

## A TIMELY AWAKENING

One evening towards sunset as I sat at my desk, wishing something would happen to produce a little excitement, I was surprised to find that it had gradually become darker in the room, and after a short time I could hardly distinguish the words on the book before me. However, this mattered but little since I had not been interested in my work, but rather in the calendar above my desk which represented one of the old-fashioned sailing vessels.

The monotony which hung over the whole first corridor like a mist seemed to become denser and more noticeable. The only noise to be heard was that of the radiator beside me whose hissing and spurning tended to increase the silence. Gradually the hissing of the steam seemed to be farther and farther away, the light grew dimmer and dimmer, and the ship loomed up before me, lolling peacefully on the calm waters. My whole attention was riveted on it. I could see a group of sailors working on the star-board side amidships.

Soon I observed the object of their efforts. A dory was lowered over the side of the vessel and, manned by two sailors, came swiftly towards me. As it approached me, I could see the features of the men who rowed it, and they were the most horrible looking people I had ever seen. Long hair hung untidily over their shoulders and their black beards and beak-like noses gave me the impression that they were the old Spanish pirates who, it had been said, were the terror of the Spanish Main. I was soon grabbed and thrown into their boat. One stood over me in a menacing manner while the other rowed swiftly to the ship.

When we reached the side a number of able-looking seamen wearing short swords and pistols helped us aboard. They gathered round and escorted me down through a small hole and into a cabin where an old gray-haired pirate sat in state upon a lounge. His piercing, faded, blue eyes never left me for an instant. After dismissing his men he turned to me and said,

"Well, stranger, you will have to make yourself perfectly at home because you are going for a long, long ride. My men will be under the strictest orders not to hurt you so long as you behave properly, but if I find out that



you are not faithful to me you will walk the plank as all faithless seamen do. My life is a precarious one, and I will not be burdened by a young flibbertigibbet like you. Now, get up on deck and remember my last words."

All this time I had listened with what composure I could muster for the occasion. When he had finished I muttered something about trying not to discommode him and immediately went up on deck. We had already begun to sail and were skimming along at a very good rate despite the fact that there was very little breeze blowing. The sun was now well below the horizon on our right and a cloud or two floated peacefully on our left. All seemed to be occupied and paid little or no attention to me.

After a time the moon slowly rose and crept higher and higher until its silvery beams completely encircled our ship. I had never seen such a beautiful night. It seems strange now, that I was observant of it, for my disturbed state of soul would hardly warrant such, but the gladness that it brought made me forget my awful plight and drink in the beauty of those beams that seemed to dance gleefully from wave to wave in a mad race for the ship. In an ecstasy of delight I sat astride one of them and was carried away from the terrible faces about me to some far away island of perpetual sunshine and flowers; into strange but beautiful castles; among fairy queens and kings; among beautiful princes and ladies and at last through a long, winding passage to the shore and over the waves again to explore another strange land. Finally I was interrupted from my reverie to be led into a small cabin where I was informed I might pass the night. Despite all I had endured during the past few hours, I was soon asleep, regardless of the unaccustomed splash and swish of the water against the side of the ship.

It must have been nearly midnight when I was awakened by a great commotion on deck. The sound of running feet, hoarse voices, and falling bodies came strangely to my ears. I immediately jumped out of my bunk, and ran on deck to see what all this terrible noise could be. What I saw proved to me at a glance that my captors were really pirates, and pirates of the worst kind. By the moonlight I could see that we had drawn up alongside another boat and men could be easily seen engaged in hand to hand struggle on the other ship. Finally the



struggle ended and the captives and booty were taken aboard. The men were tied together on deck while the women and children were securely locked in the hold. Then began the gruesome task of disposing of the men. Why they so cruelly murdered them I could not tell, but one by one they were forced to walk the plank, blindfolded and at the point of the sword. The cruelty of all this surpassed anything I had seen or read during my whole life.

I swiftly ran along the deck and back to my cabin. But sleep would not come. I lay there tortured by the sight I had just witnessed. Tales of such deeds had come to my ears but never before had I believed that men could act so much like animals. I began to wonder what they might want from me. My thoughts were soon interrupted, however, by a gruff fellow who entered and took me to the Captain's room.

"Now," said the Captain; "I want you to tell me how much money your father has. I want to know how much to ask for you. We all know he is rich, so come across and tell us."

"And what if I don't?" said I, gaining courage.

"You," he answered, "will walk the plank like those men you saw a few minutes ago."

My thoughts flew back home and I thought of my father and mother. How I longed to be with them for just a few short minutes! Why did he not ask this before, instead of waiting till this dread hour of night? I could see no reason. My heart ached—

"One more minute," he interrupted.

Just at that moment two fierce looking men appeared. One carried a piece of rope and the other a black cloth. They advanced and took up their stand on either side me. I gasped for breath and the tears streamed down my cheeks.

"Time's up," grunted the Captain, "What do you say?"

"I will not tell," I replied.

The men began to tie my hands and feet and soon they led me to the plank where I had seen so many brave men die only a few short moments ago. But I would not give in. It would kill father to lose everything at his stage of life. Just when he had a start! I could not bear it. I would die first,—I was blinded and forced



gradually out on the plank by someone sticking a sword in my back.

"Will you tell?" came the question.

"No," I replied.

I felt the sword stick into my back. I took one step ahead, but no plank was there. Down, down I fell until I hit the water—

Splash! I awoke to find my room-mate with a pitcher, pouring water down the back of my neck.

My hideous dream was hideously interrupted.

—A.E.L., '31



Learn to hold thy tongue; five words cost Zacharias forty weeks of silence.—*Fuller*.

As universal a practice as lying is, and as easy a one as it seems, I do not remember to have heard three good lies in all my conversation.—*Swift*.

Great wits are sure to madness near allied, and thin partitions do their bounds divide.—*Dryden*.

Care to our coffin adds a nail, no doubt; and every grin, so merry, draws one out.—*Wolcott*.

