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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NARRATIVE OF THE SHIPWRECK OF THE BRIG BETSEY, OF WISCASSET, MAINE, AND MURDER OF FIVE OF HER CREW, BY PIRATES, ***

NARRATIVE

OF THE

SHIPWRECK OF THE BRIG BETSEY,

OF WISCASSET, (MAINE,)

AND

MURDER OF FIVE OF HER CREW,

BY PIRATES,

ON THE COAST OF CUBA, DEC. 1824.

"—quæque ipse miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui."

BY DANIEL COLLINS,
ONE OF THE ONLY TWO SURVIVORS.

WISCASSET:
PRINTED BY JOHN DORR.

 DISTRICT OF MAINE, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, THAT on this twenty-sixth day of April, in the year of our Lord L. S. one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five, and the forty-ninth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Mr. JOHN DORR, of the District of Maine, has deposited in this Office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, viz:

"Narrative of the Shipwreck of the Brig Betsey, of Wiscasset, and murder of five of her crew, by Pirates, on the coast of Cuba, Dec. 1824. By Daniel Collins, one of the only two survivors.

"—quæque ipse miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui."

Wiscasset: Printed by John Dorr. 1825."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also, to an act, entitled, "An Act supplementary to an act, entitled, an act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

J. MUSSEY, Clerk of the District Court of Maine.

A true copy as of record.—Attest,

J. MUSSEY, Clerk D. C. Maine.

 NARRATIVE.

On the 28th of November, 1824, I sailed from Wiscasset, (Me.) for Matanzas, in the Island of Cuba, on board the brig Betsey, laden with lumber; our officers and crew consisting of seven, viz. ELLIS HILTON, of Wiscasset, master; JOSHUA MERRY, of Edgecomb, 1st mate; DANIEL COLLINS, of Wiscasset, 2d mate; CHARLES MANUEL, (a Portuguese), SETH RUSSELL, and BENJ. BRIDGE, seamen; and DETREY JEOME, cook. On the 18th of December we passed the Berry Islands, and early next morning came to anchor within a league of Orange Key, on the Bahama Banks. It was the morning of the Sabbath, so calm and clear that even the lengthened billows of the Gulf Stream seemed sleeping around us, and the most untutored son of Neptune could not but remember that it was a holy day, consecrated to devotion and rest. Here we continued until noon, when a fresh breeze from the North invited us to weigh anchor and unfurl our sails, which, swelling with a fair wind, were as buoyant as our own spirits, at the increasing prospect of reaching our port of destination.

Our course was W. S. W. that afternoon and night. At 4 o'clock next morning, by order of Capt. Hilton, who had been sick most of the passage out, and was now unable to appear on deck during the night, we kept her away one point, steering S. W. by W. calculating the current easterly at three knots, which he supposed would clear us of the Double Headed Shot Keys. [Pg 4]

About sunset, a dark and stormy night approaching, I suggested to our Captain the propriety of shortening sail, to which he would not assent, presuming we might get into Matanzas the next day. The night was so dark that we could not discover objects distinctly beyond the length of the vessel, and the wind blew more than an usual wholesale breeze, which drove her, heavy-laden as she was, at the rate of 9 knots, calculating ourselves more than 6 leagues to the windward of the Double Headed Shot Keys. At half past 2 o'clock I was relieved at the helm, and after casting a glance over the lee side and discovering no alteration in the appearance of the water, I observed to my shipmate at the helm, "there is no fear of you"—went below and turned in with my clothes on. No one was below at this time except the Captain, who stood at the foot of the companion way viewing the appearance of the weather.

I had been in my birth about half an hour when I felt a tremendous shock, which covered me with the muskets that were over head, boxes, barrels and other cabin articles; the water pouring into my birth through the quarter. I cleared myself by a violent effort, ran for the companion way—it was gone—turned—leaped through the sky light, and was on deck in an instant. We were in the hollow of a sea, and I could just discern over our main peak the dark top of the rock, which we had struck, stem on, then going at the rate of nine knots. This rock, which some of our crew supposed to be a wreck, was concealed from the helmsman by the mainsail. Two of the crew were at the pumps—the deck load, which consisted of boards, scantlings and oars, piled on each [Pg 5]

side as high as their heads—the other two people were probably on the quarter deck. It was a careless watch for a dark night, even at our supposed distance from the Keys; but we were now in no situation to complain. A part of our stern and the yawl at the davits, had gone together. I ran forward to clear the anchors in order to prevent her from ranging ahead on another rock which I could perceive among the surf; but a greater part of the bows were gone, and with them the anchors.—The water was already groaning under the deck—she arose for the last time on the crest of another sea nearly to the top of the rock, quivering like a bird under its death-wound. Our Captain and crew were around the long-boat endeavoring to cut the lashings and right her, while I secured a compass, an axe, a bucket and several oars. The next sea we descended she struck; opened fore and aft, the masts and spars, with all sails standing, thundering against the rock, and the lumber from below deck cracking and crashing in every direction. We were all launched overboard on the lumber that adhered together, clinging hold of the long-boat as the seaman's last ark of refuge, and endeavoring to right her, which we did in a few moments; but not without the misfortune of splitting a plank in her bottom. We all sprang in, bearing with us nothing but the sea clothes we had on, the few articles before named, and some fragments of the boat's lashings. The Captain's dog, which a few moments before had been leaping from plank to plank after the cat, with as determined an enmity as though the pursuit had been through a farmyard, followed us; a companion by no means unwelcome to those, who, without provision or water, might have been compelled to depend on this faithful animal for the preservation of their lives.

[Pg 6]

A new difficulty now presented itself: Our boat leaked so fast that three hands, two with hats and one with the bucket, were unable to free her; but with the aid of the only knife we had saved, and the fragments of the lashings, I filled some of the seams, which helped to free her; but not so effectually as to relieve a single hand from bailing.

About a league from the rock we hung on our oars, watching the sea that ran mountains high, until day-light, when we pulled up under its lee, but could discover neither fresh water nor a particle of provisions, except a few pieces of floating bread that we dared not eat. Fragments of boards and spars were floating here and there, but the only article either of convenience or comfort we could preserve was a large blanket, which was converted into a sail and set; and being compelled by the violence of the sea, we put her away before the wind, steering S. half E.—a course that must have carried us far East of our intended track, had it not been for the strong Westerly current in St. Nicholas' Channel.

[Pg 7]

The rock on which we were wrecked, and from which we took our departure in the boat, proved to be one of the N. E. range of the Double Headed Shot Keys.

We steered the above course all that day, bailing and rowing without a moment's cessation, and approaching, as was then supposed, the Island of Cuba, the coast of which, except the entrance of Matanzas and Havana, was unknown to us. We knew, however, that the whole coast was lined with dangerous shoals and keys, though totally ignorant of the situation of those East of Point Yeacos. An hundred times during the day, were our eyes directed to every point of the compass, in search of a sail, but in vain—we were too far to the eastward of the usual track to Matanzas.

As night approached the danger of our situation increased. We had all been fatigued—some of us much bruised, by the disasters of the preceding night; and our toils during the day, as may well be conceived, were not much relieved by an incessant rowing and bailing, without a particle of food to assuage our hunger or one drop of fresh water to cool our parched tongues. Anxiety was depicted in every visage, and our spirits were clouding like the heavens over them. Capt. Hilton, whose sickness and debility had been increased by fatigue and hunger, could no longer smother the feelings that were struggling within.—The quivering lip, the dim eye, the pallid cheek, all told us, as plainly as human expression could tell, that the last ray of that hope which had supported him during the day, was now fading away before the coming night. I had seen much more of rough service and weather than any one on board, and having been blessed with an excellent constitution, made it my duty to encourage the rest, by representing our approach to the Island as certain and safe; this seemed to stimulate increased exertion at the oars, and the breeze continuing fair, we made good head-way. About midnight, Capt. Hilton's oar touched something which he supposed bottom, but which the blade of the oar discovered to be a shark that followed us next morning. Deeming us, therefore, over some dangerous shoal, he gave full vent to his feelings, by observing, that if even we were to escape these dangerous shoals, our distance from the Island was so great, that we could never endure hunger, thirst and the fatigue of bailing long enough to reach it. I endeavored to convince him that we must reach the land by another night, in the direction we were steering. The disheartened crew soon caught the contagious and fatal despair which the Captain had incautiously diffused among them. In vain did I expostulate with him on the necessity of continuing our exertions at the oars—he burst into tears, kneeled down in the bottom of the boat and implored Divine protection. It is true our hold on life was a frail one. In an open boat, that from leaking and the violence of the sea we could scarcely keep above water—without food, drink, or clothing sufficient to defend us from the cold and rain of a December *Norther*—in an irregular and rapid current that prevented any correct calculation of our course—on an unknown and dangerous coast, without a chart to guide us.

[Pg 8]

[Pg 9]

In a state of mind bordering on that insanity which is sometimes caused by hunger, thirst and despair united, we passed a most perilous night. At the very first dawn of light every eye was again in search of a sail. A small dark speck on the ocean was descried ahead, about 5 leagues distant! The joyful sound of land ran through our nerves like an electric shock, and gave new life to the oars. The wind being fair, the aid of our sail, which was equal to two additional oars, gave

us such head way, that as the rays of the rising sun sported over the tops of the waves and fell on the small spot of land ahead, we found ourselves nearing one of the Cuba Keys.

The land we first discovered was a little Island of about three acres, that arose above the surrounding key, as high as the tops of the mangroves. The name of this key—the largest of its group^[A]—was of so sacred an import, that one would have supposed it had been a refuge no less from the storms of persecution, than those of the element around it.

[Pg 10]

[A] There are about 700 of the Bahama Keys in groups or clusters, the greater part of which are overflowed two or three feet, and covered with mangrove bushes from 10 to 15 feet high, the roots of which are very numerous and rise above water. The largest of the groups generally contain a small spot of dry land, and are distinguished by appropriate names.

CRUZ DEL PADRE, or the *Cross of our Father*, situated in W. long. 80° 5' and N. lat. 23° 11'—is about 27 leagues E. by N. from Matanzas. It is a long, narrow key, of whose size we could not accurately judge.—Around its North side about a league distant from the shore, was a semi-circular reef, over which the sea broke as far as the eye extended. It was a tremendous battery in a storm, and were I approaching it in an American squadron, I should fear its ground tier more than all the cabanas of the Morro. But hunger and thirst are powerful antidotes to fear. We therefore boldly approached it with confidence in that divine interposition which had been recently so signally displayed towards us. Availing ourselves of the deepest water and the swell of a sea, we were hurried on the top of a breaker, that shook our long-boat like an aspin leaf and nearly filled her with water; but in a moment she was floating on a beautiful bay that presented to the eye "the smooth surface of a summer's sea."

The Northern boundary of this bay was formed by the reef, making the inner part of a crescent—the Southern, by two long lines of mangroves on each side, and a small beach of beautiful white pipe clay, that formed the front of the little Island in the centre. The distance across was about three miles, two of which we had already passed, directly for the beach, a few rods from which as we had previously discovered, were two HUTS, inhabited by fishermen, whom we could now see passing in and out. When at the above distance from the reef, our attention was suddenly arrested by the appearance of two wrecks of vessels, of too large a size, one would have supposed, to have beaten over the reef. As the water grew shoaler I could see an even pipe clay bottom, on which our boat grounded an hundred yards from the shore. One of the inhabitants came off in a flat bottom'd log canoe about 25 feet long and 2-1/2 wide, hailed us in Spanish, demanding who we were, and was answered by Manuel our Portuguese.

[Pg 11]

As this Spaniard, who was the head fisherman, came along side, he was recognized by Capt. Hilton as the same of whom he had purchased some sugars the voyage before at Matanzas.

The two huts we have named were formed of the planks and cabin boards of wrecks, about 7 feet high, and 10 by 15 on the ground, with thatched roofs. At the N. E. corner was a group of old weather-beaten trees, the only ones above the height of a mangrove on the Island, on which the fishermen hung their nets. In front of the beach was a *turtle troll* about 15 feet square, surrounded by a frame, from which were suspended a great number of wooden hooks, on which their fish were hung, and partially preserved, by drying in the sea breeze. It was about 8 o'clock in the morning when we were conducted into one of the huts, and as we had had neither food nor drink for nearly two days and nights, some refreshment, consisting of turtle and other fish, hot coffee, &c. was immediately provided.

[Pg 12]

After our refreshment, some sails were spread on the ground, on which we were invited to repose. My shipmates readily accepted the invitation; but I had seen too much of Spanish infidelity, under the cloak of hospitality, to omit an anchor watch, even in our present snug harbour.

There were five fishermen, all stout, well built Spaniards, the master of whom was over six feet, and had much the appearance of an American Indian.—My companions were soon in a "dead sleep," and when the fishermen had left the hut, I walked out to explore our new habitation. The two huts were so near that a gutter only separated them, which caught the water from the roofs of each and conducted it into a hogshead bedded in the sand, from which other casks were filled against a drought; the fresh water thus obtained being all the Island furnished. West of the beach was a small bay, in the centre of which was an Island about a mile in circumference. At the head of this bay a creek made up several rods into the mangroves, which served as a harbour for a small fishing vessel of about twelve tons, decked over, in which they carried their fish to Matanzas and elsewhere about the Island of Cuba. East of the beach was a COVE that extended about a quarter of a mile into the bushes, forming a kind of basin at its head, which was as still as a millpond. This basin was surrounded by thick mangroves, and completely concealed from every thing without by the jutting out of a point at its entrance. A more lonely place I never saw. Around its borders a "solitary guest," you might see the *Flamingo*^[B] strutting in all the pride of its crimson plumage, as erect and nearly as high as a British soldier. The bottom of this Cove was like that of the bay.

[Pg 13]

[B] The Flamingo, it is said, builds its nest on the Bahama Keys. It is a superb bird, covered, the third year, with bright crimson feathers, except the tip of its wings, which are black. This appearance, added to its erect posture, which brings its head nearly as high as that of a man's, has given it among the natives the appellation of the "British soldier."

The mangroves are very thick,—their trunks covered with oyster-shells that adhere to them like barnacles to a vessel's bottom, which annoy those who attempt to pass among them, by tearing

their clothes and wounding the flesh as high up as the hips.

Among the bushes were concealed two clinker-built boats, remarkably well constructed for rowing, with their bottoms greased or soaped; in one of which I found a handkerchief filled with limes: I took one and brought it into the house;—this displeased the fishermen, who afterwards told Manuel that the boats and limes belonged to some people at a small distance, who would return in a few days. There were also two yawls moored in front of the huts, that appeared to have belonged to American vessels.

When I returned to the hut, my shipmates were yet asleep, and we did not awake them until supper was prepared, which was much the same with our breakfast, except the addition of plantain. After supper we all set around the table devising means to get to Matanzas. Through Manuel, Capt. Hilton offered the master fisherman our long-boat and forty dollars in cash, on our arrival at Matanzas, which was accepted, and we were to sail in their small schooner as soon as the weather would permit. About 8 or 9 o'clock, we all turned in, but my suspicions would not allow me to sleep; for when all was silent, I could hear the Spaniards conversing with each other in a low tone, on which I spake to Manuel with the hope that he might understand the subject of their consultation; but he, like his companions, was too sound asleep to be easily awakened. A lamp of fish oil had been dimly burning for two or three hours, when the master fisherman arose and extinguished it. About this time an old dog belonging to the fishermen, commenced a most hideous howling without, that was occasionally answered by our dog within. Supposing some boat might be approaching, I went out, but could discover no living being in motion. It was a star light-night, the wind blowing fresh with a few flying scuds. When I returned into the hut, I set down between two barrels of bread, against one of which I leaned my head, prepared to give an early warning of any foul play that might befall us; but the night passed without any incident to interrupt the slumbers of my weary messmates.

[Pg 14]

Early in the morning they turned out and we went down to the Cove before described, in order to bathe. While we were clothing ourselves on the shore at the head of the Cove, we discovered, at high-water mark, a number of human skeletons—(except the skulls)—bleached and partly decayed. The bones of the fingers, hands and ribs were entire. To me this was no very pleasant discovery, and I observed to Mr. Merry that "we might all be murdered in such a place without the possibility of its being known"; but the bones were, at the time, supposed to have belonged to seamen that might have been shipwrecked on the reef near this part of the key.

[Pg 15]

On our return to the hut we found breakfast awaiting us. This day we spent in rambling about the Island, and were generally followed by two of the fishermen, who manifested more than usual vigilance. During this as well as the preceding day they suspended their usual occupation, and passed their time in loitering about. My suspicions were increased by a number of circumstances to such a degree, that I urged Capt. Hilton to depart in our own boat bad as she was; but he expressed great confidence in the head fisherman, from his previous acquaintance with him at Matanzas.

As we had made arrangements to depart the next morning, all hands were preparing to turn in at an early hour when the master fisherman observed, it was too *hot* to sleep in the house, drew his blanket over his shoulders and went out.

It is a little singular that such a circumstance should not have produced on the minds of my shipmates the same effect it did on mine, as the weather was then uncomfortably cool to me within the hut. But in justice to them I ought to add, that a singular dream the night before our shipwreck, had produced on my mind a kind of sailor's superstition, which banished sleep from my eyes, even now while they were enjoying its refreshing influence.

[Pg 16]

After I had paced the room several times, one of the fishermen arose and extinguished the light, and when all was still, I went to the door that had been fastened after the master fisherman, drew the bolt without disturbing any one, and went out. At the threshold of the door I found an axe which I took in my hand, walked around the hut several times, but could not discover the object of my search. I at length found his blanket tucked up among the thatch under the eaves of the hut, and immediately re-entered the room to tell my companions I was apprehensive that this strange departure of the Spaniard was influenced by another motive than that expressed.

He could not go far without wading in the water, which was two or three feet deep all over this extensive key, except the spot around the huts, on which he was not to be found; and it is well known to mariners, that these keys are dissected by numerous creeks like the one already described, which in some instances extend miles among the mangrove bushes, where a sea robber might conceal himself for months without the fear of detection.

Without disturbing the Spaniards, I shook Mr. Merry and whispered to him my suspicions, on which we both went to the door and sat down to await the fisherman's return. When I first awaked him he trembled with fear that some unnatural fate awaited us. But the night passed without any further disturbance, and at day-light we all, by previous arrangement, commenced loading the two canoes, (which were of the same dimensions of that already described) by wading off to them with the fish in our arms. It was about sunrise when we had completed loading, and while we were all in the huts, the master fisherman suddenly entered—saluted Capt. Hilton in Spanish, and requested all our people and three of his own to accompany him to the schooner before named, in order to haul her out of the creek and moor her off, preparatory to our departure: this we did with no little labor, wading into the mud and water breast high. After we had anchored her about half a mile abreast of the huts, and discharged the fish from the canoes

[Pg 17]

into her, we returned to the huts to breakfast.

When the master fisherman returned in the morning, I observed that his trowsers were wet up to his hips, and he appeared as though he had been wading several miles.

After breakfast we finished loading the little schooner, and returned to the huts to bring down some small stores. As we were all standing before the huts, the master fisherman was seen pointing to the Eastward and laughing with his companions. On looking in the direction he was pointing, I discovered the object of his amusement to be a small vessel just doubling an Easterly point of the key, about seven miles distant *within the Reef*, and bearing away for us. I had too often seen the grin of a Spaniard accompanied with the stab of his stiletto, to pass the circumstance unnoticed. By my request Manuel inquired of the Spaniards what vessel it was, and received for answer, that "it was the King's Cutter in search of Pirates." This answer satisfied us, and in a short time we were all hands, the master fisherman and three of his crew, on board our vessel. As soon as we were ready to weigh anchor, observing the Spaniard intent on watching the "Cutter," and delaying unnecessarily to get under way, I began to hoist the foresail, on which, he, for the first time, sang out to me in broken English, "no foresail, no foresail." By this time the sail was within three quarters of a mile of us. As I stood on the forecastle watching her, I saw one of her people forward, pointing at us what I supposed a spy glass; but in an instant the report of a musket and whistle of a bullet by my ears, convinced me of my mistake. This was followed by the discharge of, at least, twenty blunderbusses and muskets, from which the balls flew like hail-stones, lodging in various parts of our schooner; one of which pierced my trowsers and another Mr. Merry's jacket, without any essential injury.

[Pg 18]

At the commencement of the firing the four fishermen concealed themselves below deck, out of danger, and our Portuguese attempting to follow their example was forced back. I remained on the forecastle watching the vessel until the whistling of six or seven bullets by my ears, warned me of my danger. At first I settled down on my knees, still anxious to ascertain the cause of this unprovoked outrage, until they approached within two or three hundred feet of us, when I prostrated myself on the deck, soon after which, the master fisherman arose, waved his hat at them, and the firing ceased. About forty or fifty feet abreast of us, she dropped anchor and gave orders for the canoe at our stern to come along side, which one of our fishermen obeyed, and brought on board of us their Captain and three men. The supposed Cutter was an open boat of about thirty-five feet keel, painted red inside and black without, except a streak of white about two inches wide; calculated for rowing or sailing—prepared with long sweeps, and carrying a jib, foresail, mainsail, and squaresail. She was manned by TEN SPANIARDS, each armed with a blunderbuss, or musket, a *machete*,^[C] long knife, and pair of pistols. They were all dressed with neat jackets and trowsers, and wore palm-leaf hats. Their beards were very long, and appeared as though they had not been shaved for eight or nine months.^[D]

[Pg 19]

[C] A long, straight Spanish sword, with a thick back, and generally very sharp.

[D] The Pirates, it is said, wear long beards, that the change in their appearance, produced by shaving, may prevent their being recognized when they remingle with society.

One of them had an extremely savage appearance, having received a blow, probably from a cutlass, across his face, that had knocked in all his front teeth and cut off a part of his upper lip, the scar extending some distance beyond the angles of the mouth—three of the fingers of his left hand, with a part of the little finger, were cut off, and the thumb was badly scarred. He was tall, well proportioned, and appeared to have some authority over the others. The Captain was stout, and so corpulent that I should not underrate his weight at 260 pounds. He reminded me strongly of a Guinea Captain I had formerly seen. He was shaved after the manner of the Turks; the beard of his upper lip being very long—was richly dressed—armed with a machete and knife on one side, and a pair of pistols on the other; besides which, he wore a dirk within his vest. After examining our papers, which had been accidentally saved by Capt. Hilton, he took out of a net purse, two doubloons, and presented them to the master fisherman in presence of all hands. This, we at first supposed to be intended as some compensation for the injury done, by firing at us. The account of our shipwreck, sufferings, and providential escape to the Island, was now related to him, by Manuel, which he noticed, by a slight shrug of the shoulders, without changing a single muscle of his face. He had a savage jeer in his look during the recital of our misfortunes, that would have robbed misery of her ordinary claims to compassion, and denied the unhappy sufferer even a solitary expression of sympathy.

[Pg 20]

"There was a laughing Devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled—and Mercy sighed farewell!"

[BYRON'S CORSAIR.

After he had ascertained who we were, he returned to his own boat with three of his men, leaving one on board of us as a kind of prize master. Our master fisherman, who also accompanied him, was greeted by all on board the armed vessel in a manner that denoted him to have been an old acquaintance. We could see them passing to each other a long white jug, which, after they had all drunk, they shook at us, saying in broken English, "Anglois, vill you have some *Aquedente*?" to which we made no reply. When they had apparently consulted among themselves about half an hour, they sent two men, with the jug, on board of us, from which we all drank sparingly, in order to avoid offence, and they returned to their own vessel, took in two more men and proceeded to the huts, which they entered and went around several times, then came down to our long boat

[Pg 21]

and examined her carefully. After this they came off to our vessel with the *two canoes*, one of which, went to the armed boat and brought on board of us, all but the Captain and two of his men. Our little crew had thus far been the anxious spectators of these mysterious manœuvres.

There were circumstances which at one time encouraged the belief that we were in the hands of friends, and at another, that these pretended friends were calmly preparing for a "foul and most unnatural murder." Capt. Hilton was unwilling yet to yield his confidence in the treacherous Spaniard, who, I did not doubt, had already received the price of our blood. In this state of painful suspense, vibrating between hope and fear, we remained, until the master fisherman threw on the deck a ball of cord, made of tough, strong bark, about the size of a man's thumb, from which they cut *seven* pieces of about nine feet each—went to Capt. Hilton and attempted to take off his over-coat, but were prevented by a signal from their Captain. They now commenced binding his arms behind him just above the elbows with one of the pieces of cord, which they passed several times round, and drew so tight, that he groaned out in all the bitterness of his anguish.^[E]

[Pg 22]

^[E] Capt. Hilton had before been taken by the Pirates, and most cruelly abused, in order to extort from him a disclosure of some money which they supposed was concealed on board; but after they had ascertained that this was not the case, they robbed him of every thing on and about his person and let him go.

My fears that they were *PIRATES* were now confirmed; and when I saw them, without temptation or provocation, cruelly torturing one whom shipwreck had thrown among them, a penniless sailor, reduced by sickness to an almost helpless condition, and entreating with all the tenderness of a penitent that they would not cut him off in the blossom of his sins, and before he had reached the meridian of life—reminding them of the wife and parents he left behind, I burst into tears and arose involuntarily as if to sell my life at the dearest rate, but was shoved back by one of the Pirates who gave me a severe blow on the breast with the muzzle of his cocked blunderbuss. A scene of wo ensued which would have tried the stoutest heart, and it appeared to me that even they endeavored to divert their minds from it, by a constant singing and laughing, so loud as to drown the sound of our lamentations.—After they had told Manuel they should carry us to Matanzas as prisoners of war, they proceeded to pinion our arms as they had Capt. Hilton's, so tight as to produce excruciating pain.

[Pg 23]

We were now completely in their power, and they rolled us about with as much indifference as though we had been incapable of feeling, tumbling us into the canoes without mercy. They threw me with such force that I struck the back of my neck against the seat of the canoe and broke it. Capt. Hilton, Mr. Merry, Bridge, and the Cook were in one canoe; Russell, Manuel, and myself in the other. For the first time they now informed us that they were about to cut our throats, which information they accompanied with the most appalling signs, by drawing their knives across their throats, imitating stabbing and various other tortures. Four Pirates accompanied the other canoe and three ours, besides the four fishermen, two to manage each canoe. We were thus carried along side the piratical schooner, when all their fire arms were passed on board of her; the arm chest, which was in the stern sheets and covered with a tarpaulin, opened, several long knives and machetes taken out, their keen edges examined with the greatest scrutiny and passed on board the canoes for the expressed purpose of murdering us all.

The seven Pirates and four fishermen, as before, now proceeded with us toward the beach until the water was about three feet deep, when they all got out; the two fishermen to each canoe, hauling us along, and the Pirates walking by the side of us, one to each of our crew, torturing us all the way by drawing their knives across our throats, grasping the same, and pushing us back under the water which had been taken in by rocking the canoes. While some of us were in the most humiliating manner beseeching of them to spare our lives, and others with uplifted eyes were again supplicating that Divine mercy which had preserved them from the fury of the elements, *they* were singing and laughing, and occasionally telling us in broken English, that "Americans were very good beef for their knives." Thus they proceeded with us nearly a mile from the vessel, which we were now losing sight of by doubling a point at the entrance of the *COVE* before described; and when within a few rods of its head, *where we had before seen the human bones*, the canoes were hauled abreast of each other, from twelve to twenty feet apart, preparatory to our execution.

[Pg 24]

The stillness of death was now around us—for the very flood-gates of feeling had been burst asunder and exhausted grief at its fountain. It was a beautiful morning—not a cloud to obscure the rays of the sun—and the clear blue sky presented a scene too pure for deeds of darkness. But the lonely sheet of water, on which, side by side, we lay, presented that hopeless prospect which is more ably described by another.

"———. No friend, no refuge near;
All, all is false and treacherous around;
All that they touch, or taste, or breathe, is Death."

We had scarcely passed the last parting look at each other, when the work of death commenced.

They seized Captain Hilton by the hair—bent his head and shoulders over the gun-wale, and I could distinctly hear them chopping the bone of the neck. They then wrung his neck, separated the head from the body by a slight draw of the sword, and let it drop into the water;—there was a dying shriek—a convulsive struggle—and all I could discern was the arms dangling over the side of the canoe, and the ragged stump pouring out the blood like a torrent.

[Pg 25]

There was an imploring look in the innocent and youthful face of Mr. Merry that would have appealed to the heart of any one but a Pirate. As he arose on his knees, in the posture of a penitent, supplicating for mercy even on the verge of eternity, he was prostrated with a blow of the cutlass, his bowels gushing out of the wound. They then pierced him through the breast in several places with a long pointed knife, and cut his throat from ear to ear.

The Captain's dog, repulsed in his repeated attempts to rescue his master, sat whining beside his lifeless body, looking up to these blood hounds in human shape, as if to tell them, that even brutal cruelty would be glutted with the blood of two innocent, unoffending victims.

Bridge and the Cook, they pierced through the breast, as they had Merry, in several places with their knives, and then split their heads open with their cutlasses.—Their dying groans had scarcely ceased, and I was improving the moment of life that yet remained, when I heard the blow behind me—the blood and brains that flew all over my head and shoulders, warned me that poor old Russel had shared the fate of the others; and as I turned my head to catch the eye of my executioner, I saw the head of Russel severed in two nearly its whole length, with a single blow of the cutlass, and even without the decency of removing his cap. At the sound of the blow, Manuel, who sat before me, leaped over board, and four of the Pirates were in full chase after him. In what manner he loosed his hands, I am unable to say—his escape, I shall hereafter explain. My eyes were fixed on my supposed executioner, watching the signal of my death—he was on my right and partly behind me—my head, which was covered with a firm tarpaulin hat, was turned in a direction that brought my shoulders fore and aft the canoe—the blow came—it divided the top of my hat, struck my head so severely as to stun me, and glanced off my left shoulder, taking the skin and some flesh in its way, and divided my pinion cord on the arm. I was so severely stunned that I did not leap from the canoe, but pitched over the left side, and was just arising from the water, not yet my length from her, as a Pirate threw his knife which struck me, but did not retard my flight an instant; and I leaped forward through the water, expecting a blow from behind at every step.

[Pg 26]

The shrieks of the dying had ceased—the scene of horrid butchery in the canoes was now over—Manuel and I were in the water about knee deep—two of the Pirates after me, and all the rest, with the fishermen, except one Pirate, after Manuel. We ran in different directions; I, towards the mouth of the Cove, making nearly a semicircle in my track, to keep them over my shoulder, which brought me back again towards the canoes; and as the remaining Pirate came out in order to cut me off, I was obliged to run between the canoes, so near the last Pirate, that he made a pass at me and fell, which gave me the start. At the first of our race, I was after Manuel, with Pirates before and behind. My object was to gain the bushes as soon as possible, supposing their cutlasses would be an obstacle, which I had the good fortune to prove. I lost sight of Manuel just as I entered the bushes; he was up to his breast in water, and the Pirates near him. When I entered the bushes one of the Pirates was within ten feet of me, and continued striking, hoping to reach me; and all of them yelling in the most savage manner, during the whole distance. The most of the way, the water and mud was nearly up to my hips—the mangroves were very thick, covered, as I before observed, with oyster shells up to high water mark. It was about noon when I entered these bushes, my course Westerly, the Pirates after me, repeatedly in view, one of them frequently within three rods of me. Had it been on cleared land, I should soon have been overtaken by them; but the bushes were so large and thick as frequently to entangle their swords. I was barefoot; and had I worn shoes, they would soon have been lost in the mud. My feet and legs were so badly cut with the oyster shells, that the blood flowed freely; add to this, my head was very painful and swollen, and my shoulder smarted severely. In this manner and direction I ran till the sun about an hour high, when I lost sight of the Pirates and paused for a moment, pulled off my jacket (the cord being yet on my right arm, which I slipped off) in which I rolled my hat, and taking it under my arm, I settled down on my knees, which brought the water up to my chin, in order to secrete myself. In this way I crept till nearly sunset, when, to my astonishment, I discovered the ocean, and just as the sun was setting, I crawled out to the border of the Island. I looked round and saw a very large bush of mangroves, the highest near, among the roots of which, I concealed myself. When the sun was setting, I could distinctly hear the splashing of water and cracking of bushes, and the Pirates hallooing to each other, which increased my apprehensions, supposing they might discover my track through the muddy water. I was almost exhausted from a severe pain in my side, caused by running so long, though I had determined not to yield to them until I fell under the blow of their cutlass. Soon after the sun was down their noise ceased, and I crept up to the top of the tall mangrove, put on my hat and jacket, where I set all night, until the sun rose the next morning, that I might discover if they had come round the Island to intercept my passage.

[Pg 27]

[Pg 28]

As I ran through the bushes, I disturbed numberless birds, among which was the Flamingo, who was extremely bold, flying around me with such a noise, that I feared it would betray me, by serving as a guide to my pursuers.

When the sun had arisen, without a cloud, I could discover nothing to increase my apprehension. I descended the mangrove and proceeded to the border of the Key—looked across the water before me, where lay another Key, which I judged 2 1-2 or 3 miles distant. Here I stripped myself to my shirt, the sleeves of which I tore off, and with my trowsers, threw them into the sea. I then tied my jacket, which was of broad cloth, by means of the cord that was on my arm, slung it over my neck, and put my hat on, to protect my wounded head from the sun. In this plight I committed myself to the sea, first supplicating, on my knees, a Divine blessing on my undertaking; but doubting whether I should ever reach the opposite Key. Being, however, an excellent swimmer,

[Pg 29]

having before swum nearly 2 miles on a wayer, I reached the opposite Key without any other injury than the galling my neck with the cord; and with much less fatigue than I could have supposed. This Key was much of the description of the last, but smaller. I made but little pause, continuing my course South Westerly across it, which was, I should suppose, about three miles; and as I had not hurried, owing to my fatigue, when I arrived at its border, it was about the middle of the afternoon. At about 2 miles distance, I descried another Key, to which I swam, slinging my jacket as before. When I arrived at this, which was the third Key, it was a little before sunset. I proceeded into the bushes about three-fourths of a mile, it being a small Key, and came out nearly to its margin, where I passed the night, leaning against a bunch of mangroves, with the water up to my hips. Such had been my fatigue and mental excitement, that even in this unpleasant situation, I slept soundly, until I was disturbed by a vision of the horrible scene in the canoes—the images of Capt. Hilton and Mr. Merry, mangled as when I last saw them, came before my eyes; and in my fancied attempt to rescue them, I awoke, but could not convince myself it was a dream, until I grasped my own flesh. Again I slept interruptedly until day-light. Being excessively hungry, for this was the third day since I had taken a single particle of food or drink, I plucked some of the greenest of the leaves; this relieved my hunger but increased my thirst. About sun-rise I departed from this Key, wading with the water, at times, up to my neck, for nearly a mile, when it grew deeper.

[Pg 30]

The next and fourth Key, being about another mile distant, I swam to. This day I kept on about the same course, South Westerly, and crossed three more small Keys, about a mile distant from each other. I had now arrived at the seventh and last Key; on this I passed the night, having prepared a kind of flake of old roots, on which I slept soundly, for the first time out of water, since I left Cruz del Padre. Between day-light and sun-rise, having eaten of the green leaves as before, and having been refreshed by sleep, I departed from the last Key; by this time so weak that I could scarcely walk. The water was not so deep but I could wade until within half a mile of what afterward proved to be Cuba; but of which I was ignorant at the time.

[Pg 31]

While I was crossing this last passage, I had to contend with a strong current probably from the mouth of the very river I afterward forded; and when but a few rods from the shore a *Shark* approached within a rod; but to my great joy, he turned and left me.

I had now swam about nine miles beside the distance I had travelled through mud and water, and the hunger and thirst I had endured, having tasted neither food nor drink, except a few salt leaves of mangroves, during my flight. And to add to my sufferings, my almost naked body was covered with moschetoes, attracted by the blood and sores produced by my escape from Cruz del Padre.

Observing that this shore varied a little from those I had passed, I followed it in an Easterly direction, which was reversing my former course, for nearly two miles, when I came to a large yawl, with her foremast standing. As I set me down on her gun-wale, the thought struck my mind that this boat, like our own, might have preserved some unfortunate crew from the fury of the storm, in order to offer them up to the pitiless Pirate, who, perhaps, had not suffered a solitary individual to escape and say, that the vengeance of man, on these encrimsoned shores, had sacrificed those whom the mercy of God had spared amid the dangers of his "mighty deep." While I was employed by these reflections, the gnawings of hunger were suddenly aroused by the appearance of two Craw-fish under the stern sheets; one of which, I caught and devoured with such greediness, that it was very soon rejected; and although I at first thought I could have eaten a dozen of them, the exhaustion, produced by my efforts to vomit, destroyed all relish for the other.

[Pg 32]

I again proceeded on my old course, South Westerly, until about the middle of the afternoon, when I approached dry land, and set me down on a wind-fall to contemplate my situation; to a description of which, I might well have adapted the language of JOB: "My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken and become loathsome." Near the roots of this tree, as I sat viewing some holes formed by land crabs, I observed water issuing from one of them. A more grateful and unexpected sight the Israelites could not have witnessed at the smitten rock; for I soon found the water proceeded from a boiling spring: and without it, I am sure I could not have survived another day; for it will be recollected that this was the first fresh water I had tasted since the morning my shipmates were murdered. But pure as it was, my parched stomach would not retain it, until after repeated trials, I succeeded in quenching my thirst. I again proceeded South Westerly, the land gradually elevating, until there suddenly opened upon me an immense plain, where the eye could reach over thousands of acres without the obstruction of a tree, covered with cattle of every age and description; some of which came snuffing around, so near, that in my crippled condition, I feared they might *board me*. But a swing of my hat set them capering and snorting in every direction. The number and variety of wild cattle collected on these plains is immense. I should think I saw more than five hundred hogs, chiefly of a dark colour, and more than half that number of horses, principally white; bulls, and cows with calves by their sides, goats, mules, &c.

[Pg 33]

I travelled on my course with as much rapidity as my feeble and exhausted condition would allow, until dusk, when I arrived at the bank of a small River;^[F] here I reposed uninterruptedly until day-light next morning. When I first attempted to arise, my limbs refused their duty; and I was compelled to sieze hold of a bush that was near, in order to raise myself upon my feet. This is not strange, when we consider the fatigue and hunger I had endured, the wounds all over my limbs, and the numbness produced by sleeping without a covering, exposed to the dampness that arises from a fresh water river, in a climate like that of Cuba.

I paused on the bank a few moments observing the current, in order to ascertain the direction of its source, towards which, I proceeded, travelling on the bank until noon, when I entered a beautiful lime grove, the fruit of which, completely strewn the ground. After I had devoured as many of these, rind and all, as satisfied the cravings of hunger, I filled my jacket pockets, fearing I might not again meet with such a timely supply.

[Pg 34]

By this time I had discovered a winding foot path, formed by droves of wild cattle; but in vain did I search for the impression of a human foot step. This path I followed until it led to a fording place in the river, where I paused, dreading the effect of fresh water on my sores, some of which had begun to scab over. But my situation would not admit delay; I therefore forded the river, which had been so swollen by recent rains, that I was compelled to wade up to my arm-pits. This produced the apprehended effect; for I had no sooner reached the opposite shore, than my sores began to bleed afresh, and smart severely. My supply of limes recruited my strength sufficiently to pursue my path until sunset, when I again halted and set me down on a log.

The only article of clothing I had to cover my nakedness, was my jacket; for the body of my shirt, I had left on one of the Keys, fearing that the blood stains upon it, might bring on me some unjust suspicion. My numerous sores, owing to the alternate influence of heat and fresh water, had now become so offensive as to occasion a violent retching, that nearly overcame the feeble powers of my stomach; and had it not been for my providential supply of limes, that afterward, in some degree corrected their fœtor, I must have laid me down by this log, a mass of corruption, and given my body up a prey to the birds and wild beasts of the forest. The reader will not think this an exaggeration; for while I was sitting here, the numerous Turkey-buzzards that were roosting over my head, attracted by my offensive smell, alighted within a few feet of me, and began to attack each other with as much ferocity as if they were already contending for their prey. I arose, as if to convince them that I yet possessed the power of motion; though I doubted within myself whether they would not have possession of me before the setting of another sun. But onward I travelled as far and as fast as my feeble condition would permit, until it was too dark to follow the path, when I laid down and passed a restless night, annoyed, as usual, with mosquitoes. In the morning I arose feeble and dejected; and in my prayers, which I had daily addressed to HIM whose mercy-seat had so often covered me from the tempest, and whose "pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night" had not yet forsaken me in the wilderness, I desired that I might meet this day, (the sixth of my miraculous escape,) some being to whom I could relate my sufferings, and the murder of my companions, as an appeal to my country, (bound as she is, to protect the humblest of her citizens,) to arise in the majesty of her naval power, and stay the hands of those who are colouring these barbarous shores with the blood of her enterprising seamen.

[Pg 35]

My life glass appeared to be nearly up, and I now began to yield all hopes of being relieved. My feet and limbs began to swell, from the inflammation of the sores, and my limes, the only sustenance I had, although they preserved life, began to create gnawing pains in my stomach and bowels. I however wandered on, following the intricate windings of the path, until the middle of the forenoon, when I discovered, directly in the way, several husks of corn, and soon after, some small sticks like bean poles, that had evidently been sharpened at one end by some human hand. This discovery, trifling as it may appear, renewed my spirits and strength to such a degree, that I made very little pause until about sun-set, when I espied in the path, not a great distance ahead, a man on horse back, surrounded by nearly twenty dogs! Fearing he might not observe me, I raised my hat upon my walking stick, as a signal for him to approach. The quick-scented dogs were soon on the start, and when I saw that they resembled blood hounds, [G] I had serious apprehensions for my safety; but a call from their master, which they obeyed with prompt discipline, put my fears to rest. The man was a negro, mounted on a kind of mat, made of the palm leaf, and generally used for saddles by the plantation slaves on this Island.—When within a few rods of me he dismounted, approached with his drawn sword (machete) and paused in apparent astonishment; I pointing to the sores on me, fearing from his attitude he might mistake me for some highway robber. He now began to address me in Spanish, of which I knew only enough to make him understand I had been shipwrecked; on which he made signs for me to mount the horse. This I attempted, but was unable to do, until he assisted me. He then pointed in the direction of the path for me to go on, he following the horse, with his sword in his hand.

[Pg 36]

[Pg 37]

[G] The Cuba dogs are chiefly descended from the ancient blood hounds, originally imported to hunt down the natives.

After travelling nearly three miles, I discovered a number of lights, about half a mile distant; and when we came up with them we halted near a large bamboo grove, where, with his aid, I dismounted, and by a signal from him, set down until he went to a hut and returned with a shirt and pair of trowsers, with which he covered my nakedness. He now took me by the hand and led me into a large house, occupied by his master, the owner of the plantation. A bench was brought me, on which I seated myself, and the master of the house, a grey headed Spaniard, probably turned of seventy, came toward me with an air of kindness, understanding from the black I had been shipwrecked. As the old man was examining my sores, he discovered on my arm a handsome impression of the *Crucifix* that had been pricked in with indelible ink, in the East Indies some years before, which he kissed with apparent rapture, saying to me, "Anglois very much of the christian," supposing me to be a Roman Catholic.—This drew around me all the members of the family, who kneeled in succession, kissing the image and manifesting their sensibility by tears, at the sufferings which they perceived by my sores and emaciated appearance, I must have endured. I was then conducted by an old lady, whom I took to be his

wife, into another apartment, in the corner of which, was a kind of grate where a fire was kindled on the ground. Here a table was spread that groaned under all the luxuries which abound on the plantations of this Island; but it was perhaps fortunate for me, that my throat was so raw and inflamed I could swallow nothing but some soft-boiled rice and coffee. After this refreshment, the kind old Spaniard stripped me, dipped a clean linen cloth into pure virgin honey and rubbed it over my sores. He then pointed to the bed, which had been prepared for me in the same room. I gave him to understand, by signs, that I should besmear his clean sheets; but this was negatived by a shake of the head; so without further ceremony I turned in—it was the softest pillow I ever did, or expect to, lay my head on;—yet it was rest, not sleep.

[Pg 38]

The old man had ordered a servant to attend me during the night, fearing the little food I had taken, after so long an abstinence, might produce some serious illness. Every time I groaned or turned, this servant would run to me with a bowl of strong hot coffee, which I could not refuse without disobeying his master's orders. Early in the morning, before I arose, the old planter came to my bed side, examined my pulse and tongue, and brought me a quart bowl of fresh tamarinds, more than half of which, he compelled me to eat, in order to prepare my stomach for the after reception of food, and prevent those symptoms of inflammation, which his intimate knowledge of the healing art had enabled him to discover.

I arose, put on my clothes and walked out to survey the possessions of this wealthy old planter, to whose hospitality I had been indebted for my life.

[Pg 39]

The plantation, or rather villa, called St. CLAIRE, is owned by one family, consisting of about thirty members including the heads, whom I have already described, with their children, grandchildren, and an elderly sister who resides with them. These all inhabit one large mansion, recently constructed of the Cedar of Cuba—two stories high, with a roof thatched with palm leaf. Some fifty huts, occupied by the slaves belonging to the plantation, were scattered around the villa.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the coffee plantation. It is an immense square of several hundred acres, enclosed by a lime hedge about five feet thick, with their tops so exactly trimmed as to form a perfect level. This square is intersected by avenues, crossing each other at right angles, of three or four rods wide, ornamented and shaded by orange and other delightful trees. At the head of the largest avenue, on a little spot of rising ground, arose the mansion before mentioned; and at the foot, rather without the square, was the extensive and beautiful bamboo grove where I alighted on my first arrival. The squares formed by the avenues, are filled with coffee trees.

One would hardly think me in a frame of body or mind to enjoy the beauties of nature; but who could behold such a garden as this, diversified with here the orange, adorned with its green luxuriant leaf, and gracefully bowing under the weight of its golden fruit; and there the palm, the lord of the forest, waving its majestic summit "full a head above the rest," without admiring the richness of its scenery. Beside the coffee; sugar, tobacco, and Indian corn, were cultivated on this plantation.

[Pg 40]

Without, every thing was life and industry; even the little negro children who could do nothing else, were employed in rolling cigars. Within, indolence and luxury walked hand in hand; yet they were not strangers to hospitality and kindness; for never have I seen a more merciful master than the old planter of St. Claire. Early in the morning, a signal called together the whole multitude of his slaves, who gathered around the mansion, looking into the window, where was placed a full size painting of our Saviour, kneeling, crossing themselves and filing off in succession, till all had completed the morning's devotion. Every evening a great number of them were collected again, in front of the house, into groupes, some playing on the guitar and other musical instruments; and others dancing merrily, and performing wonderful feats of agility, which were intended no less for their own gratification than the amusement of the family, who never failed to be the joyous spectators of these evening pastimes.

One would have thought my stay in such a delightful place as this, particularly, long enough to have recovered from the effect of my fatigue and wounds, would have been indispensable. A Samaritan kindness was bestowed on me in sickness, and employment offered me in health. But with all these inducements, there was another source of anxiety than the thoughts of home. Every night we were visited by four men armed so precisely like those fell monsters who had murdered my shipmates and been the cause of all my sufferings, that I could not feel safe in their society. ^[H]

[Pg 41]

^[H] There were probably Pirates in the neighborhood; for it appears by the papers since, that a piratical schooner captured by the Sea Gull, was fitted out at VILLA CLARA—a town not very far distant Easterly from St. Claire.

The only person I found on the plantation who could speak English, was a slave, formerly of *St. Thomas'*, who gave me some history of his master's character, immense wealth, the number of new plantations he was yearly forming, &c. Among other things he informed me that his name was (as he pronounced it) *Sir Thomas*, and that he was an *Alcalde*, or magistrate, for that part of the Island. This last information was important to me, for it was necessary that I should procure a *pass* from some civil officer in order to travel in safety to Matanzas.

On the third morning after my arrival, finding myself somewhat recruited by my kind treatment, I desired this slave to go with me to his master, and ask of him a pass to proceed to Matanzas. The Alcalde readily granted my request; and while he was writing the pass, an English Carpenter

(who I afterward learned built the Alcalde's house) entered the room, and looking at me, exclaimed, "for God's sake who are you! you appear to be an American or Englishman?" to which I replied, I am an American. After several questions and answers, I was compelled to tell him my whole story, part of which concerning the Pirates, I had concealed from the inhabitants of St. Claire, from motives of personal safety. But the generous hearted Carpenter, whose sensibility I began to perceive had been a little indebted to some more diffusible stimulant than his native sympathy, burst into tears, exclaiming very rashly and imprudently, "they are a d—d set of Pirates all over the Island." After my pass was finished, its translation by the Carpenter being satisfactory to me, I began to make arrangements to depart, having expressed through him, my gratitude to the Alcalde and his family, for the kind treatment I had received at their hands, which I shall ever review as the mean of preserving my life. But the Carpenter supposing from what I had suffered that I should be unable to perform the journey to Matanzas, endeavored to persuade me to remain, giving me the strongest assurances that I should be both welcome and safe at St. Claire, the owner of which he extolled to the highest degree.—This Carpenter, who had been so recently at work, on some part of the Alcalde's house that he had not yet removed his clothes and tools, finding I rejected his advice, very humanely supplied me with several articles of clothing and four quarters of a dollar in money.

[Pg 42]

About nine miles on a circuitous road towards Matanzas, was a plantation where he was employed in building a house. Hither he accompanied me, we both riding on one horse; and as it was nearly sun-set when we arrived, he gave me an invitation to pass the night with him, which I accepted. As we entered the planter's house, I observed three men, armed like Pirates; whose curiosity being rather excited by my appearance, they began to inquire of the Carpenter, who and whence I was? The bold Englishman possessing more frankness and spirit (neither of which had suffered from a parting glass with the Alcalde) than prudence, told them my whole story, concluding with an oath that denounced them all as a gang of Pirates. A quarrel soon ensued, and swords were drawn on both sides; but the Carpenter who was a very stout man, and well armed with pistols as well as sword, with my feeble assistance, soon silenced them, and in less than an hour they left the house. After supper, we retired to rest. The Englishman had once been a soldier, and I had been in the United States' Navy, (where I received a wound that fractured the bone of my right leg) during and ever since the late war, until my trip in the Betsey. We, therefore, like the broken soldier of the Poet,

[Pg 43]

"Wept o'er *our* wounds, and talk'd the night away."

After an early breakfast in the morning, as we were preparing to depart, the three armed men, with several others, who called themselves soldiers, rode up to the door and demanded me, saying they had a commission to present me to some officer of Government at Villa Clara, on the ground that some suspicion rested on me. After a short and warm debate between them and the Carpenter, and when they were on the eve of resorting to arms, he told me to shew them my pass. This enraged them to a great degree, and the Carpenter, with a hearty laugh, enjoying their ire, they muttered over at him a few Spanish oaths, threw my pass on the ground, and left us. Being fitted out with as much provision as I could conveniently carry, I commenced my journey with the Carpenter, who accompanied me armed, to the main road, or rather path, to Matanzas, about six miles; here he presented me with a heavy cane to defend myself with, telling me I should pass but two houses before I came to an inland village, containing twenty or thirty houses and a church, and took an affectionate leave of me.

[Pg 44]

I had not proceeded far, before I saw, coming out of a wheelright's shed in a field beside the road, a negro and Spaniard, both armed;^[1] who coming up, seized me by the collar, and before I could defend myself, wrested the cane from my hand, dragged me out of the path, and commenced stamping on and beating me with the cane, a blow of which over my shoulder, left a scar which I shall bear to my grave. I fell on my knees pointing to my sores; but this rather increased than abated their cruelty; for the Spaniard drew his knife across my face, which I avoided by dodging my head; and just at this moment they heard a drove of mules which probably saved my life; but they did not leave till they had robbed me of the money present by the Carpenter—my provision and all my clothes, except my shirt and trowsers. Fearing the muleteers might have as little mercy as the others, I crawled on my hands and knees into the bushes, the blood following me, until they had passed, when I arose, and travelled out of the path till I came to a house, which I dared not enter. Toward night I saw another house some distance from the road, which I entered and besought them, by signs, to give me refreshment and lodging; but they pointed to the road with as scornful a look as they would have bestowed on a dog. About a quarter of a mile from this house, I laid down among the bushes and passed the night. The afternoon following, I reached the village named by the Carpenter, where I was kindly treated and presented with a dollar. Toward night I saw a number of houses, one of which I entered, and took some refreshment; but their whispers and sly looks exciting my suspicions, I departed unobserved, and at no great distance, passed another night among the bushes. The next morning I stopped at a large house, where I was refreshed and furnished with provisions for the day, during which I saw two or three travellers, whom I avoided; and the following night I met with a kind reception at another house, where I lodged and took breakfast. This day I met on the road a large man of very respectable appearance, who accosted me in English, and to whom I related my story, and the cruelty with which I had been treated on the road. He read my pass, presented me with four dollars, and directed me to the habitation of the Alcalde's sister, a large house in the rear of an extensive cane-field, and about a mile from the road where we were. To this house I proceeded, and presented my pass to the old lady, who treated me with the same hospitality I had received from her brother. There was a similar appearance of wealth, though not to the same

[Pg 45]

[Pg 46]

extent I had noticed at St. Claire; and from the antiquated appearance and number of her massy silver vessels, I could not but infer that the Alcalde was descended from some noble Spanish family. After I had passed two or three hours here, and been furnished with provisions for my journey, I departed; and knowing that I could not be far from Matanzas, I walked leisurely along, admiring those beauties of nature for which my fears had hitherto precluded a relish.

[I] No person thinks of travelling in any part of Cuba unarmed; even the negro wears his machete—and every man of respectability travels with pistols.

Along the narrow winding path there was an endless variety of rich romantic scenery—sometimes I would ascend an elevated piece of ground, where I could view numerous plains as level as the sea, rising here and there in various elevations, teeming with vegetable life, and presenting to the eye a variety of rich colours, separated from each other by irregular and abrupt ridges. Even the wilderness through which I passed, appeared as though the hand of man had been employed to adorn it; for the tall majestic trees that constitute the growth of the Island, were tied together at the tops, by creepers running out from their branches, forming the most graceful festoons, and often peeping over the tops of the trees, as if to exult in their own luxuriance.

Night, which had now commenced, added grandeur to the beauty of the scene; for the innumerable brilliant lights of the Cuculla,^[J] bespangling the fleecy flowers that crowded the forest, appeared like the stars of heaven glowing among the silver clouds of an autumnal evening.

[Pg 47]

[J] This is a large species of the Fire-fly, frequent in Cuba.—When fully grown, it is nearly an inch long, and has three powerful lights; one on each side of the head, and a third on the abdomen.—The light afforded by two or three of these insects will enable one to read in the darkest night.

How could I repose amid such a scene as this, without contrasting it with that at the Cove; where I had literally made my escape through the blood^[K] of my companions, whose mangled carcasses were now perhaps mouldering on the shore.

[K] While escaping from the Pirates at the Cove, as I passed between the canoes, the water was coloured with blood as far as the shore.

The next day at four o'clock, P. M. I came out to CANIMAR River, about nine miles from Matanzas, where I found a number of American and English coopers, employed in making and repairing sugar hogsheads, &c. Here I passed the night; and the next morning I departed for Matanzas in a Spanish launch. The wind blowing a gale against us, we made but little headway, so that I had a good opportunity to observe and admire the stupendous precipices that compose the banks of this river; some of which on either side, arise perpendicularly to the height of 200 feet, presenting an appearance as though the opposite banks had been burst asunder by some dreadful convulsion. It is extremely deep, about 180 feet wide, and terminates very abruptly at about eight miles from its mouth, two or three miles below Matanzas. At the head of the Canimar is a small settlement, called the Embarcadero, a kind of thoroughfare to Matanzas for twenty or thirty miles in the interior. I was informed that at this little settlement, nearly two million pounds of coffee and half that quantity of sugar, were annually purchased and sent to Matanzas for a market. Nothing could have prevented the growth of a large city at the head of this river (or rather arm of the sea,) but the bar at its mouth. But even with this obstruction, such is the business between the Embarcadero and Matanzas, that a steam-boat is about running, for their mutual accommodation, shoal enough to pass the bar loaded.

[Pg 48]

Owing to the violence of the gale, we did not arrive at Matanzas until eight o'clock in the evening. Fearing I might meet with some of the numerous piratical spies that infest that place, who are ever ready to intercept and murder an informant of their diabolical traffic, I remained on board the launch; but had little disposition to sleep among such a crew. The next morning I went to the U. S. Agent, Mr. Adams, who directed me to his partner, Mr. Lattin, our consignee, in order to inform him of the loss of the brig, whose arrival he had been expecting for two or three weeks. In a few moments I met Capt. Holmes of the ship Shamrock, belonging to the owner of the brig, (Hon. Abiel Wood,) who sailed from the same wharf in Wiscasset but a few days before us.

Capt. Holmes conducted me on board the Shamrock, refreshed me, and had my sores dressed; and with the poultices on my feet, I walked to the Governor's office, in order to give oath to the murder of my shipmates, accompanied by a number of American and British officers, who gave me assurance of their protection. I was asked through an interpreter if I could speak Spanish, to which I replied in the negative.—After relating my story, the Governor enquired of what nation were the Pirates? I answered, Spaniards. He asked how I could affirm that, if I could not speak Spanish. My reply was, "I can tell a Spaniard as far as I can see his evil eye." He bit his lip, shrugged his shoulders, and concluded by observing, "Spaniards have to bear all the piracies."

[Pg 49]

After the examination, I went on board the Shamrock and passed the night. The next day I spent on shore, and the night following, sailed in the U. S. schooner Ferret, in search of the Pirates and fishermen.

No one who had seen me in health would now have recognized me; for I was reduced to a living skeleton. My head and face were very badly bruised and swollen, from the beating received on my journey—the skin of the latter had peeled entirely off, and I had been nearly blind since leaving the Keys—add to this, the wounds and sores on my feet and legs had degenerated into foul, unhealthy ulcers, that caused them to swell enormously. The American ship masters and seamen who saw me on my first arrival at Matanzas, have frequently declared, that they had never beheld a human being more disfigured by sufferings, or emaciated by wasting disease. I

[Pg 50]

was soon surrounded by American tars, whose generous hearts were as ready to relieve my present wants, as were their powerful arms, to defend me from future insult or injury.

I now began to perceive how much the mind may be diverted from a consciousness of the sufferings of the body, by its own operations; for I had never been out of reach of the Pirate or robber, from the time I landed on Cruz del Padre until I entered on board the *Ferret*. My mind was now, therefore, principally occupied by the contemplation of my present sufferings, and their rapid termination in death. I was constantly raising blood, and the inflammation of my numerous sores had produced a sympathetic fever, that compelled me to keep my birth; and the surgeon, for my consolation, expressed an apprehension that he should be compelled to amputate both my legs above the ancles.

The following afternoon we came up to the Reef before the huts, and in attempting to go over it, struck. After some difficulty we went about, but it rained and blew so hard that we stood off from the land during the night. The next morning we went into a passage called *Sagua grande*, East of the Key, where the *Ferret's* launch was fitted out for a cruise, a bed placed in her stern sheets, on which I was laid; for, sick as I was, I had a strong desire to meet the inhuman murderers of my shipmates at the tribunal of my country. But 21 days of fruitless search, during which I could perceive that my general health was wasting away, although the condition of my sores was improving, were sufficient to convince me that if I intended to die among my friends, I had but little time to loose.

[Pg 51]

The only place where we heard of Pirates, during our cruise, was at a Key, thirty or forty miles Easterly of Cruz del Padre, where we fell in with a man who had been a pilot in the Colombian service. He informed us, that on the morning of that day, about forty Pirates, in three boats, came on shore, robbed him of his little all, consisting of hogs, poultry, &c.—abused his wife and daughters, and set fire to his hut, a part of which we perceived had just been burned. Although it was near night, we started in a direction for them in the launch, manned with fifteen men; but we could hear or see nothing more of them. It was extremely unfortunate, that during the whole of our cruise, the violence of the weather would not permit us to pass the Reef and visit the huts.

After my return to Matanzas, I was carried along side the *Sea-Gull*; and while in the barge, Manuel, who had numbered me among the murdered of the crew, accidentally approached the side!—A visit from a spectre could not have affected him more than the sight of me. After he had recovered from his surprise, as we had but a few moments to stay, he briefly informed me, that he escaped to the bushes, where he concealed himself until midnight, when he returned to the Cove, took one of the canoes, and with a paddle ventured off into the ocean, where he was taken up by a Spanish armed brig, carried into Havana, and there lodged in prison. The latter part of his story was corroborated by the commander of the *Sea-Gull*, who, hearing of his imprisonment, went round to Havana and released him. But I shall ever believe, that he was overtaken by the Pirates and suffered, from national partiality, to escape in the canoe, as he described.

[Pg 52]

I now went on board the *Shamrock* to return home, and have reason to thank God, that in addition to his other mercies toward me, I did not attempt a second cruise in the *Ferret*, with which ill-fated vessel, I might perhaps have perished; for it will be recollected that she was capsized, a few hours out of Matanzas, and, with part of her crew, lost.

On the second day of April, 1825, I arrived at Wiscasset; where, by the advice and aid of my friends, I have published to the world, the simple story of my sufferings, as an appeal to my country, from an humble sailor, who has been honored by fighting her battles, to avenge one of the most unnatural murders that ever darkened the pages of her history.

FINIS.

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This text has been transcribed as typeset, barring one error of "the" duplicated in "[peeping over the tops](#)". All spelling and punctuation variations, oddities, and inconsistencies have been retained.

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