

DICK RODNEY;

or, The Adventures of
An Eton Boy...

BY JAMES GRANT.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Thunderbolt.

An emotion of mingled freedom and satisfaction possessed the whole crew on being rid of our tormentor, and Lambourne now took charge of the brig, which he was perfectly able to handle and work, though ignorant of navigation as a science, and having but a vague idea of the course to steer for the Cape of Good Hope.

She was hove in the wind, while in the moonlight, about two hours after the exciting scene which closes the last chapter, we committed to the deep the body of Antonio's last victim, the poor apprentice, whom the sailmaker sewed up in his hammock, to which, being without shot or other suitable weights, we tied a sack of coals to sink the corpse.

The head-yards were filled again, and, as if anxious to leave that portion of the sea as far as possible astern, we hauled up for the cape. Tom Lambourne ordered every stitch of canvas that the spars would hold to be spread upon the Eugenie, that she might, as he said, "walk through the water in her own style."

All he could do at first was to keep her in the course we had been steering on the night these disasters began, for as yet we knew not to what degree of latitude, south or north, we might have been drifting; however, we calculated that Hislop, weak as he was, might be able to take a solar observation and prick off our place on the chart, in the course of six or seven days.

We had the usually snug little cabin cleaned and cleared from the debris created by the outrage as proceedings of Antonio, who must have gone to the bottom with all Weston's valuables and money about him, as we could find neither; and the sweet expression of the poor widow's face, as it seemed to smile on us from the miniature on the after-bulkhead, contrasted strangely with all the wild work that had so lately taken place on board.

Hislop and I were restored to our former berths, and then more than once in my dreams the pale olive-green visage and glaring eyes of the Cuban came before me, and again I seemed to see him clinging unlit and in desperation to the slender boom which swung above the seething sea—for his death and all its concomitant horrors haunted me and made me unhappy.

The intensity of the heat in that season suggested the idea that we could not have drifted far south of the line.

So great was it that the upper spars of the Eugenie appeared to wriggle or vibrate like serpents aloft in the sunshine; while so hot, so clear and so rarefied was the atmosphere between decks that it was suffocated, especially in the lulling of the faint breeze. A white heat seemed to make sea and sky grow pale, and the former cast upward a reflection from its glassy surface and long smooth swells that was hot—hot beyond all description.

Though ever and anon the upper deck was drenched with salt water, it dried immediately, emitting a strong odor of wet wood, while the skids over the side failed to keep the paint, tar and rosin rising in large burnt blisters.

About the time when we hoped that Hislop would have been well enough to make an observation, even by being placed in a chair on-deck, the weather became so rough that he was unable to leave his berth, and during all that day the brig drove before a heavy gale, with her courses hauled close up, the fore and main topsail yards lowered on the caps, and their canvas close reefed.

After the heat we had endured, the reader may imagine this gale would be refreshing and a relief. Not so. The atmosphere, as it became dark with gathering clouds, increased in density, closeness and heat, thus about the time we should have had clear twilight, the hour was gloomy as a northern midnight—so dark that the men in the tops, or those lying out along the foot-ropes at the yard-arms, when under close-reefed topsails, could not be seen from the deck, while the breeze that swept over the ocean was breathless—hot as the simoon of the desert; and our men knew not whether they were drenched by perspiration or the spindrift torn from the warm wave tops by the increasing blast.

The peculiar appearance of this black gale alarmed and bewildered Tattooed Tom, who could make nothing of it, while poor Marc Hislop, whose skill would have been invaluable to us, when he heard the singing out on deck, the thunder of the belling courses struggling with their brails, the roar of the wind through the half-bared masts and rigging, the clatter of blocks and feet overhead, writhed in his bed, and mourned his own inactivity, or rather incapacity; but he sent me to tell Lambourne to cover up the anchors with wetted canvas, as it was not improbable, by the state of the atmosphere, that it was full of electricity and thus we might be in a dangerous way.

"Tell Tom," he whispered, "it is a trade-wind gale—I know it to be so."
"How?" I asked, "when you are lying here below?"
"By the barometer, which remains high, while the wind is steady," replied Hislop in a low voice, for he was still very weak; "if the barometer

fall, be sure it will become a typhoon, and then, with a short-handed craft, heaven help us! But assure Tom it is only as yet a trade-wind gale—to take as much canvas off her as he can, and to make all snug aloft. We'll have thunder directly, Dick—such thunder as you can only hear in the tropics."

He sank back, exhausted even by these few words, while I hurried on deck with his orders.

I had scarcely conveyed them to Lambourne, who was keeping a look-out forward, when, amid the dusky obscurity of sea and sky, there burst a sudden gleam of wondrous light.

The men, who were spreading some old, wetted sails over the sheet and working anchors; the steersman at the wheel, the watch and all hands who were crouching to leeward, or holding on by ropes and belaying pins to windward, seemed for a moment to become white-visaged specters amid a sea of pale, blue flame—a sea whereon the flying brig, with her brailed courses and reefed topsails, her half-naked masts and black cordage, were all distinctly visible as at noonday, while the polished brass on funnel, binnacle and skylight all flashed and shone, as ship and crew, with all their details of form and feature,

"Were instant seen and instant lost." For a broad and blinding sheet of electric flame burst upon the darkness of the night, and passed away as rapidly, when the livid brand burst in the welkin or in the wave, we knew not which.

Then came the roar of thunder—the stunning and appalling thunder of the tropics, every explosion of which seemed to rend earth, sea and sky, as they rolled like a palpable thing, or like the united salvo of a thousand echoes at the far horizon.

After a sound so mighty and bewildering, the howling of the wind through the rigging, the hiss and roar of the sea as wave broke against wave; the flapping of the brailed courses; the creaking and straining of the timbers, seemed as nothing—the very silence of death—while the Eugenie tore on, through mist and spray, through darkness and obscurity, with the foam flying white as winter draft over her bows and martingale.

Again there was a pale-green gleam overhead, right above the truck of the mainmast, where the chambers of the sky seemed to open. The clouds divided in the darkness of heaven, and out of that opening came the forked lightning, zigzag, green and ghastly.

There was a dreadful shock, which knocked every man down, except Carlton, who was at the wheel, and an exclamation of terror escaped us all.

A thunderbolt had struck the Eugenie!

With all its wondrous speed—instantaneous as electric light could be—it glided down the main-top-gallant mast, rending the topmast-cap and the framed grating of the top to pieces; thence it ran down the mainmast, burst through the deck and spent its fury in the hold.

At that moment the main-topmast, with all its yards, gear and canvas, fell about the deck in burning brands, and the brig was hove right in the wind's eye, while the sea twitched the helm out of the hands of Ned Carlton, who became bewildered on finding the compasses lose all their polarity by the influence of the electric fluid, the north point of one heading south-east and of the other southwest.

Almost immediately after this there was a cry of "Fire!"—that cry so terrible, so appalling on board ship; and then thick white smoke was seen to issue from the crevices of the battened main-hatchway.

All hands rushed to this point. The long-boat was unshipped from its chocks and dragged aft; some stood by with buckets of water, while others struck off the padlocks and iron bars; the tarpaulin was torn away—the hatch lifted—and lo!

A column of fire ascended in a straight line from the body of the hold—lurid, red and scorching, as the casks of molasses and bales of cotton burned and blazed together. A column that rose up between the masts, scored through the mainstay, all the braces of the foreyards, and filled the whole vessel with light, announced that all was over.

"It is a doomed ship!" cried Tom Lambourne; "we must leave her at last. Clear away the longboat. Be cool, lads; be cool and steady! Your lives depend upon your conduct now, and your obedience to orders!"

CHAPTER XXV.

Cast Away.

Not a moment was lost in getting the longboat over the side, and with a heavy splash, by which it was nearly swamped, we got it afloat.

Ned Carlton and Probert, the carpenter, sprang in to fend off and keep it from being stove or dashed to pieces by the sea against the brig's side.

By the wild, weird glare that rose in frightful columns from the main and fore hatchways we had plenty of light, as it shone far over the huge billows of that dark and tempestuous sea, to which we were about to commit our fortunes, and now a pale and half-dressed figure approached us.

It was Marc Hislop, whom the terrible odor had roused from his berth in the cabin, and he now came forward, supporting his feeble steps by

clutching the shrouds and belaying-pins.

I rushed below and brought up a blanket and great coat to wrap him in, and he was promptly swung over into the boat, where Carlton received and supported him.

Three bags of bread, with a tarpaulin to cover them, two kegs of rum, four casks of water, with oars, sails and blankets, were thrown pell-mell into the boat. A hatchet and a bundle of spun-yarn completed our stores.

The compasses were considered now to be useless, or were omitted, I forget which.

The wind still amounted to a gale, though less violent, and it fanned the growing flames, so that the forest brig burned fast. The lightning still flashed, but at the horizon, and the thunder was heard to grumble above the hiss of the sea; yet we heeded them not, though they added to the terror and the grandeur of the scene; and, most providentially for us, the fury of the storm was past.

Tattooed Tom was the last man who left the brig, and the moment he was in the boat he exclaimed, with a loud voice, that rang above the roaring of the flames, which now gushed through every hatchway and aperture, above the howling of the wind and the breaking of the frothy sea—

"Shove off!—out oars, there, to starboard—pull round her stern—pull with a will to windward—keep the boat's bow to the break of the sea!"

We pulled silently and vigorously, and soon got clear of the brig, through the four stern windows of which four lines of light glared redly on the ocean.

All our strength was required to achieve this, for the brig, being the larger body, attracted the boat toward her. However we got safely to windward, which was absolutely necessary, for to leeward there fell hissing into the sea a torrent of sparks and burning brands from the rigging, which was all in flames now.

Resting upon our oars, or only using them to keep the boat's head to the break of the sea, and to prevent her being swamped—an operation during which they were as often flourished in the air as in the ocean, when we rose on the crest of one vast, heaving wave, or sank into the dark vale of water between two—resting thus, we gazed in silence and with aching hearts at the destruction of our home upon the sea.

We could feel the heat of the conflagration even to windward. In a quarter of an hour she was enveloped from stem to stern in a sheet of fire that rose skyward in the form of a pyramid. By this time every vestige of her spars, sails and rigging had disappeared.

The entire deck had been consumed; the belmarks and molded plank-sheer rapidly followed, and through the flames that roared fiercely from the hollow of her hull we could see the black timberheads standing upward like a row of fangs.

Rents appeared next in her sides as the flames burst through the inner and outer sheathing, and with a hissing sound as they met the waves of the briny sea. Then a salt steam rose, and its strange odor, with that of the burning wood, was wafted at times toward us.

At last she gave a sudden heel to starboard, and with a sound unlike anything I ever heard before—a deluge of water extinguishing a mighty fire—the waves rushed tumultuously in on all sides. She vanished from our sight in mist and obscurity, and a heavy darkness suddenly replaced the glare that for a time had lit up the heaving sea, dazzling our eyes and sickening our hearts.

(To be continued.)

WESTERN NOMENCLATURE.

Movement to Change the Curious, Quaint Names of Oregon Towns.

It is difficult to shake off the names attached to streams and mountains by the pioneers of a new country. With few exceptions Washington state has fared well in nomenclature. In a majority of instances Indian names have been retained, and usually they are easy and poetical. But in some cases the individuality of the first settlers prompted them to an effort to improve on the native names of streams and sections, and in some instances they were not happy in their originality. The word Hangman has clung to the little stream which skirts Spokane on its western border, and repeated spasmodic efforts to center the public mind on the more melodious name Latana have failed of their purpose. Now Senator Plummer of this county has introduced a bill at Olympia to make this change, and as no objection can attach to the measure it will probably pass, and may exert sufficient force to bring about the desired change. A few years ago an esthetic movement swept through the Oregon legislature, and a number of pioneer names were turned down for more polite ones. The good people of Alkali, in eastern Oregon, imagined that the name was not one to conjure eastern capital, and dropped it for Arlington. A new name was devised for Bully creek, and Yaller Dog and Bake Oven were tabooed as primitive and unpoetic. Bake Oven has adhered, and is still the name of a post-office. Indeed, much room remains for improvement of the nomenclature of Oregon, which includes in its list of postoffices the towns of Burnt Ranch, Gooseberry, Haystack, Lobster, Long Tom, Mule, Shake, Shirk, Starve-out, and Sucker. A few names in Idaho could be dropped for the better, among them Bayhorse, Corral, Glimet, Jacket, Valley, Sawtooth, and Yellow Jacket.—Spokane Spokesman-Review.

Italy has had 294 square miles of land added to its territory in the last 70 years by the advance of the delta of the Po into the Adriatic sea.



There was a slight touch upon my arm, my wounded arm, as it chanced, that lay beneath the blanket, a touch that sent a pang like the piercing of a hot iron through it, and a sweet voice said:

"Can I do anything for you, my poor man? The surgeon will be here immediately, and I thought it best to awaken you," it added, as I opened my eyes upon that neat, quiet little figure which I had long before seen.

The recognition was mutual. "Captain Hale!" "Mrs. Dumarcie!" "I did not expect to see you here!" a mutual exclamation, and there was time for no more, for the surgeon, followed by his assistant with a hideous paraphernalia, had come.

Then followed an awful hour. I think I received a full idea of the meaning of the word torture during its passage. At last they left me, the ball extracted and the arm bandaged, but utterly exhausted by pain, long fasting and want of sleep.

I did not wake until the following morning and then to an intolerable pain and smarting in my arm. The bandage seemed like a ligature, and there was a burning, as of hot iron, from finger ends to shoulder. I was writhing with the torture, and feeling strangely weak and powerless when she came to me. Her voice roused me from my trance of agony.

"Can I do anything for you, Captain Hale?" she said, in those quiet, even tones that were a sedative in themselves.

"Yes, thank you. Send some one to loose my bandage—my arm is intolerable."

"I will do it myself. I know how perfectly," and before I could utter an expletive she had my arm tenderly in her little hands, and was deftly removing the bandage and loosing the folds. She hurt me very badly, but there was something soothing in her touch that made me bear it without much shrinking.

"Your arm is badly swollen, but I think that will be better," she said, at length, as she gently disposed the wounded limb above the blanket. "I will go to the office and procure a lotion for you."

And with the word she was gone. I had been greatly relieved, and could think of something besides my sufferings. And my thoughts went back as I followed the quaint little figure with my eyes to the time I had seen it last, and in such different surroundings.

It was five years before at a grand ball, at the house of one of the diplomatic corps, in Washington, that I saw Helen Dumarcie, a bride. As a child I had known her well, and had met her once or twice as she grew to womanhood, when she paid rare but welcome visits to my sisters. We renewed our acquaintance then, and she introduced me to her husband, a splendid-looking young officer—a South Carolinian of French-Huguenot descent. I was pleased with his grand, courtly manner, and Helen seemed equally proud of him. Her father's reverses had made her a governess in the South, and there she met Paul Dumarcie. I heard that the Dumarcies felt the marriage a misalliance, but I think Paul Dumarcie did not feel that he had condescended in marrying the pretty little creature who hung upon his arm.

She was splendid that night—in some rich dress from her trousseau—I am not a man milliner to describe it—with the soft gleam of pearls in her golden hair and a necklace, with a great emerald blazing amid the lucent pearls that surrounded it, upon her bosom. She was too little to bear much bravery of dress, and with all her splendor I thought I had seen her look better in the pretty muslins that suited our village gatherings afar in the old New England home.

I had scarcely heard from her since,

HELEN WOULD OFTEN TAKE MY THROBBING HAND IN HERS.



for my life had been one of roaming and excitement, afar from old associations. But what a change! I could even now scarcely realize it. Where was Dumarcie? Surely he had gone with the South in this war! And yet how came she here, a nurse in this Union hospital?

Still in the maze of thought, I saw her coming back with the surgeon by her side. The poor fellows on their cots raised themselves to look at her as she passed back, and fell back smiling if she but glanced at them kindly, or spoke a few words in that wonderfully calming voice.

The surgeon looked grave as he saw my arm. He gave his orders rapidly,

and I could see a shade pass over Mrs. Dumarcie's face as she listened. She followed him just out of earshot, as he moved away, and spoke to him earnestly. His parting words only reached my ear.

"As he is a friend of yours, certainly. The room is empty, and, as the fever is coming on, he will, of course, be more comfortable where pure air can be obtained. Give your own orders, if you please, for I am too busy just now to attend to it."

"Do you think you could bear being moved upstairs?" Helen Dumarcie said, coming back to me. "There is an empty room I shall have prepared for you; but first you must have your breakfast. Do you feel hungry?"

She spoke in a quiet, matter-of-fact way, as if she had been all her life a nurse in a hospital, and then she went away and presently brought me a dainty mess of something that she said I must eat, because she had cooked it with her own hands. I had no appetite, but I tried to eat, because she bade me, and something of the weary sense of exhaustion left me when I had finished. About noon men came, and with Helen to superintend, lifted my cot and carried me away to the quiet, low upper room that had been prepared for me.

When they had gone Helen bustled in, smilingly, and introduced to my notice a big, shiny-looking contraband, who gave my tired senses a first impression of mingled patent-leather boots and piano keys, who, she said, would stay with me all the time, and take care of me when she was obliged to be absent. Then she said something to him apart about "erysipelas" and "giving the medicine regularly."

I remember feeling an air of comfort



I WAS PLACED ON THE FATAL TABLE.

In the clean, bare room and a delicious sense of quiet, after the roar of battle and the sounds of pain and anguish that had been ringing in my ears ever since I was wounded. Then followed a blank, whether of sleep or delirium I know not, with occasional intervals of waking, always to intolerable pain and burning in my arm, in my whole side, with a ringing in my ears and a fevered restlessness entirely beyond my control. Through my dreams flitted Helen, now in the sheen of pearls and satin, now in plain hospital garb. Time passed in this strange, dream-like existence, that was peopled by many another sight, scenes borrowed from the fury of battle, the sudden terror of attack, quiet mountain bivouacs and picket stations under the stars, on drear plains that seemed stretched to mysterious, unending distances, in the shadowy light.

Helen would often come in, sit beside my cot and take my throbbing hand in hers. Sometimes she was accompanied by a sweet-faced Sister of Charity—one of those angels of mercy, whose presence in army hospitals is familiar to all wounded soldiers, and whose gentle ministrations have soothed the agony of many a dying hero.

I know that I was carefully tended, but all care could not prevent what followed. One morning I was lifted from my cot and placed upon the fatal table. When they placed me in my bed again the arm was gone, and with it the awful burning pain, and much of the danger that had threatened my life.

It was not long, then, before I emerged from the shadowy semi-delirium in which my days and nights in that quiet chamber had been passed. I began to recognize and identify Jem, the shiny contraband, as something tangible; to feel amused at his quaint ways, and odd, indistinct mode of speech; and to feel pleased when he answered my dim smile by a hearty guffaw and a fearful display of the piano keys. And I began to make Helen's visits the events of my monotonous life; to watch for her at her accustomed hours, and to sink back, every nerve soothed and muscle relaxed, in the deeps of a measureless content when she came. I had lost my arm, my good right arm, a poor man's emblem of power to do and dare, and which was all that stood between me and the cold world's charities. And yet I was strangely happy.

Gradually, with strength, my thoughts came back to the interests of life. I had many brief talks with Helen, but they had been chiefly of our old home; she had never alluded to herself, nor told me why she was there. It had been enough, in my illness, to know that, however she came, she was there, and I getting well in her care—and Jem's; for I will not be ungrateful whatever else I am.

But at last I came to wonder at this, though I dared ask no question. Thinking thus, I spoke aloud, as one sometimes does in musing, quite unaware that I had done so, till Jem, crouching by the window in the full rays of the sun, answered me.

"What can have become of Captain Dumarcie?"

"Master Paul's dead," was Jem's answer; "killed down to Newbern last year."

"You knew him, then?" I cried, startled, being unaware, you see, till he spoke that I had uttered my thought aloud.

"Yah! yah!" burst out Jem, "reckon I did, marster; used to 'long to him, bet. But I 'spect I own myself, now, 'ere an' all my folks."

"You! Paul Dumarcie's slave? And Helen's now?"

"No, sir. Miss Helen never would own wedem. Tell us to go North, and when she cum I stick to her close, you bet. But I 'spect I own myself, now," replied Jem with another laugh and a mixture of negro patois and Yankee slang in his speech.

"You do, of course, Jem," for his last remark was half question; "there are no slaves here. But was Captain Dumarcie in the army?"

"Yes, sir. 'Long of the Confederates. When he killed, Miss Helen come North to get his body, and, oh, how she weep when she find he been buried many days! She nebber go back any more. She been here ebbes since, and Jem with her."

"Ah!" I said. "But I am very thirsty. Will you bring me a drink, Jem?" I would not question a servant, but I had received information enough to think about for one day.

Helen was a widow, then! How lonely she was, and what a hard, hard life after the years of luxury she had enjoyed in her southern home!

A few days afterward, when I was nearly well enough to be discharged, Helen spoke to me of herself. She told me of the dreadful parting that was final. Of her journey northward when tidings of her husband's death came, and finding only the grave where his mutilated remains were laid days before.

"My little Phillip died but a month before," she said, "and I had no longer any tie to bind me. My dream of love and home was past. Stern, sorrowful realities presented themselves. Intelligent nurses were wanted, and I resolved to take my place among them. My life is dedicated to the work."

"But, Helen, you need not sacrifice your life. You are looking pale and worn. When my mother comes to take me home, go with us. You know how welcome you will be."

"I thank you, Charley," she answered, as if something in my words had recalled her youth, calling me by the old, familiar name, "but my work is here; I cannot leave it. After the war is over, perhaps, if I live till then—"

Her tone was very sad, but she looked up as she paused, and a touching smile, full of resignation and hope, dawned over the marble pallor of her face. She rose up and went away.

When my mother came she added her entreaties to mine, and even something of the authority which her age and long friendship justified. But Helen, with warm thanks, put her aside, as she had done me. Her work was there, she said; she could not leave it. And so we left her to her patient rounds and mournful duties.

I went home a crippled man. No more of outward striving life for me, no dreams and successes, no ambitions to be realized. The future seemed a drear blank. I fell into a morbid state—thoughts introverted self prominent, bitter, uncharitable, unreasoning, I supposed I was grateful to Helen, but I often found myself wishing she had let me die. And, as I could not yet hold a pen in my left hand, I made that an excuse for not writing to her, when either of my sisters would gladly have written for me, and often did write on their own account, and thanked her over and over again for preserving to them the brother, who had been too sullen and bearish to deserve such kindness ever since his return. Helen answered briefly—her time was so occupied—but she said little about herself.

It came upon us all with a great shock, then, when, about two months after my return home, the papers brought us tidings of her death.

Faithful to the end, she had never left her post, even to die. When she could no longer resist her weakness and disease she lay down in the great, bare room, and upon the very cot I had laid on to die. There poor, faithful Jem watched her, with all a woman's tenderness, to the last, and kind,



MASTER PAUL'S DEAD, WAS JEM'S ANSWER.

though stranger friends, of her own sex, gathered round her. Her burden had been too heavy for her, but she had borne it well, and her monument is in a hundred warm hearts that will always beat quicker with love and gratitude whenever her name is mentioned or their thoughts revert to her.

Costly Bible.

The most costly book in the Royal Library at Stockholm is a Bible. It is said that 160 asses' skins were used for its parchment leaves. There are 800 pages of writing, and each page falls but one inch short of being a yard in length. The covers are solid planks four inches thick.