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ADVENTURES OF TOM SMITHERS
AMONG THE LAND PIRATES.
OR, THE CAVE OF WYRRAL.

Tom Smithers, an honest fisherman of Liverpool, having been cast away upon the breakers of Wyrral, is thus described, discovering a den of Land Pirates:—

Smithers leaned his back against one of the surrounding rocks, regretting his lost boat, yet thankful for his own preservation, when a bright flash suddenly glared upon his sight, immediately succeeded by the report of a gun, in a direction with which he was too well acquainted not to know what imminent danger the vessel from whence it proceeded must be in. "Aye, aye: you may fire," cried he bitterly, "but it will be long before you get any help on these bleak shoals; sooner will the land pirates beat out your brains with a handspike than throw you a rope's end to save your precious lives. If I had but my boat yet, I might do some good, but she has deserted, like all other friends, and left the old stump to whither by itself."

Again the signal gun of danger roared aloud, as if appealing to the heavens themselves for pity and assistance, and then all was silent. Even the ruthless winds appeared to be abating their fury, and wailing over the destruction they had caused, like the remorseful groans of the convicted criminal, when it was too late to recal his crime.

Poor Smithers, after listening long in vain for a renewal of sounds from the vessel, (for though signals of distress, they proved that she and her crew were yet existing) he turned disconsolately towards the rocks, and entering one of the largest caverns, threw himself upon the ground, and endeavored to forget his woes in sleep.

But before the power of slumber could steep his wearied senses in oblivion, he was startled by the sound of harsh voices near him, apparently approaching the cave in which he lay.

"Haul him along, Jack Brown!" cried a hoarse voice.

"But he wont come," answered another, at a greater distance.

"Then blast him, knock his brains out," replied the first speaker, "he's given us more trouble than he's worth already, and it's like enough to be his end at last."

Then there seemed to be a confused noise, as of a number of men in dispute, and immediately after the whole band entered the mouth of the cavern in which Smithers was crouching—for he had sprung upon his feet at the first noise, and as they drew nearer, had receded into a deep and narrow fissure, which was fortunately close at hand, and effectually concealed him from the casual observation of passers by, though at the same time, they were distinctly visible to him. He saw (by the light of several lanterns which they carried) about a dozen ruffian-like men pass into the interior of a cavern, forcing along a person who seemed frequently and strenuously to resist their efforts, and attempt to look behind; and in a few moments four others appeared, bearing between them a female figure, apparently in a state of complete insensibility.

So soon as the glare of the lights had begun to cast a faint flickering reflection upon the lofty roof, Smithers stole from his place of concealment, and followed the plunderers at a cautious distance. The cavern for about thirty paces, rose in a lofty and wide extended arch; it then gradually diminished in height, until the passenger was compelled to stoop low to continue his course, and through this defile, our hero (if so we may call him) pursued the steps of the retreating crew, until the whole band stopped, and one of the foremost removed a large stone, which had seemed a line of termination of the vault.

The party disappeared through the cavity thus laid open, with a celerity which showed that the vault beyond must be sufficiently high to permit them to move erect, and the stone was immediately replaced in its former position, presenting an obstacle to the further sight of the seaman: near this he remained, listening to the retreating footsteps, until they appeared to die away, in distance. He then stooped forward to endeavor to remove the stone, but just as he had grasped it, he heard a voice close beyond, saying—

"Th's is queer job, Dick Williams, what dost think old Ironhead means to do with these live stock?—why couldn't he knock 'em on the head, as he always did before?"

"It's little I know or care either," replied another, "belike he thinks the lass will make a graidly housekeeper, and ook well a'ter the whiskey casks, or may be, he thinks there's something about 'em worth hunting for, and he dont like to make a noise outside,—he's more upon his sharps than he was before the lighthouse jog.—Wasn't that a game trick, Bill?—we've had rare fun amongst the split timbers since,—none but old Ironhead would have had pluck enough to have set that old steer-'em well a-smoking."

"Hush! he's coming back, and if he hears thee call him old 'Ironhead,' he'll make thy head softer than it is,—and there is no need of that any way, said the other speaker, and immediately afterwards, a number of confused voices were heard, and the sound of approaching footsteps, when old Tom immediately made the best of his way to his former hiding place.

Scarcely had he attained the requisite spot of shelter, before the whole crew hurried from the cavern, no doubt in search of further plunder. Tom followed them, at a distance and saw, by the light of the moon, which now beamed at intervals thro' the scattered clouds, that the tide had receded to a sufficient distance from the projecting headlands, to afford a safe passage between them and the subsiding waters.—Round the western of these headlands they had, doubtless, dragged their prisoners, on entering the bay, and behind it they again disappeared.

No sooner had their retiring figures ceased to be visible, than our adventurer retraced his steps to the cavern, and, with as much speed as he was able to exert, felt his way along the low narrow passage until he reached the stone which terminated it. This, with a little exertion, he removed, but started back on perceiving a light on the other side. After a pause of some minutes, finding no sound to follow the removal of the barrier, he ventured to step forward, and found himself in a large square chamber, in the midst of which stood a rough table, composed of spars of wood spliced together, on which was placed a lamp, which from its appearance, had probably been purloined from the cabin of some stranded vessel. From one corner of the apartment a narrow, though lofty passage seemed to lead farther, as if to some inner room, whilst around every other part of the walls, were piled casks of spirits and tobacco, surrounded by every description of goods, evidently the spoil of such ill-fated vessels as had been cast upon that desolate coast. After a hasty glance around, to ascertain that none of its murderous inhabitants still remained within the cave, Smithers raised the lamp and proceeded cautiously along the passage before him, which after a gradual and winding descent of about twenty yards, terminated in a chamber much smaller than the last, in the centre of which rose several wooden spars, as a support to the roof, which was of a much softer and more sandy nature than the passages which led to it; to one of these spars was tied a person who appeared about forty years of age, habited in a military great coat, which still displayed a great profusion of ornamental lace, though much defaced with mud, and dripping with water. To another pillar was bound a female figure, seemingly just arrived at that age when youth and womanhood are blending into one. Her slight form seemed to be prevented from sinking to the earth solely by the supporting band which fettered her, and her dark tresses fell streaming round her form, as her head drooped nearly insensible upon her shoulder.

With as much precaution as a sailor could possibly use, did honest Tom Smithers make known the purport of his having joined them, and the hopes he entertained of their escape. But still the possibility of deliverance had a moment before appeared so distant, that the thrill of hope was now so sudden, that the lovely and the helpless female sufferer, as she heard it, uttered a faint scream, and lost what little portion of conciousness has sill remained to her.

A few moments had only elapsed ere the seaman's knife had severed the cords which bound the father (for such he was,) and his gentle daughter. Raised in the arms of the sailor and the sire, the insensible fair one was borne swiftly beneath the overhanging arches, until the sea breeze once more greeted the captives and their rescuer with its reviving freshness. The rough blasts seemed to have expended all their fury, though the waves had not yet regained their usual calmness, as the anxious parent supported his unconscious child upon his breast while the worthy tar bore water in his hat to bathe her snowy temples.—The application, with the aid of the still fresh blowing sea breeze quickly recalled her senses to their accustomed station, and the fugitives hastened along the shore with as much speed as their exhausted charge could bear, not without casting many a solicitous look behind them, and often fancying they could distinguish the sound of their pursuers' approaching foosteps on the wavering gale.

Just as they had gained the point where the Mersey unites its waters with the channel, they could discern by the light of the dawn, a small vessel beating out of the river which the experienced eye of Smithers soon observed to bear a royal streamer at her topmast head. At the desire of his companions, (the weaker of whom was again almost fainting with fatigue and exertion, to which she had been so little accustomed,) the seaman watched his opportunity as a tack brought the vessel near the strand, to hail her with that cry which every son of the ocean well understands.—He was successful in his efforts, and a few minutes brought her boat in contact with the shore.

A short statement of their situation and danger, induced the midshipman to convey them to the cruiser, which was lying to, at a short distance for her boat, and on being received on board her, a few words determined the officer who commanded her to steer direct for the cavern, and attempt to surprise the ruffians in their den. They accordingly made towards the spot as quickly as the still adverse, though now not boisterous wind would permit them, and by the assistance of their boat landed the greater part of their crew, together with the fisherman and the stranger, both of whom were resolute in their determination to take their part in the struggle which was to be expected with such a merciless and daring band of desperadoes.

They had taken the precaution of bringing a dark lantern from the cruiser, and with the fisherman for their guide, they proceeded with silent steps to explore the smuggler's retreat. For some time they feared the inhabitants were absent, for not a sound arose from the inner cave even when they reached the stone barrier which alone divided them from their foeman's hold.

Smithers removed the stone, but on stepping forward into the chamber, stumbled over a fragment of rock, and fell.

The fall was instantly succeeded by the discharge of a pistol, the ball of which entered the left shoulder of the commander of the cruiser, and in a few moments the whole band were awakened from their sleep, and engaging their assailants, hand to hand, with the ferocity of tigers.

But those few moments were sufficient to admit the whole of the besiegers within the vault, and, although the ruffians fought with all the frenzy of desperation, even desperation itself is a weak opponent to the determined courage of British sailors.—Amid the confusion, the chief of the banditti had almost forced his way to the narrow passage which offered the only possibility of escape, when a blow from a hatchet with which old Tom had armed himself, proved that his "iron head" was not proof against the stroke of justice, and levelled him with the dust.

Scarcely had five minutes elapsed, ere thirty lawless men lay breathless in the midst of their ill-gotton spoils, and left not a foe to contend with their victorious invaders.

They had returned, just at day-break, laden with plunder, and thrown themselves on the earth to sleep, totally careless about the present state of their prisoners, feeling confident of the impracticablity of their escape.

Only three of the cruiser's brave crew fell a sacrifice, but many were severely wounded by the desperate marauders.

A few years rolled on, and an old man was to be seen each sunny day, with his blooming daughter besides him, sitting on the beach at the front of a lovely and commodious cottage in Gloucestershire, relating to a group of pleased and listening children, the providential escape of their mother and their grandfather, Sir Charles Montgomery, on the cost of Cheshire.

That cottage and the land around it were the gift of the beings he preserved, and that happy man was old Tom Smithers.

A HIGHWAYMAN'S CONFESSION.

Some twenty-five years ago two young men were hung at Baltimore for robbing the great Southern mail, and killing the driver. One of the highwaymen was but a boy nineteen years of age, the son of a respectable physician at Utica, in this State. The other was an older offender. The following is an extract from the confession of the latter, which was published at the time in a pamphlet.—

My first exploit on the highway, was to rob an old Scotchman whom I had perceived in the afternoon, from my lurking place, driving a fatted cow to a neighboring market. As he was returning, (a little in liquor.) I placed myself in his way, and saluted him with "Good evening, old dad."

"How do ye, how do ye," said he.

"Sold your cow, ah?"

"Yes." (Hickup.)

"How much?"

"Too leetle; too little, only twenty siller dollars."

"Well, shell," said I.

"Shell!"

"Yes, shell out; and do it quickly too, or I'll make daylight shine through you with an ounce ball.

"Oh! for Gude's sake, you wadna rob me?"

"No, but for my own sake—to be brief, I am a gentleman in distress, and will take your money as a loan from you."

"Weel a weel, dinna hurt me," said he, apparantly sobered, "and I weel count it out till ye."

So saying, he put his hand in his coat pocket behind, and drawing forth a large pistol, ready cocked, he presented it at me, observing, very coolly —

"I hae heard o' sic borrowin' folk as ye afore now; and sae I hae aye gone providit wi' the ready to plank doun."

Such a novice was I in this new business, that I had not taken my pistols from my belt, where they were confined under a buttoned coat; besides, if I had, it would not have availed me, for I had neglected to provide flints for them.

"But," continued he, "as ye say ye are a puir gentilmon, (and pure enough, Gude kens,) just step aff a few yards further, and dance a Scotch jeg, or a hornpipe; and mak the music wi' yere an whustle too, or ye're a deed mon."

"Oh! my old friend, impossible! surely you do not insist on my dancing jig in sand half way up to my knees?"

"Gif ye dinna at it wi' a' yere might, in less time than I can snap my fingers three times, by the son o' Elihu, (wha I'm fend