

CHASE OF THE SLAVER "CORA"

The Last Slave Ship Captured by the United States.

700 HUMAN CHATTELS IN THE HOLD

One of the True Romances of the Sea Told by the Commander of the Pursuing Constellation—A Leaf from the Past.

One of those true romances of the sea that put to the blush the best efforts of a Captain Marryat, a Fenimore Cooper, or a Clark Russell, was the chase and capture of the American slave ship Cora by the United States steamer Constellation.

The Cora was a stanch bark, freighted with no less than 700 slaves, and she was commanded by a bold, resolute and successful master. At the time of the capture the captain gave his name as Campbell, and claimed that he was an English subject, and merely a passenger on the bark. By Masonic friendship he managed to escape from the Constellation at St. Paul de Loando, and in after years he met the young naval officer who was detailed to command the prize. Then he was painted and spangled performer in a circus, the celebrated clown, William B. Donaldson, and he confessed that this was his real name. Says his captor: "He had been sailor, loungeur and pseudo-gentleman of leisure on Broadway, negro minstrel, clown, slave captain—perhaps he had been all these things, but he had a faithful, generous heart. He was a brave man even though a statutory pirate."

The Cora was the last slave ship captured by the United States and the young officer who played so prominent a part in the affair was Lieutenant Wilburn Hall. As soon as Lieutenant Hall, who was in command of the Cora, landed his prize, he was cast his fortunes with the confederacy. After serving through the civil war he became one of the American staff officers on the staff of the khedive of Egypt. He is now the American consul at Nice.

Major Hall has written a graphic account of the chase and capture of the Cora for the May number of the Century. An extract from his story follows:

In President Monroe's administration the United States and Great Britain agreed to suppress the slave trade, which to that time had received the sanction of the United States. The United States was occasionally used by British men-of-war, still they seldom exercised it against American vessels, and it became almost the rule that American men-of-war should perform the duty. This fact came about because the slave trade was largely carried on by American vessels. And strange as it may seem, by the protection of the American vessels were invariably fitted out and despatched from northern ports, only one in many years immediately preceding the war having southern ownership—the schooner Wanderer, which landed slaves on the coast of Georgia; but these slaves were at once gathered in by the United States government and sent back to Africa on the steam frigate Niagara.

Engaged in this duty the Constellation was cruising on the African coast, the ship finding relations only at long intervals in a short rest at Madeira or the Canaries; or perhaps on one of the islands in the Bight of Benin. After one of these cruises when off the Ambriz river near the Congo, in August, 1850, the calm gave way to a refreshing breeze and the Constellation, with all squareset to royals, had just shaped her course for St. Paul de Loando. It was about 7 p. m., the sea was calm as a floor and a beautiful moon lit the waters with a splendor that the crew and officers were all on deck enjoying the refreshing change. Songs were heard forward, messenger boys were skylarking in the gangways, officers were pacing the foredeck, and a steady hum from the foretop sail yard rang out the cry: "Sail ho!"

Instantly laughter ceased, songs ended, and the men jumped to their feet—all with an expectancy. "Where away?" came sharply through the speaking trumpet from the foredeck. "About one point forward, sir," answered the watch officer, who caught the direction indicated. Sure enough, bright and glistening in the reflected moonlight, the sails of the stranger were seen, but with the upper parts of the courses in view.

Lieutenant Hall describes the alacrity and bustle with which all of the officers and crew were engaged in the chase. "The Constellation was a remarkable sailer by the wind, and the ships were very close together. As when everything was braced sharp up and bowlines taut. The yards were now so sharp up that she nearer than the Constellation. In no long time the courses of the stranger began to rise, showing the gain we were making; and in an hour she was nearly half up. It was a clear as day, but the light was that wonderfully soft light which the moon gives only in the tropics. The strainer's sails were white in the light as a pocket handkerchief. The breeze had freshened so that we were running at least nine knots. Men had been sent aloft to wet down the topsails, and the threat was stretched out. The leeches of the topsail just quivering. At this time a gun from our weather bow was fired a signal for the stranger to heave to, but she sped, silent as a dream. We could now plainly see through the glasses that there was not a light about the ship, a most significant circumstance. As the white smoke came pouring over our deck we lost sight of the chase, but as it was swept to leeward, there she came silent and glistening, with no light or light started. Suspicion now amounted almost to a certainty that we had a slave ship at hand.

Our distance was yet to reach to reach her with a shot. Soon her jib fluttered, her bow swung to the wind, the main-yards were hauled—altogether she seemed to turn upon her very heel, and the quick, sure and almost the precision, of a man-of-war she had gone on the other tack, hoping, doubtless, to beat to windward. The Constellation followed, and it again fired a gun. We were both doing our utmost, and the two ships cut the brilliant waters on an apparently even course. The Constellation, however, followed like Fate itself. About 11:30 we had the fleeing vessel within long range, and began a steady fire from one or two guns, stopped, and full of command. The orders were to fire at her upper spars, as all were now convinced that the hull was filled with slaves.

The slaver was well on her board bow. Mr. Fairfax called to go with him on the gun deck, where we ran two heavy 32's out to our bridle ports ready for a chase dead ahead, which occurred. I was directed to go to my quarters, and to stay there until we were under no circumstances to hit the vessel's hull. "Aim high and make your mark," continued. I touched my cap and smiled. It was so like the admonition of an ambitious mother to her son. Soon one gun was sending round-shot whirling through the rigging.

Suddenly our attention was attracted by dark objects on the water ahead of us. The slaver was lighting ship throwing overboard cakes, spars and even spare masts. The sea appeared as if filled with wreckage in a long line. All at once boats were seen. They were filled with negroes. I heard one cry on deck. "Boats on your course." I heard the flag officer shout on the fore-castle. Just as the boats were seen, they were boats, and as we sped they seemed to be coming swiftly to us. My heart beat with quick emotion as I thought I saw them crowded with human beings. Men on deck shouted that they were crowded with people, but we swept by, passing them rapidly. The slaver hoped we would stop to pick up his boats, and thus gain more time, but this ruse made us even more eager. Now, our guns redoubled, we

what the end must come soon, but there seemed no way to stop the chase without sinking her, and humanity forbade a shot in her hull. Her captain realized the situation, but even then his courage was wonderful. On we went. Suddenly I saw her course begin to change; she was coming to windward, her masts and rigging were flapping down, her skylarks and royals were clewed up, her foremast aloft, and as she rounded up to the wind and backed her mainmast, the Constellation had barely time to get in her canvas, and round to under her main-topmast, scarcely 200 yards to windward. Away they went, first cutting away which the mainmast was, and then their shrill whistles ceased.

I had barely time to get on deck, after the guns had been secured, before I saw the first of our gallant first lieutenant himself as the boarding officer, speeding like an arrow to the vessel, her oars scattering sparkling diamonds of phosphorescent water as they rose and fell. Every officer and man was leaning over our low hammock-rails, breathlessly waiting and watching. We saw the Constellation's bows, the gangway, "In bows; way enough!" we could hear Fairfax say distinctly, though his orders were few. Then came the rattling of the oars as they were heaved, and the grating of the cutter alone.

Fairfax's active figure could be seen quickly mounting the side, and then he disappeared as he leaped over the gangway into the water. For two or three minutes the stillness was painful. One could hear men breathing in their excited anxiety. Suddenly a launch from the Constellation, I can recall as if heard today—clear, distinct and manly: "Constellation, ahoy! You have captured a prize worth over 700 slaves!"

For a second the quiet still prevailed, and then the crew forward of the mainmast spontaneously gave three loud ringing cheers. Only the sanctity of the quarter deck prevented the officers from joining, but they shared the feelings of the crew. Aside from the natural feeling which we were in a chase brings, there was large prize money in prospect, for in every such capture the law divided among officers and men a sum equal to half the value of the ship. "Oh, colonel! how delightful—and unexpected! Mother, you remember Colonel Swardley?"

"I wish to goodness you had," was the reply. "But, say, colonel, don't you ride yourself and me a high price for a horse? I can't give you a horse with any spirit in him, now, here's the very best you're looking for, and if you'll ride him all the way, I'll give you a cent and I'll say 'Thank you, besides, of course I don't expect a guest to train my horse down for me, but a particular animal would make you and me old times. I've got a military saddle, too; I remember that you didn't like ordinary saddles last year."

The offer was just to the colonel's taste. A long dash—somewhere, anywhere, would perhaps dispel his blues and brace him up; promising to try, and in a moment he had entered a room where he was greeted by a grinning waiter, who remembered him and placed him at a table besides Miss Coyne, who had been expected. "Oh, colonel! how delightful—and unexpected! Mother, you remember Colonel Swardley?"

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THE COLONEL'S LATEST VICTORY.

A Story for Memorial Day.

He, Colonel Swardley, had entered the civil war as a mere lieutenant, but he had fought so well and so persistently, remaining alive while officers about him were killed by dozens, that when the great conflict ended he wore a silver eagle on each shoulder.

His friends insisted that if the fighting had lasted a few months longer Swardley would have been made a brigadier-general.

Be that as it may, when he was mustered out at the close of the war he carried into civil life with him a reputation of a high military reputation, a dignity and a mustache which were the envy of all of his subalterns. Such of his friends as were in business hesitated to offer anything so small as a clerkship to a fellow who carried himself with the air of a man who should have an immense establishment of his own to manage.

Sometimes his periods of leisure were so long that observing persons told one another that Colonel Swardley really ought to marry, if only to have some one to tell him his own good and to receive his compliments. Suddenly, however, he would make a modest, yet quick and brilliant hit, in the way of business, always honest, and finally, by the details of each operation became so interesting that his acquaintances fell into alluding to them in about the same form of words.

"Have you heard of the colonel's latest?" There came a year, however, in which the question was scarcely asked; instead of it, the strange wonder to one another whether the colonel might not be losing his grip.

It did not winter come to his assistance and brought his faithful and indestructible army overcoat to the front again, he would scarcely have dared to appear in the streets by daylight.

As soon as the warm weather succeeded the winter of the colonel's discontent, the ex-warrior hastened to a summer resort where he had made quite a bit of money before by building a temporary bridge in a very few days, earning a large premium for each day saved from the specified time of construction.

The so-called improvement company for whom he had done the work had been generous of praise as well as of payment, and expressed the hope that the colonel would be within call should they ever again get into a hole, and as the colonel started for the locality a second time he could not help looking, with a wish, for a hole to get into, that a hole would be ready when he reached his journey's end.

At the little summer hotel to which he had gone that year when he built the bridge, he met Miss Mirlam Coyne, the fine woman who had ever given his heart any serious uneasiness. Although not a marrying man, he was fond of women, and so deferential to any girl who was acquainted with him would cheerfully go whole city squares out of her way to receive a bonjour from her.

Miss Coyne, however, was no mere pretty girl; she was a handsome woman, with a great deal of heart, which she was large enough to display on proper occasion without running any risk of losing it or having it stolen, and the colonel had felt a certain respect for her acquaintance and her manner toward him, and he felt it a matter of honor to make a pilgrimage to the place where he had met her.

There was no likelihood that he would meet her again, for she was practically the nurse of an invalid mother, who seldom could endure any summering place two years in succession.

The colonel had spent many winter hours in cursing the carelessness of habit which had kept him from accumulating money, for had he possessed a moderate competence he would have proposed to Miss Coyne—proposed even had he been almost sure of rejection, for even to be rejected by so glorious a creature would have been an honor.

He knew that she would have listened kindly, that her great, deep eyes would have seen his heart's honesty, and that her hand would have been laid on his forehead, and under no circumstances to hit the vessel's hull. "Aim high and make your mark," continued. I touched my cap and smiled. It was so like the admonition of an ambitious mother to her son. Soon one gun was sending round-shot whirling through the rigging.

what with Miss Coyne that very evening—a chat so delightful that when he retired to his own room he abused himself for half an hour in language which he wouldn't have endured from any one else for half a minute.

From swearing he changed suddenly to praying and solemnly promised heaven that thereafter, if he missed his opportunity in the world, he would be industrious, methodical and saving until he felt justified in asking the woman of all women to let him fight all for her.

Between the intensity of his profanity and protestation the colonel became so excited that he passed a restless night, and was on the hotel piazza, by sunrise, he found his host having a difficulty with a spirited saddle-horse.

"Fact is," said the landlord, "the season's been so cold and wet that there's been hardly anybody here and the horses haven't been used any to speak of, and they're so full of oats and hay that they're bound to get a little used to them. Wouldn't do my business any good to have somebody thrown and brought in with a broken leg or scratched face."

"I wish," said the colonel, as he looked the horse over with a professional eye, "that I had some of my old cavalry horses here. They'd cure your horse in a short order, and not harm them any, either."

"I wish to goodness you had," was the reply. "But, say, colonel, don't you ride yourself and me a high price for a horse? I can't give you a horse with any spirit in him, now, here's the very best you're looking for, and if you'll ride him all the way, I'll give you a cent and I'll say 'Thank you, besides, of course I don't expect a guest to train my horse down for me, but a particular animal would make you and me old times. I've got a military saddle, too; I remember that you didn't like ordinary saddles last year."

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The frame contained a "warrant"—the first of the kind that had been issued in the county for non-commissioned officers, yet as the colonel's eye fell on the familiar form Miss Coyne exclaimed: "What can be the matter?"

"Matter? Oh, nothing. I beg that you'll excuse me, my dear madam, if I forget myself in this way. The warrant is for a man who has been merely a corporal, but really this was no affair of his."

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about this ridge—had land, far from town—"Tention, men!" exclaimed the leader.

"I'd take the risk of playing and suing for the money, but it doesn't appear that they'd ever be collected. Let's tramp back home; what do you say?"

The band admitted that there seemed nothing else to do. Miss Coyne, who had been sitting at the window in black behind the window, murmured:

"Oh, colonel! Don't let them go! Look out for the children!"

The colonel turned pale. There was but one way to keep the band; he had but \$10 in his pocket; he might give his word and call it a bluff, but he was not a gambler, and he would not run into debt without the probability of being able to pay in a long time, was too awful to think of, even to please Miss Coyne.

"Do keep them!" begged the lady. "I'll cheerfully pay them rather than the poor fellow shan't have a military funeral."

"The money is mine," said the colonel, "and I must be mine," the colonel replied, feeling very much as he did during his first charge.

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stood at the head of the grave and rested while the coffin was taken from the hearse. Then he saw that Miss Coyne, the one woman in the world, had tramped that dusty road with the angel of consolation, seemed nothing irregular to her in the proceedings, and the colonel became his dispirited self as he saw her, as handsome and bright as the woman in black behind the window, place her arm around the dingy, common looking widow and draw her to the side of the grave, and then drop her shapely head in a whisper, probably, words of consolation.

The interment was quickly made, preceded by a prayer from one of the men, then every one looked expectantly at the colonel, and one man finally remarked:

"Jim alius said he wanted the national air played over him when he was buried."

The colonel responded, first whispering to the other musician that a drum did not harmonize with any of them but "Yankee Doodle" with which he would conclude.

At last the ordeal was over. The colonel walked back to the house of mourning, leading his horse, for Miss Coyne was still about and trying to comfort the widow. With all possible haste the colonel got her away from the scene of so much that had been unexpected when the morning ride began.

As they took the road again and the colonel raised his hat to the mourners and friends of the farmers shouting, "Three cheers for him!" and the response was quite noisy for so small a party. The colonel acknowledged the salute and they exclaimed:

"Tret, march—I beg pardon, my dear Miss Coyne, but I don't seem to have my head this morning through the very unusual incidents of the past hour or two. I assure you."

"Colonel," interrupted Miss Coyne with the greatest, most womanly expression that the colonel had ever seen even in her face, "you are the greatest man I ever met. I have lifted me entirely out of my little world—taken me so far out of it that I wish I might never be obliged to go back into it."

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