was charged to my negligence. Indeed, no one seemed to compassionate my lot save a fat, lubberly negro cook, whom I could not endure. He was the *first* African my eye ever fell on, and I must confess that he was the only friend I possessed during my early adventures.

Besides the officers of the *Galatea*, there was a clerk on board, whom the captain directed to teach me English, so that, by the time we reached Sumatra, I was able to stand up for my rights, and plead my cause. As we could not obtain a cargo of pepper on the island, we proceeded to Bengal; and, on our arrival at Calcutta, the captain, who was also supercargo, took apartments on shore, where the clerk and myself were allowed to follow him.

According to the fashion of that period, the house provided for our accommodation was a spacious and elegant one, equipped with every oriental comfort and convenience, while fifteen or twenty servants were always at the command of its inmates. For three months we lived like nabobs, and sorry, indeed, was I when the clerk announced that the vessel's loading was completed, and our holiday over.

On the voyage home, I was promoted from the cabin, and sent into the steerage to do duty as a "light hand," in the chief mate's watch. Between this officer and the captain there was ill blood, and, as I was considered the master's pet, I soon began to feel the bitterness of the subordinate's spite. This fellow was not only cross-grained, but absolutely malignant. One day, while the ship was skimming along gayly with a five-knot breeze, he ordered me out to the end of the jib-boom to loosen the sail; yet, without waiting until I was clear of the jib, he suddenly commanded the men who were at the halliards to hoist the canvas aloft. A sailor who stood by pointed out my situation, but was cursed into silence. In a moment I was jerked into the air, and, after performing half a dozen involuntary summersets, was thrown into the water, some distance from the ship's side. When I rose to the surface, I heard the prolonged cry of the anxious crew, all of whom rushed to the ship's side, some with ropes' ends, some with chicken coops, while others sprang to the stern boat to prepare it for launching. In the midst of the hurly-burly, the captain reached the deck, and laid the ship to; the sailor who had remonstrated with the mate having, in the meantime, clutched that officer, and



attempted to throw him over, believing I had been drowned by his cruelty. As the sails of the Galatea flattened against the wind, many an anxious eye was strained over the water in search of me; but I was nowhere seen! In truth, as the vessel turned on her heel, the movement brought her so close to the spot where I rose, that I clutched a rope thrown over for my rescue, and climbed to the lee channels without being perceived. As I leaped to the deck, I found one half the men in tumultuous assemblage around the struggling mate and sailor; but my sudden apparition served to divert the mob from its fell purpose, and, in a few moments, order was perfectly restored. Our captain was an intelligent and just man, as may be readily supposed from the fact that he exclusively controlled so valuable an enterprise. Accordingly, the matter was examined with much deliberation; and, on the following day, the chief mate was deprived of his command. I should not forget to mention that, in the midst of the excitement, my sable friend the cook leaped overboard to rescue his *protégé*. Nobody happened to notice the darkey when he sprang into the sea; and, as he swam in a direction quite contrary from the spot where I fell, he was nigh being lost, when the ship's sails were trimmed upon her course. Just at that moment a faint call was heard from the sea, and the woolly skull perceived in time for rescue.

This adventure elevated not only "little Theodore," but our "culinary artist" in the good opinion of the mess. Every Saturday night my African friend was allowed to share the cheer of the forecastle, while our captain presented him with a certificate of his meritorious deed, and made the

paper more palatable by the promise of a liberal bounty in current coin at the end of the voyage.

I now began to feel at ease, and acquire a genuine fondness for sea life. My aptitude for languages not only familiarized me with English, but enabled me soon to begin the scientific study of navigation, in which, I am glad to say, that Captain Solomon Towne was always pleased to aid my industrious efforts.

We touched at ST. HELENA for supplies, but as Napoleon was still alive, a British frigate met us within five miles of that rock-bound coast, and after furnishing a scant supply of water, bade us take our way homeward.

I remember very well that it was a fine night in July, 1820, when we touched the wharf at Boston, Massachusetts. Captain Towne's family resided in Salem, and, of course, he was soon on his way thither. The new mate had a young wife in Boston, and he, too, was speedily missing. One by one, the crew sneaked off in the darkness. The second mate quickly found an excuse for a visit in the neighborhood; so that, by midnight, the *Galatea*, with a cargo valued at about one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, was intrusted to the watchfulness of a stripling cabin-boy.

I do not say it boastfully, but it is true that, whenever I have been placed in responsible situations, from the earliest period of my recollection, I felt an immediate stirring of that pride which always made me equal, or at least willing, for the required duty. All night long I paced the deck. Of all the wandering crowd that had accompanied me nearly a year across many seas, I alone had no companions, friends,

home, or sweetheart, to seduce me from my craft; and I confess that the sentiment of loneliness, which, under other circumstances, might have unmanned me at my American greeting, was stifled by the mingled vanity and pride with which I trod the quarter-deck as temporary captain.

When dawn ripened into daylight, I remembered the stirring account my shipmates had given of the beauty of Boston, and I suddenly felt disposed to imitate the example of my fellow-sailors. Honor, however, checked my feet as they moved towards the ship's ladder; so that, instead of descending her side, I closed the cabin door, and climbed to the main-royal yard, to see the city at least, if I could not mingle with its inhabitants. I expected to behold a second Calcutta; but my fancy was not gratified. Instead of observing the long, glittering lines of palaces and villas I left in India and on the Tuscan shore, my Italian eyes were first of all saluted by dingy bricks and painted boards. But, as my sight wandered away from the town, and swept down both sides of the beautiful bay, filled with its lovely islands, and dressed in the fresh greenness of summer, I confess that my memory and heart were magically carried away into the heart of Italy, playing sad tricks with my sense of duty, when I was abruptly restored to consciousness by hearing the heavy footfall of a stranger on deck.

The intruder—as well as I could see from aloft—seemed to be a stout, elderly person. I did not delay to descend the ratlins, but slid down a back-stay, just in time to meet the stranger as he approached our cabin. My notions of Italian manners did not yet permit me to appreciate the greater freedom and social liberty with which I have since become

so familiar in America, and it may naturally be supposed that I was rather peremptory in ordering the inquisitive Bostonian to leave the ship. I was in command—in my *first* command; and so unceremonious a visit was peculiarly annoying. Nor did the conduct of the intruder lessen my anger, as, quietly smiling at my order, he continued moving around the ship, and peered into every nook and corner. Presently he demanded whether I was alone? My self-possession was quite sufficient to leave the question unanswered; but I ordered him off again, and, to enforce my command, called a dog that did not exist. My *ruse*, however, did not succeed. The Yankee still continued his examination, while I followed closely on his heels, now and then twitching the long skirts of his surtout to enforce my mandate for his departure.

During this promenade, my unwelcome guest questioned me about the captain's health,—about the mate,—as to the cause of his dismissal,—about our cargo,—and the length of our voyage. Each new question begot a shorter and more surly answer. I was perfectly satisfied that he was not only a rogue, but a most impudent one; and my Franco-Italian temper strained almost to bursting.

By this time, we approached the house which covered the steering-gear at the ship's stern, and in which were buckets containing a dozen small turtles, purchased at the island of Ascension, where we stopped to water after the refusal at St. Helena. The turtle at once attracted the stranger's notice, and he promptly offered to purchase them. I stated that only half the lot belonged to me, but that I would sell the whole, provided he was able to pay. In a

moment, my persecutor drew forth a well-worn pocket-book, and handing me six dollars, asked whether I was satisfied with the price. The dollars were unquestionable gleams, if not absolute proofs, of honesty, and I am sure my heart would have melted had not the purchaser insisted on taking one of the buckets to convey the turtles home. Now, as these charming implements were part of the ship's pride, as well as property, and had been laboriously adorned by our marine artists with a spread eagle and the vessel's name, I resisted the demand, offering, at the same time, to return the money. But my turtle-dealer was not to be repulsed so easily; his ugly smile still sneered in my face as he endeavored to push me aside and drag the bucket from my hand. I soon found that he was the stronger of the two, and that it would be impossible for me to rescue my bucket fairly; so, giving it a sudden twist and shake, I contrived to upset both water and turtles on the deck, thus sprinkling the feet and coat-tails of the veteran with a copious ablution. To my surprise, however, the tormentor's cursed grin not only continued but absolutely expanded to an immoderate laugh, the uproariousness of which was increased by another suspicious Bostonian, who leaped on deck during our dispute. By this time I was in a red heat. My lips were white, my checks in a blaze, and my eyes sparks. Beyond myself with ferocious rage, I gnashed my teeth, and buried them in the hand which I could not otherwise release from its grasp on the bucket. In the scramble, I either lost or destroyed part of my bank notes; yet, being conqueror at last, I became clement, and taking up my turtles, once more insisted upon the departure of my annoyers. There is no

doubt that I larded my language with certain epithets, very current among sailors, most of which are learned more rapidly by foreigners than the politer parts of speech.

Still the abominable monster, nothing daunted by my onslaught, rushed to the cabin, and would doubtless have descended, had not I been nimbler than he in reaching the doors, against which I placed my back, in defiance. Here, of course, another battle ensued, enlivened by a chorus of laughter from a crowd of laborers on the wharf. This time I could not bite, yet I kept the apparent thief at bay with my feet, kicking his shins unmercifully whenever he approached, and swearing in the choicest Tuscan.

He who knows any thing of Italian character, especially when it is additionally spiced by French condiments, may imagine the intense rage to which so volcanic a nature as mine was, by this time, fully aroused. Language and motion were nearly exhausted. I could neither speak nor strike. The mind's passion had almost produced the body's paralysis. Tears began to fall from my eyes: but still he laughed! At length, I suddenly flung wide the cabin doors, and leaping below at a bound, seized from the rack a loaded musket, with which I rushed upon deck. As soon as the muzzle appeared above the hatchway, my tormentor sprang over the ship, and by the time I reached the ladder, I found him on the wharf, surrounded by a laughing and shouting crowd. I shook my head menacingly at the group; and shouldering my firelock, mounted guard at the gangway. It was fully a quarter of an hour that I paraded (occasionally ramming home my musket's charge, and varying the amusement by an Italian defiance to the jesters), before the tardy mate

made his appearance on the wharf. But what was my consternation, when I beheld him advance deferentially to my pestilent visitor, and taking off his hat, respectfully offer to conduct him on board! This was a great lesson to me in life on the subject of “appearances.” The shabby old individual was no less a personage than the celebrated William Gray, of Boston, owner of the *Galatea* and cargo, and proprietor of many a richer craft then floating on every sea.

But Mr. Gray was a forgiving enemy. As he left the ship that morning, he presented me fifty dollars, “in exchange,” he said, “for the six destroyed in protection of his property;” and, on the day of my discharge, he not only paid the wages of my voyage, but added fifty dollars more to aid my schooling in scientific navigation.

Four years after, I again met this distinguished merchant at the Marlborough Hotel, in Boston. I was accompanied, on that occasion, by an uncle who visited the United States on a commercial tour. When my relative mentioned my name to Mr. Gray, that gentleman immediately recollected me, and told my venerable kinsman that he never received such abuse as I bestowed on him in July, 1820! The sting of my teeth, he declared, still tingled in his hand, while the kicks I bestowed on his ankles, occasionally displayed the scars they had left on his limbs. He seemed particularly annoyed, however, by some caustic remarks I had made about his protuberant stomach, and forgave the blows but not the language.

My uncle, who was somewhat of a tart disciplinarian, gave me an extremely black look, while, in French, he

demanded an explanation of my conduct. I knew Mr. Gray, however, better than my relative; and so, without heeding his reprimand, I answered, in English, that if I cursed the ship's owner on that occasion, it was my *debut* in the English language on the American continent; and as my Anglo-Saxon education had been finished in a forecastle, it was not to be expected I should be select in my vocabulary. "Never the less," I added, "Mr. Gray was so delighted with my *accolade*, that he valued my defence of his property and our delicious *tête-à-tête* at the sum of a hundred dollars!"

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## CHAPTER II.

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The anecdote told in the last chapter revived my uncle's recollection of several instances of my early impetuosity; among which was a rencounter with Lord Byron, while that poet was residing at his villa on the slope of Monte Negro near Leghorn, which he took the liberty to narrate to Mr. Gray.

A commercial house at that port, in which my uncle had some interest, was the noble lord's banker;—and, one day, while my relative and the poet were inspecting some boxes recently arrived from Greece, I was dispatched to see them safely deposited in the warehouse. Suddenly, Lord Byron demanded a pencil. My uncle had none with him, but remembering that I had lately been presented one in a handsome silver case, requested the loan of it. Now, as this was my first *silver* possession, I was somewhat reluctant to let it leave my possession even for a moment, and handed it to his lordship with a bad grace. When the poet had made his memorandum, he paused a moment, as if lost in thought, and then very unceremoniously—but, doubtless, in a fit of abstraction—put the pencil in his pocket. If I had already visited America at that time, it is likely that I would have warned the Englishman of his mistake on the spot; but, as children in the Old World are rather more curbed in their intercourse with elders than on this side of the Atlantic, I bore the forgetfulness as well as I could until next morning. Summoning all my resolution, I repaired without my uncle's knowledge to the poet's house at an early hour, and after

much difficulty was admitted to his room. He was still in bed. Every body has heard of Byron's peevishness, when disturbed or intruded on. He demanded my business in a petulant and offensive tone. I replied, respectfully, that on the preceding day I loaned him a *silver* pencil,—strongly emphasizing and repeating the word *silver*,—which, I was grieved to say, he forgot to return. Byron reflected a moment, and then declared he had restored it to me on the spot! I mildly but firmly denied the fact; while his lordship as sturdily reasserted it. In a short time, we were both in such a passion that Byron commanded me to leave the room. I edged out of the apartment with the slow, defying air of angry boyhood; but when I reached the door, I suddenly turned, and looking at him with all the bitterness I felt for his nation, called him, in French, “an English hog!” Till then our quarrel had been waged in Italian. Hardly were the words out of my mouth when his lordship leaped from the bed, and in the scantiest drapery imaginable, seized me by the collar, inflicting such a shaking as I would willingly have exchanged for a tertian ague from the Pontine marshes. The sudden air-bath probably cooled his choler, for, in a few moments, we found ourselves in a pacific explanation about the luckless pencil. Hitherto I had not mentioned my uncle; but the moment I stated the relationship, Byron became pacified and credited my story. After searching his pockets once more ineffectually for the lost *silver*, he presented me his own *gold* pencil instead, and requested me to say why I “cursed him *in French*?”

“My father was a Frenchman, my lord,” said I.

“And your mother?”

"She is an Italian, sir."

"Ah! no wonder, then, you called me an 'English hog.' The hatred runs in the blood; you could not help it."

After a moment's hesitation, he continued,—still pacing the apartment in his night linen,—“You don't like the English, do you, my boy?”

"No," said I, "I don't."

"Why?" returned Byron, quietly.

"Because my father died fighting them," replied I.

"Then, youngster, you have *a right* to hate them," said the poet, as he put me gently out of the door, and locked it on the inside.

A week after, one of the porters of my uncle's warehouse offered to sell, at an exorbitant price, what he called "Lord Byron's pencil," declaring that his lordship had presented it to him. My uncle was on the eve of bargaining with the man, when he perceived his own initials on the silver. In fact, it was my lost gift. Byron, in his abstraction, had evidently mistaken the porter for myself; so the servant was rewarded with a trifling gratuity, while my *virtuoso* uncle took the liberty to appropriate the golden relic of Byron to himself, and put me off with the humbler remembrance of his honored name.

These, however, are episodes. Let us return once more to the Galatea and her worthy commander.

Captain Towne retired to Salem after the hands were discharged, and took me with him to reside in his family until he was ready for another voyage. In looking back through the vista of a stormy and adventurous life, my memory lights on no happier days than those spent in this

sea-faring emporium. Salem, in 1821, was my paradise. I received more kindness, enjoyed more juvenile pleasures, and found more affectionate hospitality in that comfortable city than I can well describe. Every boy was my friend. No one laughed at my broken English, but on the contrary, all seemed charmed by my foreign accent. People thought proper to surround me with a sort of romantic mystery, for, perhaps, there was a flavor of the dashing dare-devil in my demeanor, which imparted influence over homelier companions. Besides this, I soon got the reputation of a scholar. I was considered a marvel in languages, inasmuch as I spoke French, Italian, Spanish, English, and *professed* a familiarity with Latin. I remember there was a wag in Salem, who, determining one day to test my acquaintance with the latter tongue, took me into a neighboring druggist's, where there were some Latin volumes, and handed me one with the request to translate a page, either verbally or on paper. Fortunately, the book he produced was *Æsop*, whose fables had been so thoroughly studied by me two years before, that I even knew some of them by heart. Still, as I was not very well versed in the niceties of English, I thought it prudent to make my version of the selected fable in French; and, as there was a neighbor who knew the latter language perfectly, my translation was soon rendered into English, and the proficiency of the "Italian boy" conceded.

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I sailed during five years from Salem on voyages to various parts of the world, always employing my leisure, while on shore and at sea, in familiarizing myself minutely with the practical and scientific details of the profession to

which I designed devoting my life. I do not mean to narrate the adventures of those early voyages, but I cannot help setting down a single anecdote of that fresh and earnest period, in order to illustrate the changes that time and "*circumstances*" are said to work on human character.

In my second voyage to India, I was once on shore with the captain at Quallahbattoo, in search of pepper, when a large *proa*, or Malay canoe, arrived at the landing crammed with prisoners, from one of the islands. The unfortunate victims were to be sold *as slaves*. They were the *first slaves* I had seen! As the human cargo was disembarked, I observed one of the Malays dragging a handsome young female by the hair along the beach. Cramped by long confinement in the wet bottom of the canoe, the shrieking girl was unable to stand or walk. My blood was up quickly. I ordered the brute to desist from his cruelty; and, as he answered with a derisive laugh, I felled him to the earth with a single blow of my boat-hook. This impetuous vindication of humanity forced us to quit Quallahbattoo in great haste; but, at the age of seventeen, my feelings in regard to slavery were very different from what this narrative may disclose them to have become in later days.

When my apprenticeship was over, I made two or three successful voyages as mate, until—I am ashamed to say,—that a "disappointment" caused me to forsake my employers, and to yield to the temptations of reckless adventure. This sad and early blight overtook me at Antwerp,—a port rather noted for the backslidings of young seamen. My hard-earned pay soon diminished very sensibly, while I was desperately in love with a Belgian beauty, who

made a complete fool of me—for at least three months! From Antwerp, I betook myself to Paris to vent my second “disappointment.” The pleasant capital of *la belle France* was a cup that I drained at a single draught. Few young men of eighteen or twenty have lived faster. The gaming tables at Frascati’s and the Palais Royal finished my consumptive purse; and, leaving an empty trunk as a recompense for my landlord, I took “French leave” one fine morning, and hastened to sea.

The reader will do me the justice to believe that nothing but the direst necessity compelled me to embark on board a *British* vessel, bound to Brazil. The captain and his wife who accompanied him, were both stout, handsome Irish people, of equal age, but addicted to fondness for strong and flavored drinks.

My introduction on board was signalized by the ceremonious bestowal upon me of the key of the spirit-locker, with a strict injunction from the commander to deny more than three glasses daily either to his wife or himself. I hardly comprehended this singular order at first, but, in a few days, I became aware of its propriety. About eleven o’clock her ladyship generally approached when I was serving out the men’s ration of gin, and requested me to fill her tumbler. Of course, I gallantly complied. When I returned from deck below with the bottle, she again required a similar dose, which, with some reluctance, I furnished. At dinner the dame drank *porter*, but passed off the gin on her credulous husband as water. This system of deception continued as long as the malt liquor lasted, so that her ladyship received and swallowed daily a triple allowance of

capital grog. Indeed, it is quite astonishing what quantities of the article can sometimes be swallowed by sea-faring *women*. The oddness of their appetite for the cordials is not a little enhanced by the well-known aversion the sex have to spirituous fluids, in every shape, on shore. Perhaps the salt air may have something to do with the acquired relish; but, as I am not composing an essay on temperance, I shall leave the discussion to wiser physiologists.

My companions' indulgence illustrated another diversity between the sexes, which I believe is historically true from the earliest records to the present day. *The lady* broke her rule, but *the captain* adhered faithfully to his. Whilst on duty, the allotted three glasses completed his potations. But when we reached Rio de Janeiro, and there was no longer need of abstinence, save for the sake of propriety, both my shipmates gave loose to their thirst and tempers. They drank, quarrelled, and kissed, with more frequency and fervor than any creatures it has been my lot to encounter throughout an adventurous life. After we got the vessel into the inner harbor,—though not without a mishap, owing to the captain's drunken stubbornness,—my Irish friends resolved to take lodgings for a while on shore. For two days they did not make their appearance; but toward the close of the third, they returned, “fresh,” as they said, “from the theatre.” It was very evident that the jolly god had been their companion; and, as I was not a little scandalized by the conjugal scenes which usually closed these frolics, I hastened to order tea under the awning on deck, while I betook myself to a hammock which was slung on the main boom. Just as I fell off into pleasant dreams, I was roused

from my nap by a prelude to the opera. Madame gave her lord the lie direct. A loaf of bread, discharged against her head across the table, was his reply. Not content with this harmless demonstration of rage, he seized the four corners of the table-cloth, and gathering the tea-things and food in the sack, threw the whole overboard into the bay. In a flash, the tigress fastened on his scanty locks with one hand, while, with the other, she pummelled his eyes and nose. Badly used as he was, I must confess that the captain proved too generous to retaliate on that portion of his spouse where female charms are most bewitching and visible; still, I am much mistaken if the sound spanking she received did not elsewhere leave marks of physical vigor that would have been creditable to a pugilist.

It was remarkable that these human tornados were as violent and brief as those which scourge tropical lands as well as tropical characters. In a quarter of an hour there was a dead calm. The silence of the night, on those still and star-lit waters, was only broken by a sort of chirrup, that might have been mistaken for a cricket, but which I think was *a kiss*. Indeed, I was rapidly going off again to sleep, when I was called to give the key of the spirit-locker,—a glorious resource that never failed as a solemn seal of reconciliation and bliss.

Next morning, before I awoke, the captain went ashore, and when his wife, at breakfast, inquired my knowledge of the night's affray, my gallantry forced me to confess that I was one of the soundest sleepers on earth or water, and, moreover, that I was surprised to learn there had been the least difference between such happy partners. In spite of my



simplicity, the lady insisted on confiding her griefs, with the assurance that she would not have been half so angry had not her spouse foolishly thrown her silver spoons into the sea, with the bread and butter. She grew quite eloquent on the pleasures of married life, and told me of many a similar reproof she had been forced to give her husband during their voyages. It did him good, she said, and kept him wholesome. In fact, she hoped, that if ever I married, I would have the luck to win a guardian like herself. Of course, I was again most gallantly silent. Still, I could not help reserving a decision as to the merits of matrimony; for present appearances certainly did not demonstrate the bliss I had so often read and heard of. At any rate, I resolved, that if ever I ventured upon a trial of love, it should, at least, in the first instance, be love *without* liquor!

On our return to Europe we called at Dover for orders, and found that Antwerp was our destination. We made sail at sunset, but as the wind was adverse and the weather boisterous, we anchored for two days in the Downs. At length, during a lull of the gale, we sailed for the mouth of the Scheldt; but, as we approached the coast of Holland, the wind became light and baffling, so that we were unable to enter the river. We had not taken a pilot at Ramsgate, being confident of obtaining one off Flushing. At sundown, the storm again arose in all its fury from the north-west; but all attempts to put back to England were unavailing, for we dared not show a rag of sail before the howling tempest. It was, indeed, a fearful night of wind, hail, darkness, and anxiety. At two o'clock in the morning, we suddenly grounded on one of the numerous banks off Flushing. Hardly

had we struck when the sea made a clean sweep over us, covering the decks with sand, and snapping the spars like pipe-stems. The captain was killed instantly by the fall of a top-gallant yard, which crushed his skull; while the sailors, who in such moments seem possessed by utter recklessness, broke into the spirit-room and drank to excess. For awhile I had some hope that the stanchness of our vessel's hull might enable us to cling to her till daylight, but she speedily bilged and began to fill.

After this it would have been madness to linger. The boats were still safe. The long one was quickly filled by the crew, under the command of the second mate—who threw an anker of gin into the craft before he leaped aboard,—while I reserved the jolly-boat for myself, the captain's widow, the cook, and the steward. The long-boat was never heard of.

All night long that dreadful nor'wester howled along and lashed the narrow sea between England and the Continent; yet I kept our frail skiff before it, hoping, at daylight, to descry the lowlands of Belgium. The heart-broken woman rested motionless in the stern-sheets. We covered her with all the available garments, and, even in the midst of our own griefs, could not help feeling that the suddenness of her double desolation had made her perfectly unconscious of our dreary surroundings.

Shortly after eight o'clock a cry of joy announced the sight of land within a short distance. The villagers of Bragden, who soon descried us, hastened to the beach, and rushing knee deep into the water, signalled that the shore was safe after passing the surf. The sea was churned by the

storm into a perfect foam. Breakers roared, gathered, and poured along like avalanches. Still, there was no hope for us but in passing the line of these angry sentinels. Accordingly, I watched the swell, and pulling firmly, bow on, into the first of the breakers, we spun with such arrowy swiftness across the intervening space, that I recollect nothing until we were clasped in the arms of the brawny Belgians on the beach.

But, alas! the poor widow was no more. I cannot imagine when she died. During the four hours of our passage from the wreck to land, her head rested on my lap; yet no spasm of pain or convulsion marked the moment of her departure.

That night the parish priest buried the unfortunate lady, and afterwards carried round a plate, asking alms,—not for masses to insure the repose of her soul,—but to defray the expenses of *the living* to Ostend.

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## CHAPTER III.

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I had no time or temper to be idle. In a week, I was on board a Dutch galliot, bound to Havana; but I soon perceived that I was again under the command of two captains—male and female. The regular master superintended the navigation, while the *bloomer* controlled the whole of us. Indeed, the dame was the actual owner of the craft, and, from skipper to cabin-boy, governed not only our actions but our stomachs. I know not whether it was piety or economy that swayed her soul, but I never met a person who was so rigid as this lady in the observance of the church calendar, especially whenever a day of abstinence allowed her to deprive us of our beef. Nothing but my destitution compelled me to ship in this craft; still, to say the truth, I had well-nigh given up all idea of returning to the United States, and determined to engage in any adventurous expedition that my profession offered. In 1824, it will be remembered, Mexico, the Spanish main, Peru, and the Pacific coasts, were renowned for the fortunes they bestowed on enterprise; and, as the galliot was bound to Havana, I hailed her as a sort of floating bridge to my EL DORADO.

On the seventh night after our departure, while beating out of the bay of Biscay with a six-knot breeze, in a clear moonlight, we ran foul of a vessel which approached us on the opposite tack. Whence she sprang no one could tell. In an instant, she appeared and was on us with a dreadful concussion. Every man was prostrated on deck and all our

masts were carried away. From the other vessel we heard shrieks and a cry of despair; but the ill-omened miscreant disappeared as rapidly as she approached, and left us floating a helpless log, on a sea proverbial for storms.

We contrived, however, to reach the port of Ferrol, in Spain, where we were detained four months, in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining the materials for repairs, notwithstanding this place is considered the best and largest ship-yard of Castile.

It was at Ferrol that I met with a singular adventure, which was well-nigh depriving me of my personal identity, as Peter Schlemhil was deprived of his shadow. I went one afternoon in my boat to the other side of the harbor to obtain some pieces of leather from a tannery, and, having completed my purchase, was lounging slowly towards the quay, when I stopped at a house for a drink of water. I was handed a tumbler by the trim-built, black-eyed girl, who stood in the doorway, and whose rosy lips and sparkling eyes were more the sources of my thirst than the water; but, while I was drinking, the damsel ran into the dwelling, and hastily returned with her mother and another sister, who stared at me a moment without saying a word, and simultaneously fell upon my neck, smothering my lips and cheeks with repeated kisses!

*"Oh! mi querido hijo,"* said the mother.

*"Carissimo Antonio,"* sobbed the daughter.

*"Mi hermano!"* exclaimed her sister.

"Dear son, dear Antonio, dear brother! Come into the house; where have you been? Your grandmother is dying to see you once more! Don't delay an instant, but come in

without a word! *Por dios!* that we should have caught you at last, and in such a way: *Ave Maria! madrecita, aqui viene Antonito!*"

In the midst of all these exclamations, embraces, fondlings, and kisses, it may easily be imagined that I stood staring about me with wide eyes and mouth, and half-drained tumbler in hand, like one in a dream. I asked no questions, but as the dame was buxom, and the girls were fresh, I kissed in return, and followed unreluctantly as they half dragged, half carried me into their domicil. On the door-sill of the inner apartment I found myself locked in the skinny arms of a brown and withered crone, who was said to be my grandmother, and, of course, my youthful *moustache* was properly bedewed with the moisture of her toothless mouth.

As soon as I was seated, I took the liberty to say,—though without any protest against this charming assault,—that I fancied there might possibly be some mistake; but I was quickly silenced. My *madrecita* declared at once, and in the presence of my four shipmates, that, six years before, I left her on my first voyage in a Dutch vessel; that my *querido padre*, had gone to bliss two years after my departure; and, accordingly, that now, I, Antonio Gomez y Carrasco, was the only surviving male of the family, and, of course, would never more quit either her, my darling sisters, or the old *pobrecita*, our grandmother. This florid explanation was immediately closed like the pleasant air of an opera by a new chorus of kisses, nor can there be any doubt that I responded to the embraces of my sweet *hermanas* with the most gratifying fraternity.