

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

J. H. Ingraham

Table of Contents

<u>Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay.....</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>J. H. Ingraham.....</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>CHAPTER I.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>CHAPTER II.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>CHAPTER III.....</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>CHAPTER IV.....</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Footnotes.....</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>CHAPTER V.....</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>CHAPTER VI.....</u>	<u>29</u>
<u>CHAPTER VII.....</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>CHAPTER VIII.....</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>CHAPTER IX.....</u>	<u>44</u>
<u>CHAPTER X.....</u>	<u>50</u>

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

J. H. Ingraham

This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.
<http://www.blackmask.com>

- CHAPTER I.
- CHAPTER II.
- CHAPTER III.
- CHAPTER IV.
- CHAPTER V.
- CHAPTER VI.
- CHAPTER VII.
- CHAPTER VIII.
- CHAPTER IX.
- CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER I.

Boston Harbor at sunset—The fleet becalmed—The skippers and the strange sail—The moonlight and the breeze from the sea—The frigate and goleta.

The waters of Boston Bay slept without a ripple. The round green isles that swell here and there from its bosom were reflected in dark blue masses and bold outlines beneath the surface. It was near sunset. The skies were suffused and glowing with molten gold, and the waters were no less gorgeous than the sky. 'As face answers to face in a glass,' so the mirror-like bay gave back the green islands, the golden firmament and the empurpled clouds that magnificently curtained the West. By inclining the head a little one could see another world beneath the wave. A soft haze, such as is peculiar to a September sunset blended sky and sea, and communicated a dreamy, pleasing indistinctness to the horizon. The domes and towers of the distant city enthroned upon her Three Hills; the stately edifices on the wide sweeping shores of the Bay; the fortresses upon its islands, all, were tinted with the richest light, reflected from the sunset sky and clouds; and the hundred vessels of every size and class that lay becalmed amid the scene, seemed to have exchanged their snow-white canvass for sails of purple and of gold.

The breeze by which they had been impelled on their various courses, had died away in mid-afternoon, and left them there motionless. Each vessel was reflected in the watery world below, with the distinctness of outline of the reality; every spar and rope being answered from beneath; and the mock vessel was so like the true that it could not have been told from it, save that it, like the islands, was *up side down*. The men were reflected, moving about upside down, walking, as it seemed, on their heads. It was all a beautiful scene. It seemed to be suspended in a liquid element, neither air nor water, between two worlds. Some of the vessels, especially the larger ones, had their sails brailed up, hanging in festoons from the yards; others let them remain to catch the first zephyr that should come in from seaward.

The calm extended far out to sea, and the glassy ocean rocked upon its shining bosom many a vessel, diminished by the distance to a mere speck flashing back the sunbeams from the West, and sparking like a star. Near the land idly hung upon the arch of the smooth turquoise billow the graceful fisher's skiff swinging lightly to its undulations. Occasionally an unwieldy porpoise would roll his huge curving back out of the water, and blowing a cloud of silvery spray into the air, disappear; or a school of ellwives dart upwards with one impulse and descend in a silvery shower with a rushing noise rippling the sea in a wide circle around.

The sun had but a few minutes longer to remain above the horizon. Surrounded with the glories he had created he was slowly retiring behind the gorgeous curtains of rose and purple clouds he had gathered about his couch. But with his departure the splendor of the sunset scene did not cease. The crimson, violet, orange, rose and azure mingled and suffused the heavens from West to East, 'till the Orient rivalled the West in magnificence. Slowly and gradually the celestial splendor diminished. The rose and purple changed into russet, and the golden lining of the Tyrian clouds became silver, and the Tyrian changed to black. The silvery lining then grew gray and gray mixed every where with the fading dyes, 'till sky and earth and sea assumed the sober livery of evening. A glow, a blush yet lingered in the West and North, while the East became more and more a sober gray.

Still the calm continued. Not a breath of air had stirred the polished waters of the bay. The evening breeze was withheld, and, save as they were slowly borne harborward by the scarcely perceptible tides the numerous vessels that dotted the bay, remained motionless.

The last tinge of rose had not given place to gray in the North West, and the stars had but just began to stud the blue arch, when the Eastern horizon commenced to lighten up, at first with a soft silvery radiance, just tinged with the palest gold. It spread skyward growing brighter each moment, suffusing the East with the loveliest light—a fleecy, silvery light reflecting the most delicate tints of violet and orange. Suddenly, amid this exquisite and lovely rivalry of the gorgeous scene of sunset—as gentle woman rivals man! the upper end of the round moon appeared above the sea. She rose like the sun with a veil of silver over his disc. As she ascended from the waters she flung a scarf of light across them to every mariner's eye that watched her rising, impatient for the ocean breeze

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

that he knew would follow her appearance.

Among the numerous vessels that reflected, as if from banks of snow, her pure beams, there was one which had before sunset drawn many a curious eye from the decks of the trading vessels that lay becalmed near her. She was a three masted *caravel* of about one hundred and eighty tons burthen, that lay abreast of the pyramid known as 'Nix Mate.' It was a craft of a description entirely unfamiliar to the honest skippers who were watching her from the decks of their lumber vessels, and discussing her with that freedom of speech which republicans are apt to extend to every subject at all novel or that looks like mystery.

There were, however, some of the rough coasters, who had sailed in the molasses trade to the West Indies, and who were, therefore, more informed as to the probable character of the stranger, which, like a hawk got among a flight of doves, was making her way with the Yankee craft into the harbor. They recollected having seen such in Matanzas and on the 'main,' and knew they were used as trading luggers in those distant seas.

'But what can the tarnal kitter be a-doin' away here to Bosting, sticking her nose in here among christian craft as if she had as good right here as we *natives*?' said the skipper of a lumber schooner from Penobscot in answer to the skipper of a Kennebec sloop, who lay becalmed just under his stern window and who had given him the information just detailed.

Wall, Capting Pettingell,' answered the skipper, from the top of his lumber, which was piled half way up to the cross-trees, dodging, as he replied, to avoid a cloud of smoke, seasoned with onions, that floated towards him from the funnel of his caboose; 'Wall, that's wot I cant guess. Taint of en Spanish vessels come to Boston Port, and sich a craft as this I never know'd ventur' out o' the West Indies!'

'It's a mity odd looking fish, any how,' responded Captain Pettingell, looking through his hollow hand at the stranger, which lay about a third of a mile to the south and west of him; 'three masts and not a darned bit of cross tree nor yard. Her sticks be as strait and smooth as a liberty pole. I dont like her looks, Capting Pinkham, do yew?' And this courteous gentleman took three strides forward and three strides aft on the plank that served him for a quarter-deck.

'Wall, I can't zactly say as I do, Capting Pettingell,' responded the Penobscot skipper, shutting one eye and letting fall his under jaw as he surveyed more closely the suspicious vessel. 'She don't to me look *exactly* like them Spanish traders I've seen to the West Indies. She looks too cranky and trim for that. Just see how clean she looks from stem to starn. She is as sharp in the bows as a pilot boat, and as strait as an arrow. That thing in my 'pinion is made more for sailin' than freightin!'

'That's just my pinion, Capting,' said the Kennebec skipper with an air of consequence stickin' his hard brown hands into the pockets of an old blue broadcloth coat, which he wore instead of a pea-jacket, and throwing back from his forehead an antiquated bell-top hat to get a better look at her. To tell you the truth, Capting Pinkham, I have my 'spisions 'bout that ar' three masted chap! I'm thinkin' he in these waters for no good. But thar's a mano'-war below 'll have an eye on him; so he better look out how he behaves if he aint any better than he should be, which it's my solemn 'pinion he aint. He musn't think he can take the same liberties in these here parts as he could in the West Indies. It's comin on night and I tell ye, capting, it becomes us to keep our eye on him. Josh!'

'Feyther!' answered a white headed smoky faced urchin thrusting his head out of the caboose, which was perched upon a pyramid of shingles nearly on a level with the fore-cross trees.

'Go down into the cabin and bring up my double-barrel 'Bunker Hill' and my powder horn and bag 'o buck shot! I mean to show fight till I die, Capting?'

'Don't be alarmed Capting Pettingell,' said the Penobscot skipper laughing at the seriousness of his friend; 'I dare say he won't do any mischief if he should prove to be even a pirate. We are almost in harbor, and with that frigate becalmed below us, there is nothing to fear. Pirates look after higher game than you or I!'

'Wall, it aint no harm bein' prepared, Capting. If they send their boat aboard me, I'll give 'em both barrels of Bunker Hill, if I can't do no more! I am a Captain in the militia when I'm to hum, and it wouldn't answer for Capting Eben Pettingell to give up his ship without firin' a shot. I'll be darned if I don't kind o' feel riled when I look at the kitter, and sort o' wish he was a Spanish pirate and would take a notion to board the 'Polly Ann,' while I am her Captain; I guess they wouldn't want to come agen!'

'You've pluck, I see Capting. But I don't think you will have a chance to show your military spirit. They seem to be lying becalmed there very quiet!'

'I only wish they'd come aboard!' cried the valorous man shouldering his double barrelled gun and marching

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

up and down the planks, which were laid above his cargo of shingles and clapboards! 'I only wish they'd come!'

This spirited and courageous individual then stopped and resting his gun upon a ratlin of the starboard main shrouds aimed at the vessel with the three masts: and made several appalling demonstrations of his intention to fire! There is no saying what might have been the consequences of his over-broiling militia valor to the object which had aroused it, when all at once he dropped his gun and, with a pale countenance, looked over to the deck of his friend the skipper.

'Do you see that, Captaing Pinkham!— They are letting down a boat and men are gettin' in it! I do really believe they are comin' right aboard o' me coz I aimed my gun at 'em! 'Tisn't possible they overheard me, think 'tis captaing?'

'I shouldn't wonder,' answered the other dryly.

'What in natur shall we do, captin? I'm darned if they aint fillin' thar boat with men in red caps—pirates they tell al'ays wears red caps! I say, what shall we do?'

'Give 'em both barrels of Bunker hill,' answered Captain Pinkham with a smile; yet closely watching the boat.

Although the vessel had to him a suspicious appearance, he did not apprehend any danger from her in the harbor, just at sunset, with a frigate within gun shot and hundreds of coasting vessels in sight. Yet he did not observe this movement without interest. The boat filled with men and impelled by light oars, put off and pulled out towards them.

'They are coming,' cried the valorous captain as pale as a sheet! 'Shall I give it to em?'

'And before his friend could reply, bang! bang! went both barrels of Bunker Hill, the buck shot ploughing up the glassy surface a hundred fathoms off, and falling a quarter of a mile short of the boat. At the same moment the boat changed its course and pulled out ahead of the Spanish Baxel, when it was seen that she was attached to her by a tow-line fastened to the end of her flying jib-boom.

'There I told you I'd keep em off!' cried the courageous gentleman on seeing the boat haul ahead. 'If it hadn't been for my bravery we'd had our throats cut and our head strung on a signal hilyard to make a necklace for her captain! Thank *me* Capting Pinkham'

'You are an ass, Captain Pettingell. Dont you see the boat was not coming here at all; but only put off to tow! The vessel was drifting towards the Nix Mate rock and they have got their boat out to pull her off into the channel. '

'Wall, so they be!' answered the discomfited warrior 'But if they'd ha been coming *that* would a skeered em I know! It ant done no harm. They heered it and seed the shot in the water and know we are ready for em if they get up to any o' their piratish capers!'

'If they'd come nigher, captain, I should have expected to see you jump into your boat and pull for the next island! I dont think your gun frightened them much! I dare say they thought you were shooting at the seagulls that are flying about us!'

'Captain Pinkham, you may jest; but I tell ye, that chap is a dangerous neighbor. If I was the captain up to the castle I wouldnt let him pass, and if he tried to I'd skin him, I'm plagued if I wouldnt! You see! That boat ant out there for nothin! Its only playin' bunkum.

And this bold man after calling for his supper, set down and ate his biscuit and fried onions with his eye on the enemy, and Bunker-Hill placed loaded and ready cocked across his knee.

A like curiosity and interest was felt on board the other craft that were in sight of the stranger, and to all she presented a suspicion aspect. Those who, when the calm fell, found themselves near her, towed themselves with alacrity out of her way, for those who came nighest to her least liked her looks.

In the meanwhile the object of the general feeling of fear and dislike that pervaded the fleet among which she had crept, lay upon the waveless surface of the water as if sleeping between two skies. Below her was painted in bold outlines, hull, spar and canvass inverted. She was very long and narrow and lay crouching as it were, like a sleeping grey hound, close to the water. Her hull was of a dark bronze hue, relieved by a narrow bead painted steel color, and intended to represent a band of shining steel. Her decks were closely shut in from stem to stern by her bulwarks, above which could only be seen the caps of her crew as they moved about. There was visible no port, no gangway for admittance on board. All was close aud mysterious. What transpired on her decks was concealed from all eyes. This feature presented a striking contrast to the high open decks of the Yankee craft around her, where skipper and crew lived as exposed as if on the roof of a meeting-house. This mystery the

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

skippers did not by any means like. They could not think any thing honest could be going on when they built up the sides of their vessel so high 'to keep folks from seeing.' Many a skipper shook his head and prophesied about her, as well as that respectable gentleman who was the valorous possessor of 'Bunker Hill.'

The strange vessel as she lay suspended as it were between two worlds, presented to the eye of the true seamen a fine spectacle. Her model was beautiful. Its symmetry as faultless as that of a regatta club-boat! She sat upon the flood with two of her graceful lateen sails extended upon her slender masts like a swan with its wings outspread to catch the first air that stirred. Her three masts were slender single sticks, the main being full seventy feet long, and raking with a hold but graceful inclination aft. They were stained a bright vermillion, and the slender round like yards that obliquely crossed them supporting the triangular sail were black and polished like ebony. There were but few ropes visible, and the standing rigging was very slight and without rattlings; as the sails were hoisted from the deck, yard and all, by halyards rooved through a truck at the masthead. There were also halyards for pencil flying topsails which were not now aloft, her fore and main sails only being hoisted. She carried also a jib and flying jib, both of which were set. A more graceful, novel and picturesque looking object altogether, as she lay idly upon the water, has seldom met the eye of either landsman or seamen than this foreign looking craft. There was no sign of armament, nothing to indicate whether she was an armed vessel or only a simply merchantman. That she was Spanish was evident from her rig, and the dark red capped crew that showed themselves in the boat. Her ensign hang drooping over the stern, and could not be made out; though from the different colors it displayed in its closed folds, it promised the first breath of wind that should lift it to display the broad insignia of Spain.

The sun set; and the boat which had been sent out ahead was ordered aboard, and the vessel lay as before dark, silent and mysterious. She had towed half a mile farther into the harbor, and while, as the current began to set seaward, the vessels around dropped their anchors to hold their ground, she threw out from her bows two pairs of huge sweeps and began heavily and slowly to work them unseen within deck.

Gradually the sunset glories of the closing day blended with the sober gray of night, and still the three masted schooner or ship worked her oars, and by this process held her own. The evident dislike on board of her to dropping anchor did not escape the vigilant observation of the Yankee skippers, and especially of the bold captain of the shingle sloop, who with 'Bunker Hil' charged within three inches of the muzzle, had not left his deck or taken his eye off the suspicious fellow since the sun went down.

The moon at length rose upon the scene and with her came the first 'paw' of the night breeze that had been so long delayed. Her bright wake was rippled and the young waves began to dance in her path and sparkle with merry light. The vessels most seaward first felt the wind as it set towards land, and were first in motion; some standing out of the harbor close hauled to make an offing, but the greater part of them seeking the port directly before them. It blew gently and steadily, scarce ruffling the crest of a single wave and sending the vessels in at about three knots speed. Those that lay in the more open channel and passes between the islands next took the wind and were set in motion, while others sheltered by islands were slower in spreading to it their idle canvass. At length the caravel took it on her quarter and gracefully yielding to the invisible impulse shot onward, her sweeps at the same time being drawn aboard by unseen hands, and her three light flying topsails a moment after were seen ascending from the deck like snow-white birds of gigantic size, and spreading their wings to the silvery radiance of the moon. Then next the breeze reached the Penobscot schooner and sloop, and they also were in motion. Soon the whole fleet, a few moments before so still and inactive, was alive and the cheering song of the heave-o-yo! as anchor after anchor was hove up, gave place to the rippling music of a hundred prows cutting the limpid surface of the joyous sparkling bay.

Among those vessels that got the first fanning of the breeze and stood harborward, was the double decked frigate or *razee*, already alluded to as having been becalmed a mile below the Spanish caravel. Her lofty royals first felt the upper current of moving air before the surface of the water was disturbed by a flaw, and slowly and majestically she began to advance: she had, therefore, made considerable progress, when the three masted schooner which lay so much farther in, caught the breeze. This vessel had not been noticed from the frigate, as several coasters and the low shoulder of an island lay in the range, and it seemed from her manoeuvring to be the object of the schooner to keep in this range even after the moon had risen, and she was in motion again. If the honest coast skippers had been surprised at her outlandish rig, they were not less astonished and confounded at her rate of sailing after the wind rose. She seemed to walk the water! The breeze that moved them along heavily at

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

two knots, sent her three or three and a half. She seemed to want but a cap full of wind to make her dance over the water like a whaleman's skiff. She soon came up with the Polly Ann, and as the vessels were crowded thickly together and the passage was narrow, she went so near that Captain Eben Pinkham trembled so that he let fall Bunker Hill upon the plank and came very near shooting his son and heir 'Josh' through the head; as it was he made a seive of his fore-sail and was knocked over on his back by the concussion. When he got to his feet the 'pirate,' as he swore she was, was fifty fathom ahead of him leaving a white track of foam behind.

'You'd better scamper and git out o' my way,' said the militia hero on seeing this favorable state of things; and taking up Bunker Hill he put it to his shoulder and aimed at the vessel in bravado; fully satisfied that the report of his double-barrel had saved his load of lumber, and perhaps his own and his son Josh's neck from the hands of the 'darn'd pirate;' such being the complimentary and graceful appealeation which Captain Pinkham bestowed upon the enemy.

'I guess he wont want to come no nigher the Polly Ann arter this,' said this worthy and brave man as he looked after his retreating fear-inspirer.

He then turned to seek the ocngratulations of his son Josh and those of a bottled nose Kennebec fisherman who composed his whole crew, and who felt safe and happy under the protection of so brave a man, when he was struck with astonishment on beholding his vessel almost under the shadow of the triple tower of canvass that rose high above the lofty decks of the frigate. The next moment the stately structure surged past her decks looking down upon the sloop's topsail yard, leaving the sloop as she passed rocking in her wake as a child's chip boat would have done in her own.

CHAPTER II.

The Return to Port—The Goleta discovered—The end of the Cruise—Suspicious Movements on the water.

The razee marched onward with a stately advance amid the fleet of lesser craft, which, one after another, fell into her wake. She was clad in canvass from deck to truck, and towered into the skies above the humble sails around like a huge tower of snow piled terrace on terrace. At the same distance ahead of her as at first starting, the strange schooner kept her course. The fast sailing frigate had passed every thing else, but did not gain upon this vessel, which was now plainly seen from the deck of the former, the coasting vessels which had intercepted the view having been one after another left astern.

Two bells in the first watch had just been struck. The frigate was about two miles below the castle and five from the town, and the Spanish *bazel* a little less than half a mile right ahead. The wind was from the South, and both vessels were running with it free on the larboard quarter. The decks of the frigate shone brightly in the moonlight, save where the black shadow of the sails would fall across it, and the brightest spaces were crossed and netted with the gold pencil-like shadows of the rigging intercepting the moon beams. The usual watch was increased by large numbers of the crew grouped on gun carriages and the forecastle, and crowding the forward hammock nettings, watching the advance of the noble vessel into harbour; for she had been long absent and in the return to port the rigid discipline of other time was in some degree relaxed. Many a weather beaten face was turned eagerly and earnestly in the direction of the dome-crowned queen of New England, sending up her hundred glittering spires like fingers heaven-pointed. A cheerful yet suppressed murmur and laughter broke the usual gravity of the forward part of the ship, while aft the officers were no less elated with the prospect of a speedy termination to their voyage, the anticipation of a happy meeting with friends, and the enjoyment once more of social pleasures. The middies were in high spirits in the prospect of liberty and larks, and were as merry as school boys let out of school for a half holiday. Smiles and good humor and kindly feeling characterized all on board from the captain, arrayed in his shore uniform, to the gigantic African cook who was shaving his ebony chin in a bit of broken mirror preparatory to paying a shore visit to his expectant Phillis.

Gallantly the returning frigate bowled up the harbour which seemed to open its arms and then gradually to enclose in the embrace of its arms the two years wanderer. Nets of golden oranges, huge branches of bananas, and festoons of fragrant pine apples, which were hung in different parts of the frigate, showed that her last departure was from the West Indies, and that she was not many days thence.

A party of young officers off duty were standing near the larboard gangway, some of them upon the hammock nettings, watching the lights in the distant city, and pointing out to each other familiar places; for the bright moon revealed every object with remarkable distinctness.

Opposite this group, on the starboard side of the deck, a little further aft, stood the captain, his first lieutenant and the quarter-master—the latter a respectful step to leeward of his commanding officer. He managed to listen and con the ship at the same time. They were talking about bringing the frigate to anchor, and the best ground to be chosen for it after they got up to town. In the mizzen rigging, just above them, stood a young lieutenant with the quarter-master's spy glass to his eyes looking out ahead. His face was suddenly animated. The goleta was a couple of points to windward and plainly visible from the quarter deck. He had been watching her for some moments, being surprised at her ability to keep her distance ahead of the frigate which usually walked by every thing. The rest on board, save some of the sailors who were also observing the stranger keep ahead with no little surprise, seemed too much taken up with the familiar shores, the city and the idea of going on shore to notice her. To this young officer she seemed to be only a schooner as her three masts ranged, and the light was not strong enough at the distance she was off, for him to distinguish the lateen rig from the ordinary sails of a schooner. But while he looked it became necessary for her to fall off four or five points suddenly where the channel took a sharp turn, just below the castle, which she was now most up with. This change in her course brought her three quarters to, and to his surprise he saw that the supposed schooner had three masts far apart, and that she was remarkably long in the hull. The change in her position also brought the beams of the moon more broadly upon her canvass and he was astonished to trace the outlines of the sharp triangular lateen sail.

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

`Faith! The secret of that long legged fellow's speed is out,' he said with a rounder oath than it becomes us to chronicle, or became the quarter deck of a frigate.

`How? what is it, Winckley?' demanded the captain, stopping his conversation and looking at the young officer inquiringly.—`What have you discovered?'

`A lateen schooner running a race into Boston harbor with the tightest frigate in Uncle Sam's navy, and beating her at that. I never expected to meet with a lateen out of sight of the Pan of Matanzas!'

The officers attention was now drawn to the vessel; and as the frigate rapidly neared her after she had taken the angle in the channel and running for awhile nearly broadside to, they easily made her out to be a large class Spanish baxel.

`This is a strange craft to see in a Yankee port,' observed the captain. `I suppose she has taken a run with a cargo of oranges and pine apples. We are but nine days from Havana and if she had as quick a passage it will turn out a good venture!' Thus saying the captain, after glancing up the harbor, turned to his lieutenant and resumed his conversations and instructions.

The frigate now gallantly passed the Castle, which then presented to the eye snow-white walls and green parapets, and for the rest of the way all on board were too busy to heed the goleta, though her class had been discovered by other groups both amidship and on the forecastle, and given rise to no little curiosity as to her business in those seas.

The goleta was at length lost amid the numerous vessels at anchor in the broad basin of the harbor, and soon after the frigate drew in among them and taking in sail after sail, at length dropped her anchor in the stream opposite the India pier.

The deep mouthed bells in the city towers were ringing out the good old fashioned hour of nine o'clock—a sort of social *curfew* for regulating the hours of all well disposed citizens, when the frigate came to with her anchor once more grasping the ground to which its iron flukes had so long been a stranger. The sails were furled, the yards squared, the port watch set, the captain and one or two of his officers had gone ashore, as well as all who had got leave, and ten o'clock struck from half a dozen turrets, iron tongue answering to tongue from one extent of the reposing city to another.—The lieutenant of the watch was pacing up and down the deck; three or four of the older midshipmen were standing aft upon the quarter deck, gazing towards the town and conversing in animated voices about the joys of tomorrow. Groups of tars were forward listening to long yarns to beguile the time, or leaning over the hammock netting, watching the moving lights ashore and listening to the sounds that came off to their ears. All were impatient for the morning; every bosom throbbed with joyful anticipation. There was, however, one exception to the general happiness which pervaded the frigate. But in the satisfaction that made each heart full there was no room to cast a thought upon the wretchedness of others.'

The lieutenant of the watch had been pacing up and down the lofty deck with a short quick impatient step like a man to whom time lags and who would haster its flight by the rapidity of its own motion. He was suddenly stopped by hearing his name called by a midshipman, who was standing upon the quarter davits, upon which he had sprung a moment or two before.

`Roswell! Look here!'

`What is it, Dalton?'

`Come here and see for yourself!'

The officer approached him and stepping upon a gun carriage, looked over the bulwarks in the direction whither the young man's eyes were turned.

`I see nothing but some scores of small craft anchored about us!' answered he. `You are always discovering sea-serpents, Dalton,' he added with a smile.

`There are plenty of craft at anchor and one that is not at anchor. That one I called you to look at. I have been watching her the last five minutes! She is now hid by that brig. Watch the brig's bows closely and you will see the craft I mean, poke her sharp nose out beyond it in a moment! There! Now do you see her?' he demanded with animation.

`Yes; I see a vessel moving beyond the brig?'

`And do you see nothing extraordinary in that, nor in her? Do you not see now that she shows half her length that she is the goleta?'

`What goleta?'

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

`The three masted schooner that run into harbor ahead of us, and keeping just her distance to a fathom, and not two thirds of her canvass set!'

`I was below writing a letter for home, you know, when we came into port. I did not see her! But sure enough, Dalton, that is a regular West Indian caravel! a three masted lateen! I see her plainly enough now!'

`Well, she came into port at the same time we did, only showing us her saucy heels. I lost sight of her, just before we came to anchor, among the other vessels, for you must know I am positive I saw that self-same craft at anchor in Havana, up by the Reglas, the evening before we sailed!'

`Another of your sea-serpents, Dalton? It is impossible, though there is no doubt she is from Cuba. We have made the passage in nine days from anchor up to anchor down, an unparalleled passage—and there is no Spaniard that could sail with us at such odds!'

`I could swear to her!'

`So you swore the Coffee Key was a sea-serpent. You were positive you saw it lift its head and lash its tail!'

`No more of that an' thou lovest me?' said the lively young midshipman, coloring. 'What I now say is true!'

`Well it *is* possible. But you have doubtless mistaken some other goleta for this. Yet if any craft could sail it should be that! She is built like a greyhound. How she hugs the water, and yet how lightly her bows and stern sit above it. And her masts rake with the most daring devil look, just as a spirited race-horse throws back his slender ears! You may be correct, Dalton! Yet it is odd she should have been in Havana the night before we sailed, and to-night be anchored within fifty fathoms of our stern!'

`She is not anchored. Do you not see she is steadily moving, though very slowly!'

`I now see that she is. I thought it was an apparent motion, caused by the brig this side of her dragging her anchor. She surely moves and yet without any perceptible means!'

`That is what surprises me! Before I called to you she was astern of the brig. At first I thought she was at anchor; but I soon discovered that she was creeping almost imperceptibly up against the ebb tide and without any visible impelling power. Her sails being all furled and on deck I was not a little surprised!'

`You have reason to be! What can it mean? See how she has left the brig and is yet moving steadily and noiselessly on!'

`These Spaniards are always doing things unlike anybody else. What in the deuce can he want creeping about among the fleet this way!'

`Perhaps he wants to change his anchoring ground!'

`Then why don't he do it with his boat ahead? And how do you explain this motion?'

`It puzzles me I must confess. If I was in a Spanish port or any foreign harbor, I should tell that chap to keep his distance. Here there is no danger, He is only manoeuvring like all these Spanish vessels. They do every thing secret and with a mystery, confound them! Keep your eye on him, Dalton, and see if you can make out where his fins are!'

Thus speaking the lieutenant sprang from the gun to reply to some question put to him by the purser. The midshipman continued to watch the goleta with no little curiosity. Slowly, yet with a steady onward motion, she opposed the current which had begun to ebb, and each moment drew nearer and nearer under the stern of the frigate. At length her motion ceased when within about pistol shot, and she became stationary within a few fathoms of the bows of the Polly Ann, which she had a moment before passed as she lay at anchor. But her bold commander overcome with the military achievements of the day had turned in and was asleep upon his laurels, leaving the vessel to take care of herself. An anchor fast hold upon the mud was Captain Eben Pinkham's harbor watch.

Dalton surveyed the mysterious vessel a few moments, and satisfied that she did not now move, and that, so far as he could see, she had not dropped anchor, he was not a little confounded. A faintly formed superstitious feeling gathered about his heart, and bold as he was, he could not but confess that he experienced something like fear. He was about to call to the group of young officers who were laughing and talking on the opposite side of the deck looking towards the town, when Roswell came aft and got upon the gun again.

`Ah, she has dropped her mud-hook, Dalton,' he said on seeing her nearly in the same position in which he had last seen her.

`Not she! It is my opinion she is sailing on the devil's back; and he carries her about where she chooses. She has ceased to move and yet has let fall no anchor. The devil has stopped to take breath!'

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

This was said half—soberly half—laughingly.

‘She can't have grounded, for she must have ten fathom under her keel. Your devil, Dalton, must be a long—legged child to touch the bottom. But jesting aside, this is a very curious and strange affair. Did you discover how she worked her way up so far.’

‘Not I unless, as I say, she came on Belzebub's back!’

‘If we were lying in Havana, and I should see such manoeuvring I would send a boat on board of her! How the deuce she moved along without any sweeps or sails puzzles me. Ah, I have it. She must have had a line out ahead and been drawing herself forward steadily by that?’

‘But where could she have it fastened?’

‘That is the difficulty. I am still in the dark. I will get my glass and take a look upon her decks!’

‘I have not seen a soul moving!’

‘I will take survey of her in—board! Here is the spy—glass! I shall have to go two thirds of the way up to the top to be able to take a bird's eye view—her sides are built up and lean in so?’

‘What do you discover?’

‘A clean deck—rigging neatly coiled—latteen yards snugly stowed, and every thing as fine as a feather. She is a beautiful craft. Too neat for a Spaniard, yet she looks Spanish altogether!’

‘Do you see any one on board!’

‘Not a soul. Yes! I see above the bulwarks the cap of a man walking on the starboard side of the deck. Forward in shadow I think there are half a dozen men lying down; but it is so dark there and the moonlight glitters so upon the water—for the goleta lies right in the moon's wake, that I can't well make them out! She has two boats, of the same slender elegant model of herself, amidships!’

The remarks of the lieutenant of the watch drew the attention of the remaining officers upon the quarter deck to the goleta, which now lay quiet and motionless upon the water, her dark and beautiful proportions finely relieved against the silvery back ground of the moonlit wave.

After discussing her strange manoeuvring and admiring her symmetrical and nautical finish, one by one as the hours advanced they sought their hammocks, leaving no one upon the quarter deck save Roswell and the young midddy Tom Dalton. These two were on watch; and the goleta having, for the last hour remained without a movement, they ceased to think of her and beguiled their weary watch walk with talking of friends they hoped soon again to meet, till Dalton closed his eyes and slept, yet still mechanically pacing up and down the deck; and as he slept he dreamed of a sister's embrace, a mother's love, and the blushing welcome of a maiden with whom he had exchanged looks of hair three years before.

‘Eight bells,’ suddenly reported in the quick, hilarious tone with which the end of the four hours watch is usually proclaimed, aroused him to momentary consciousness; and without quite waking himself up and losing the delicious dream, he instinctly reached his hammock and tumbled into it, there to have out, undisturbed, his happy dream.

Roswell at the same time surrendered the deck to the lieutenant of the next four hours watch, and forgetting the schooner, or thinking it not worth while to report her for observation she was now so quiet, he followed Dalton below and was soon fast bound in that deep sleep which falls upon the sailor after ending his long night watch.

The movements on board the frigate had not been unnoticed from the goleta. This vessel after passing the castle ahead of the frigate, it will be remembered, was lost to those who watched her, among the numerous vessels that filled the harbor. She had, however, run but a little distance in among the crafts at anchor, when instead of dropping her slender lateen yards and coming too, like the rest, she took it in all but her fore sail, with which lowered a few feet she with diminished speed gently kept on her way through the fleet as if seeking an anchoring ground. All around her were vessels among whom as she made her way she attracted no little attention. The only person to be seen in her was a man standing upon the bows, who communicated orders from time to time to the helmsman, by the motions of his hand. Guided by these motions the helmsman steered the goleta on through the midst of the closely anchored fleet without coming in contact.

At intervals, as they sailed along, the person upon the bow would cast his eyes in search of the frigate which was also making her way under shortening sail towards her present anchorage. From his manner and the dumb orders he communicated aft, it was plain that the movements of the caravel were governed by those of the frigate, that she was watching the vessel of war, as the small, quick—moving king—bird watches the hawk as he hovers

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

over before settling upon, his cyrie.

At length, as the frigate came to anchor the foresail of the goleta descended upon her deck, and a man in a scarlet cap taking a ight grapnel in his hand cast it from the end, of the bowsprit far ahead beyond the hawser of a brig that was anchored just above. The line was then drawn in board through a round channel in the bows and the goleta was stationary without an anchor. The success of this cast was watched from the windlass by the man who had been giving the orders from the bows. When he found that the vessel was held by the grapnel and slender line attached to it he sprung from the windless and went aft. As he moved along the deck the bulwarks enclosing them were so high that the top of his head was level with them. The quarter deck was elevated a step above the main-deck. Here stood a youth with a spy glass in his hand surveying the frigate through a small port level with his eye. Several of these look-outs were now visible so constructed beneath the cap of the bulwarks as to be unnoticed a little distance off: through which observations might be taken of things without the observer being seen. The upper portion of the bulwarks was also so made with hinges and hasps as to fall down all around the quarter deck, like the leaf of a table, leaving them only breast high. Amid-ships were hammock nettings. Her inner works were all painted a rich vermillion, and the raised work around the cabin and binnacle, and the mouldings upon the capstan were all silvergilt. A crescent of boarding pikes half encircled the main-mast: and beneath an upturned boat amid-ships a practised eye might have guessed that an eighteen pounder was lurking. If this was the case it was carefully concealed. The cleanly decks; the well arranged running rigging; the neatly furled sails, triced up against the masts, the slender arched yards rivalling in length the masts themselves; the air of nautical precision pervading every thing were features certainly not often found in a mere merchantman. Forward were gathered about a dozen men, light, active looking fellows, with skins as brown as hazel-nuts; eyes glittering like the basilisks: wearing picturesque red caps with tassels; striped shirts, and scarlet sashes bound about their waists; men of Castillian features and tongue. Yet the men were none too many to sail so large a vessel, and they displayed neither knife nor pistol in their sashes. The *goleta* might be an honest merchantman after all. But circumstances looked very strongly against her, to say the least

CHAPTER III.

Scene on board the goleta—The two officers— The mystery of the bazel's motion explained— The frigate's gun deck—The prisoner .

The goleta after having anchored by the grapnel to the brig's hauser, remained stationary, being about one third of a mile distant from the frigate. The person who had stationed himself upon the bows to direct her course through the closely anchored vessels, after going aft took the spy-glass from the hand of the young man who held it, and springing upon the companion way, levelled the instrument at the vessel of war, between which and himself lay three vessels at anchor? viz., the brig at whose hauser he was swinging; the Kennebec sloop Polly Ann; and a large square rigged brig, before alluded to by Dalton.

'She is quiet,' said the youth delivering up the glass.

'Yes. But we must be cautious. Rashness on our part would be fatal to our plan!'

'We shall succeed! We *must* succeed, brother!' answered the other with extraordinary earnestness.

'It is a bold act; it is attended with risk's; but we shall be successful.'

'God grant it!' was the fervent response.

This conversation was carried on in Spanish. The taller who held the glass then resumed his observation of the frigate while the other walked up and down the deck with a slow, sad, thoughtful step. At every turn his walk would bring him full into the moonlight that fell upon the glistening decks, and then as he would recede he would fall beneath the dark shadow of the lofty bulwark encircling the stern.

As the moon fell upon his countenance, which was scarcely protected by a silken scarlet bonnet, it shewed that it was a youthful one and that its expression was pensive, yet determined; as if grief and a bold purpose were both together upon his heart. He was not more than twenty if so old, with a profile of singular elegance and finish; dark curls, black as the raven's wing, escaped from his bonnet and fell about his cheeks which were pale—paler from the contrast with the chon locks that shaded it. His mouth was finely shaped and spirited in expression; and his dark black eyes were melancholy yet full of fire. His person was elegant; his gait easy, and his step firm and manly. He wore a gold embroidered jacket richly lined with fur, closely fitting his shape, and blue trowsers slashed above the knee and ornamented with hanging silver buttons, that jingled at every step. His waist was girdled by a belt of stamped leather and he wore slouched boots of the same material; a costume picturesque and singularly becoming; but more befitting a young Mexican cavalier in the *pasco*, than the occupant of the quarter deck of a goleta. A very small gold inlaid pistol stuck in his belt, seemed worn more for ornament than as a means of defence. His warm olive complexion, though now pale from some secret anxiety, and the pure Castillian in which he had spoken, betrayed him a child of the *terra caliente*—the land of ever blooming flowers and suns that shine in an endless round of summer.

His companion after surveying the frigate, with his spyglass resting in the small port opened in the bulwarks, turned and addressed him.

'I think we can move now without suspicion. The three vessels laying in range will favor our approach till we haul nigh enough!'

'Let us move at once then,' answered the other with an eager gesture of impatience. We must do what we are to do to night or all will be in vain. Heaven smiles upon us in sending us before favoring winds and bringing us into port in advance of the frigate. This strengthens my hope for the future?'

'I believe we shall be successful! We must have been seen by Diego, for we were full three hours in sight of the frigate in the calm that followed the dense fog under which we first made the land. It is well for us that the frigate, if she noticed us particularly, did not fall in with us outside in the fair sea. She would then have brought us to, for the appearance in these Northern waters of a latteen ship is not an every day occurrence. In the harbor we are safe from her curiosity.'

'How shall we advance upon the frigate, Basilio?'

'By a warp-line. Are the two men ready with the line, Tito?' he called to a stout dark man who was standing near the helm.

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

‘*Estan listos*, senior,’ answered the man touching his cap.

‘Then send them out with it to the hawser of that lumber sloop that lies astern of the frigate!’

‘Si, senior!’

‘They will soon reach it, though it is a long swim with a line to carry. But two better swimmers never dove for pearls, than the men I send to fasten us to the sloop’s cable!’

The men let themselves down over the bows by the martingale, one of them with a small line passed once around his body and the end held in his teeth. They both struck out together, and as the line grew in length one of them fell back to support it, so as to relieve his fellow from the increasing weight. The foremost one succeeded in reaching the cable and securing it with a double turn round it; and then throwing himself upon his back floated down towards the goleta, which, at the same moment, began to move. The line was so small, yet strong enough with a steady pull to draw the vessel forward, that it was unseen on board of the frigate by Dalton and the lieutenant. Having reached a position within half cable’s length of the frigate and in a direction about two points off her starboard quarter, or that side which was farthest from the town, the goleta, as has been seen, ceased her progress. For two hours she lay perfectly quiet. The first watch was ended on board the frigate, and the first half hour in the middle watch passed, and yet she lay as if not a human being was on board Roswell had not drawn the attention of the lieutenant of this watch to her, and she was only noticed by him as being the polacre ship which had beat them running into port. Of her subsequent mysterious movements he was wholly ignorant.

After she had become stationary, the young man in the scarlet *gorra* and slouched boots seeing that they were regarded from the deck of the frigate, laid his hand impressively upon the arm of him, whom he had addressed as Basilio.

‘Do you not observe that officer in the rigging looking down upon us with a spy glass! This close scrutiny augurs unfavorably for our plan!’

‘It is the duty of the officer of the watch on board of a man-of-war to note every thing that transpires in the vicinity of his ship. If yonder lumber sloop should let down her boat she would be as closely scrutinized as our movement! To avoid increasing any suspicion, we will lay perfectly quiet till after midnight when a new set of men will have the deck, and then we shall be able to carry out our plan without further suspicion. To stir now, would be to bring every action under the vigilant eye of the officer who has seen us in motion!’

‘It is two hours nearly to midnight! we need every moment for flight and action!’ answered the younger with energy.

‘There will be time after twelve o’clock. Be sure that our every motion is closely watched now. If we remain quiet, we shall cease to attract attention.’

‘I will be patient brother!’

‘Be so. Rashness may defeat all our plans. Throw yourself upon that Indian mat and, with my cloak over you, sleep for you have been a long watcher! I will awake you in good time!’

As he spoke he kindly laid his hand upon the well turned shoulder of the youth, who, without replying, slowly sunk down upon the mat, and was soon asleep.

Basilio stood gazing upon him a moment with singular interest, and then calling to a slave who was lying below in the door-way of the cabin, he lighted a cigar and began to walk the deck, but so near the bulwarks as to prevent being seen from the frigate. His men were lying down on the forecastle. He was the only man moving, and seemingly the only one awake on board.

‘Let them repose. They will do better service by and by,’ he said as his eye fell on his prostrate crew. ‘The wind is favourable, but the moon is full bright for secret action. There are heavy clouds in the west that look as if they might rise by midnight and give us more obscurity for our purpose. Diego must have been successful thus far or we should have seen him swimming down to us. Fortune and Anita’s star have favoured our voyage in a remarkable manner. Let the same bright star shine upon what we have to do, and thy happiness will be secure?’

This was uttered with deep feeling and energy. He then, as if lost in meditation, began slowly to pace up and down the deck. In height this person was a head taller than the young cavalier who was sleeping at his feet. His air was commanding, united with the bold, graceful, nonchalance of the seaman. His countenance was strikingly handsome, with hazel eyes full of passion and intelligence. His brow was noble, and as he carried his broad Panama *sombrero* in his hand, his features were unshaded save by flowing masses of dark brown hair. The style of his features was Castilian, and they had that refined aristocratic outline which belongs to the purest blood of

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

Spain. His upper lip was darkened by a mustache which did not wholly conceal the expression and beautiful shape of his fine mouth. His costume was simple; consisting only of a blue striped gingham *ca saca*, and nankeen trowsers, secured at the waist by a blue silken sash, through the folds of which glittered, as he moved, a broad band of shining steel inlaid in thread like gold with Arabesque figures.

Slowly and thoughtfully he paced the deck of his beautiful vessel with the moonlight broadly shining down through the rigging making a tracery of clearly defined shadows across his path; the youth upon his Indian mat, just under the shadow of the mizzen mast slept soundly, though at intervals a bright blush would mantle his pale cheek, and his lips would move in the indistinct articulation of some name: the men forward also slept, and silence and repose reigned over the decks of the vessel whose late movements had seemed so mysterious to the two young officers who in the first watch had been watching her from the deck of the frigate.

Besides Roswell and Dalton there were two other individuals on board the vessel of war, whose interest in the manoeuvres and presence of the goleta was far deeper than theirs. In the general rejoicing which brought smiles and cheerfulness to every face on board the razee at the prospect of soon meeting friends, there was one young man whose brow wore no smile, whose countenance was clouded and sad. The green islands of the harbor, the familiar shores and the pleasant scenes that gladdened all hearts, as the frigate sailed up the harbor, only deepened the gloom upon his brow!

He was not one among the group of officers, who had been idly watching the town as they approached it; nor was he to be seen in the watch with Dalton and Roswell. Alone in one of the state rooms appropriated to officers of the frigate, upon the lower gun deck, nearly adjoining the ward-room, chained by the wrist to the bolt of a gun-carriage, he was brooding over his gloomy condition. No one visited him. No one was nigh him to sympathise with him or help him bear up under his condition. A prisoner chained and closely guarded, he held no communication with any one save the soldier who stood sentry by the low door which opened into his place of confinement. It contained a berth and one gun with space enough for him to walk a few paces up and down at the length of his chain.

The port was open, and he sat looking from it out upon the shining water as the frigate was sailing up the harbor, His thoughts were dark and melancholy as became his destiny. He saw as his companions on the deck had done, the green islands, the castle and the familiar shores of the Bay—for he was returning to his native land—but they presented to his mind no pleasant thoughts. He turned away from them and in the darkness and solitude of his prison paced to and fro, while deep sighs escaped him.

What crime had he committed thus to be condemned to chains and imprisonment, while the free winds blew and the free waves flowed—for his blue nautical costume showed that he was 'a child of the winds and of the waves!' What crime had deprived of liberty one still youthful and whose countenance was noble and generous even in its despondency? When every heart was throbbing with the thoughts of home and of liberty on shore, why did his beat under the chains of bondage.

The frigate came to an anchor, and the prisoner ceased his short promenade and setting upon the side of the gun looked out of the port. His air was listless and hopeless.— He gazed into the water as if he coveted its deep embrace; as if, but for his chains he would have plunged at once to death and freedom!

Suddenly a dark object swung before his eyes, intercepting his view through the port, which to his surprise he saw was a man's foot. Another foot followed, and then lightly descended the whole figure, and a man stood crouching in the port within a yard of him.— He started back, when he heard his name pronounced in a low tone. The voice was familiar. He looked again closer, for the apartment was lighted only by the reflection of the moonlight from the water—and instantly sprung forward.

'Diego! my good—my brave Diego! Is it you I behold indeed, or is this a vision?'

'It is me, Master Walter,' answered the man in broken English. I have not left you. I have been on board of the frigate!'

'Not since she left Havana? But we must speak low and cautiously.'

'I know it. I shall hold here by the rope ready to swing out of the port if any one comes in. I have been on board all the time, and heard of you every day. I did not dare to speak about you, because nobody on board suspects that I know you; but I have been making my discoveries and spying about you till I know exactly how the ground lays. I could have got to see you before to-night, for I have had my line ready four or five days ago, but I didn't want to give you any hopes till I was sure!'

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

‘Sure! Hopes? What am I to understand, Diego?’ asked the prisoner who had listened with profound surprise, and apparently bewildered to comprehend him.

‘Sure of assisting you; giving you hopes of escaping.’

‘Of this there is no prospect. You see I am heavily chained and that a sentinel always stands at my door.’

‘That I know. But chains and sentinels cannot keep those whom love would make free.’

‘How mean you, Diego? You talk mysteriously. Your presence here confounds me. Relate all!’

‘In a few words. I shipped on board of the frigate as soon as I found you were arrested and taken on board. I was resolved not to let you go without a friend. I hoped something might turn up by which Diego could prove to you that he is not ungrateful. You saved my life, Don Waltero. I was ready to risk mine, if need were, to save yours!’

‘Faithful and good friend! But I fear you have come this long passage in vain. You alone can do little, Diego. You see they regard me as no common prisoner. They do not mean I shall escape.’

‘But I mean you shall, senor.’

‘You speak positively. What hope can you give me? Seeing you, seems like half regaining my liberty? And so, unknown to me my truest friend has been on board all this dreary passage.’

‘I would have visited you sooner to cheer you up, Don Waltero, but I thought it best to keep perfectly quiet till something was sure.’

‘Then from your coming to see me you would imply that you have something sure?’ said the young man eagerly, his fine (though very pale) countenance lighting up with animation and hope.

Diego smiled; and then pointing warningly to the door outside of which the sentinel was posted he said,

‘*poco a paco*, senor? If you speak so loud even the noise of the young gentlemen in the ward-room will hardly drown your voice. I have something certain. I have come to see you to let you know there is a plan on foot to aid your escape, and that you have friends at hand you little suspect!’

The prisoner warmly embraced the hand of the faithful Spaniard and said,

‘Bless you and them with you! Liberty— life! Oh, Diego these are sweet sounds to my ear! But above all the hope of escaping a felon’s death in my native land! Do you bid me hope? Remember that we are now in port. To-morrow I shall exchange the frigate for the cell of a prison on shore. Can you bid me hope to escape! If it is to be achieved it must be done by night and *this* night! No, Diego. This is too sudden! too short a time for me to believe I can gain my liberty in it! to escape from death in! Freedom between this and dawn! No, Diego you mock me!’

‘If senor were able to look from the deck and see what I have seen to night he would hope!’

‘What have you seen?’

Before Diego could reply the door of the room opened and the sentinel thrust in his head with a lantern held in his hand. The active Spaniard had heard the first touch upon the door and swung himself from the port before he was discovered.

‘Sure, and I thought I heard a vice here, yer honor,’ said the marine, looking round as he elevated his lantern.

‘You often hear my voice, Mooney. Is it new to you?’ demanded the young man haughtily.

The lantern now rendered apparent what the indistinct light did not permit to be visible before that the prisoner wore the uniform of a lieutenant with the buttons cut off! He had long flowing light brown or auburn hair, a clear, fearless blue eye, a finely expressive mouth, and a look at once calm and determined. He was about two and twenty tall and manly, with an air more martial than seaman like, yet he also looked, as he was, every inch the sailor. No one could look upon him without a feeling of prepossession in his favor. Yet he was chained there like a felon! What extraordinary circumstances could have brought one whom nature and education had formed to interest the most indifferent, to such a position? The reader will soon be informed in due detail.

The sentinel after looking carefully around the room, under the gun and even peeping into the muzzle, went slowly out again muttering,

‘I would have sworn I heard two vices in here!’

‘You hear as you see, David, when you are drunk,’ said the prisoner not a little gratified at Diego’s escape.

‘How is that, Mr. Nevil?’

‘Double.’

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

The marine scowled, and then said,

`You may have your talk free now, sir, and wilcome, for its few watches more I'm thinkin yer honor'll be after kapein'. Its a pity sich a young gintleman should be stretching hemp wid his neck instead o' wid his hands in pullin' ropes which yer honor's more used to. Its a bad law as makes a capstan o' a Christian's neck. Sorra me! its a pity any how, for yer honor's sake!'

`You seem to have made up your mind to hang me, Mooney,' he said with a smile.

`Not me is it, but the Captain and the gintlemen. Its iviry sowl o' thim as says ye'll be hanged without judge or jury.'

The young man laughed, as he replied turning on his heel,

`It is to hang me *with* judge and jury, David, that I am brought home in the frigate.'

`Will any how, yer honor takes it easy,' said the marine as he shouldered his musket and closed the door. Hardly had the door shut begore Diego reappeared in the port and swinging himself in lighted upon the gun.

CHAPTER IV.

The Vermilion tower—The conspiracy of Don Lazaro—His Exile—The death of the Traitor— The clemency of the Governor-General— The young Basilio.

The scenes of the tale now change to Cuba and its waters, going back to a time a few weeks previous to the appearance of the razee and three-masted schooner in Boston bay. This transition or turning back upon the narrative, is for the purpose of unfolding, in due order of narration, those events which preceded and led to the imprisonment on board the frigate of the young officer whom we have seen confined there under strict guard, and in chains.

There is on the south side of Cuba, forty leagues from Havanna, a small, romantic bay almost land-locked by curving shores and numerous rocky islets that extend in a chain nearly across the mouth. The bay at its broadest part is not more than a half a league, and in length about a league. It is a secluded spot seldom visited by the merchant vessel, for no town is seen upon its shores, and only here and there a ruined *quinta* visible with its greyish white walls appearing above the trees upon the heights; while inland can be descried a vermilion tower rising above a snow-white battlement. The shores are wild and wooded, here sloping in gentle woodlands towards the water, there fronting and overhanging the dark flood beneath with precipitous walls of rock. The feathering palm and cocoa-tree lift here and there their plume-like tops, and the crevices of the rocks are filled with vines bearing wild flowers of the most brilliant colors, and of vast size and wonderful beauty. The rocky chain that stretches from the headland rich with foliage on the right, nearly across to the cliff-like promontory which forms the eastern shore, are dark and sterile, their black sides and gaping crevices, through which in storms the sea leaps in cataracts of foam, showing no signs of that vegetation which clothes the main-land with perpetual verdure and beauty. Two or three solitary banana trees alone grow upon the loftiest of the islets, serving as beacons and guides for making the entrance to the harbor. But few are the vessels which seek this shelter save for protection from the tornadoes that at certain seasons sweep the seas in this latitude.

On a bright tropical morning about two months prior to the time our story opens in Boston Bay, a person appeared upon the summit of the vermilion tower, which was situated less than a half a mile inland commanding a view of the bay and its shores, the chain of rocks across its mouth, and the blue south sea beyond. It was a female, young and beautiful, with large black eyes whose lashes shaded the soft olive cheek, and a superb form of exquisite roundness and symmetry. She could not be more than nineteen. Her costume was deep mourning with a black mantilla thrown across her head and passing like a scarf around her waist. The contrast between the mourning costume and the pale brilliancy of her complexion was striking; and the outline of her finished profile was finely relieved by the black veil which drooped from her head.

The sun was just rising and flinging his golden light over the dark green seas of foliage between her and the horizon, and turning the turquoise waters of the ocean to rose and gold; lending to her cheek a glow like that of the roseate lining of the pearl-shell. The prospect around her was wide and magnificent. To the north the mountains in the interior of the island rose blue and bold, their crests glancing in the light; and between the tower and their base extended vast plains with here and there a *puebla* or *villa* lifting its white walls and turrets to the sunbeams. Westward beyond the forest, which seemed on all sides to encircle the bay for a league in depth, were visible the *haciendas* or *casas de campo* of the wealthy islanders, surrounded by their vast sugar and coffee estates, each with its African hamlet, a little village. To the south lay the bay just described half its waters yet lying in shadow, the precipices on the east interspersing their lofty heads between them and the sun.

Towards the bay the maiden, on reaching the summit of the tower, directed her eyes. To the scenes around her she scarcely glanced; but with an eager air, a look long and earnest she fixed her attention upon the bay. The calm which had left its waters in mirror-like repose during the night was now gently breaking as light veins of wind would sweep across its surface with a scarcely perceptible ripple as if invisible wings were passing over it. That part of the bay that lay eastward in shadow was like glass; and in its depths were reflected the dark forms of the cliffs with life-like distinctness. The placid surface of the waters in the passage of the harbor was first stirred, and seaward, where the morning breeze moved unobstructed by the land, the waves soon glanced and flashed as they

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

were put in motion; till at length, the whole deep became mottled, and alive with dancing sunbeams playing upon their undulations.

From the earnest, anxious expression of countenance with which she looked seaward, searching earnestness of her gaze, it was plain that she was expecting some one in whom she was deeply interested. Her eyes for the third time, after wandering over the nooks and passes of the bay, swept the horizon with a penetrating search, and then were withdrawn with an expression of sorrow and disappointment.

'No sail visible in all the broad sweep of waters! And yet this is the twelfth day of his absence, which was to be extended but to seven. The winds have been propitious though light, and he should have returned if some accident had not happened. Oh, this dangerous life he leads! I trust if he returns with that beauteous bride who has so won his heart, he will lead a life more suited to her happiness and his own rank! Well Jose, there is nothing in sight this morning!'

This remark was made to a fine old man with long white locks and a beard of silver. His countenance was dark but finely expressive, both of benevolence and cheerfulness. He wore a coarse blue mantle gathered at the waist by a monk's girdle; but he looked more like a man who had passed his life in the world than in the cloister. He came and stood upon the top of the tower, as she spoke, remaining respectfully a step behind her.

'Do not be troubled, Senora. The winds and the currents cause many delays. Perhaps the maiden whom he went to take as his bride has kept him longer! 'Tis but five days past the time!' And the old man looked keenly towards the sea.

'Yet he should be here, for he never delays. He would have sent to me. Five days I have waited with a feast prepared to receive my brother and his bride, and yet not a sail whitens the sea! It is time to fear, Jose! You know how my brother is surrounded by enemies; how he lives in planning against the government; and that he has voluntarily gone to Habana where I hear a price is set upon his head! I would have prevented him! I plead—I clung to him—I wept and implored him by his love for me not to go! But he heeded me not. For his rashness he has now perished!'

'Fear not, Senora! Le El Senor your brother is bold and also discreet. He is safe. Had danger menaced him, we should hear of it. He would have sent a messenger to you!'

'If he comes not to-day, I myself shall take a horse and ride across the mountains' to Havana! I cannot endure this suspense! This young American will be my escort!'

'Believe me Don Basilio my master is safe, Señora! If you desire it I will send at once a trusty messenger to the city! The American cavalier is not yet recovered enough for the saddle!'

'I will alone go myself. If he is in danger I will share it with him or rescue him. He is my brother, and we are one in heart and affection. We have but one life, and one liberty! See! is that anything upon the water! or do my hopes create illusion to mock me, 'Tis something! It must be a vessel!'

Old José, who had been all his life a seaman! turned his gaze to the far western horizon towards which with a kindling eye, a flushed cheek and animated questions, she eagerly directed his attention. At first he shook his head:

'I see nothing, Señora!'

'It is gone. It seemed to be — nay! 'Tis visible again! Look this way, José! To the west of that tamarind tree just beneath the second branch, where the horizon seems like a fine blue thread drawn between the sky and ocean. There is a speck as it were, a knot in the thread line! I see it when I lift my vision a little above it, but if I direct my gaze full upon it it is invisible! Look! José it is now a bright white! It is the sun—light reflecting from the sails! 'Tis a vessel! 'Tis my brother!'

It would be impossible to describe the happiness and beauty which beamed in her face at this discovery. She clasped her hands together, and tears, large pearls of gratitude came into her glorious eyes!

'*Por mi vida*, Doña Anita, it is not possible for me to see what you see!'

'You are old and have lost your sight, *hombre anciano*,' she said with quickness.

'Maria! I believe I see it now! its just above the branch of the tamarind!'

'Did I not tell thee it was there, probecito!'

'Nay, Doña Anita, I am getting old. Do not be vexed with an anciano. Your young eyes can see a thousand stars in the far skies where mine can see one! But I have seen the day, Senora, when I could discover a sail as far as a glass could see her!'

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

‘The spy-glass! Go for it below José!’

‘I see the sail plainly now, Senora! It is at least four leagues off,’ said José after a close scrutiny. ‘I will bring the glass, which I mended yesterday, and then we will make her out. I hope it is the caravel of Don Basilio!’

‘Hope! I know it *must* be, José,’ she said earnestly. ‘Should it not prove to be him, I should not watch longer, but take a horse. There are so few vessels that pass here, that I feel confident it is the goleta!’

Old Jose brought up the spy-glass and placed it open in her hand. It was a beautiful instrument with silver tubes and a row of rubies girding the rims around the glasses. She placed it to her eye while he formed a focus with his closed hands and also surveyed the distant sail. After a few moments she exclaimed,

‘It is the goletta, Jose! Take the glass and look! I cannot be deceived.’

‘It is a lateen rigged vessel, but whether a ship or schooner I cannot make out, as she is standing on towards the bay, and all her masts are in one!’

‘Her course should decide it. What other vessel would be standing in this way?’

‘It may be Don Basilio, senora. But I don’t like to have you disappointed. There are a great many lateen rigged craft in these seas! In a little while we can tell. The wind freshens outside and is fair for her, so that she will come on rapidly. As soon as her hull open above the horizon I can tell her at once. Or if she should put away a little so that I could see all her masts I could tell. There is no mistaking the rake of the *el cinto de Acero*.’

‘She must be sailing five or six knots and in less than two hours, if it is Don Basilio, she will be anchored in the bay within half a mile of us!’

The young lady with the spy glass as her eye continued to watch the slow advance of the distant sail, exchanging from time to time words of hope or impatience, with the attentive Jose. The vessel slowly but steadily grew upon the sight, and it was soon made clear that she was a polacca rigged schooner with two masts only visible; but whether that of Don Basilio or not, with one of her masts carried away or shipped, Jose would not positively say until she should be a league nearer.

In the meanwhile the reader may be learning something of Dona Anita and her brother and of the vermilion tower.

This tower, rose from the *azotea* or flat roof of one of those old Spanish country houses which are dispersed over the island of Cuba. The house was a vast square one story high, the walls white washed and perforated at long intervals with tall grated windows. On one of the sides was a large *porte cochere* or carriage way beneath an arch which led into the *patio* or square paved court around which the house was built. In this patio was a fountain; huge orange-colored vases of gorgeously flowing plants stood around the sides; and into the court as a common hall opened the doors of all the apartments of the mansion. The doors of the sleeping rooms were hung with crimson and damask drapery and the grated windows were relieved by curtains of muslin and orange or rose-colored silk. There was an air of old-fashioned Spanish luxury and grandeur with a want of comfort and taste pervading the whole place. On the exterior, the quinta was surrounded by spacious outhouses, falling into ruin; and adjoining it stood a small chapel surmounted by a silver cross communicating with the mansion by a covered corridor. The domain around had once been a coffee estate, but was now desolate and covered with luxuriant vegetation in the wildest profusion: while the forests were suffered to encroach upon the gardens, only a narrow avenue which the sun scarcely penetrated being left open between it and the shore of the bay. This avenue was the only approach to the quinta; the ways which once had led from it to the interior and to the neighboring coffee estates being grown up and rendered impassible, and impenetrable. There was, however, a single secret path in which persons on horseback might travel but this was known only to the dwellers in the vermilion tower, or ‘El Torre Bermellon,’ as the place was called by the Spaniards.

This estate had, in former years, belonged to Don Lazaro, a wealthy Spaniard, connected with the government of the governor-general. During his time of power, he had purchased this estate then one of the most fertile in Cuba, and in a high state of cultivation. The mansion which was upon it he enlarged and converted it into an abode rivaling that of the quinta of the governor-general himself. Here Don Lazaro passed his leisure, and here he plotted on conspiracy against the government. It was defeated, however, before maturity by a change of administration, which deprived him of that influence with his party which he had held, and healed those political differences, which otherwise would have burst out into revolutionary flame. The part Don Lazaro took in the abortive conspiracy could not be concealed, and he was condemned to perpetual banishment to his estate on the

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

South side of the island and compelled to maintain a guard of soldiers who were placed by the government to watch his conduct, and also to paint the tower he had erected the color of vermillion, as the mark of a traitors habitation to all the country round. The exile was married to a charming Spanish woman of high rank, and, was the father of two lovely children. The eldest, who was a boy, at the time of his banishment was six, and the youngest, Anita, three years of age. He felt less his disgrace on his own account, when he reflected upon that of his children, whose rightful position in society he had forfeited. He was a man of education and intelligence and thought much of his proud Castilian lineage.

Four years passed in this exile, when the government saw fit to withdraw its soldiers, fearing nothing further from the ambition of the exile. Inspired with hope of restoration to favor by this seeming act of clemency, addressed a respectful petition to the governor-general, entreating to be permitted to reside in Havanna for the education of his two children. To this petition he obtained no reply. He addressed a second to which he received the following answer from the chief:

'If Señor Marial is tired of living he may visit Havanna; for he may be assured that if he is found beyond his estate his head shall answer for his temerity.'

This missive destroyed all hope of reconciliation. He internally resolved to plot in secret against the government. His wealth and tact aided him in his plans, and he had secretly raised a party among the dissatisfied cavaliers who from time to time visited him. The governor-general, however, kept a vigilant eye upon him; and sent a spy among them: Don Lazaro was taken at a Quinta a league beyond his own and conveyed prisoner to Havana, where he was shot in the public square. The Señora de Marial received shortly after a message from the governor-general, that justice was sufficiently satisfied in having the forfeited life of her husband; and that she should be permitted to enjoy unmolested his estate, and transmit it to her children. She was however commanded to keep the tower painted vermillion, and to pay a thousand *pesos* annually into the public treasury.

The Señora Maria, who had been as warm a conspirator as her husband, was not a little surprised at this clemency; for she had expected the estate would have been confiscated and herself and offsprings banished from the island. Left with these two children exiled from the world, she resolved to cease all communication with the world and devote her life to educating them. Insensibly she inculcated in the breast of Bazilio, the boy, his father's sentiments, and he grew up with the deepest hatred of the government which had shed his father's blood. These feelings were shared, but in a less degree, by his sister. In this state of seclusion, with but a few faithful slaves and the old man José, whom Don Lazaro had taken into his confidential service, she lived until Bazilio reached the age of seventeen. Up to this period he had no intercourse with the world. The roads to the 'Traitor's Tower' had been suffered to grow up with trees and the forest to close around it an impassible barrier; so that the place was shut out save by the sea from all the world. This was Bazilio's world. The Bay was the scene of all his amusements. He early became a skilful boatman and oarsman, and when but twelve years of age with his sister by his side, he would stretch far out to sea till the blue shores of the island seemed blent with the sky; and then, only at her entreaty put back to land. It was his daring ambition to go out in his light skiff where he could behold only the sky and sea; and to fly before the storm like the winged sea-bird escaping to its nest.

When he reached his seventeenth year, he exchanged his skiff with its single sail for a small lugger of three or four tons which José, assisted by the slaves, constructed for him. It was a light, beautiful craft, and sailed like the wind. In this, which he called the Eagle, he used to make long excursions of two or three days up and down the coast, with Diego for his mate and three of his ebony slaves for a crew. Sometimes, Anita, who was scarcely less sailor than himself, would accompany him; and once he run to an island twelve leagues distant, the rocks near which he found inhabited by fishermen, a bold, resolute class of men, who made an impression upon his mind that grew with his growth, and in time matured to a definite result.

La Señora Mariae suffered these excursions of Bazilio, for she could not control them. Her influence extended over Anita only. This maiden to a disposition at once fond and yielding, united a superior mind, and a spirit full of generosity and goodness. She was fearless in danger, bold in action and faithful in all things. She was devoted to her brother who was no less attached to her.

Thus they lived together mother and children, forming a world of their own. Bazilio as he advanced into manhood evinced a quick and fiery temper and a spirit of reckless daring. His affection for his mother did not bind him to any kind of submission to her will. His nature was as free as the waves over which his light bark bounded. Though willful and independent in his conduct, he was neither vicious nor lawless. His bosom was the

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

abode of honorable and manly feelings; but a cherished hatred to the government of the island, and sentiments hostile to it he deemed no part of dishonor. He had been taught by his mother to live its deadly foe! And the spirit of determined hostility to the murderer of his father, as he bitterly denounced the government filled his bosom and influenced his early life and character.

In the possession of his little vessel, the Eagle, he almost makes it his home. He soon got several of the fisher's lads of his own age from the islands, to whom he paid wages to act as his crew and over whom he exercised the most absolute sway. He was educating them to his service; for he cherished in his soul a plan that he had not breathed even to his sister; a scheme over which he had meditated even in his boy-hood, and which deepened and interwove itself with his existence. In the Eagle he made long bold excursions, and became familiar with every inlet, creek and lagoon along the whole South side of the island. In some of these excursions he had discovered the haunts of pirates, and once fell in with them and was urged to join them; for they admired his daring and free spirit. But he scorned the proposal and when they would have seized him and his boat, he fought his way from their hold and escaped with the party of eight Spanish youths forming his crew

Such was the character, education and pursuits of Bazilio de Marial until he reached his twentieth year, when he resolved to put the plan so long cherished in his heart into execution.

Footnotes

[1] Steel Belt.

CHAPTER V.

The adventures of Don Basilio and his goleta.—The progress of the plot.—The Governor General visits the vessel—The stratagem—The cannonading—Don Basilio's subsequent scheme aided by Donna Elena .

The plan which the young Basilio had in view was to seize the person of the Governor General and avenge his father's death! To this end he had been training the lads he had obtained from the Fisher's Rocks, and to this purpose devoting all his own energies. Up to the time when he had reached his twentieth year he had not travelled into the interior, or visited any of the distant *Quintas*' visible from the tower. All his excursions were taken upon the water along the coast. He now resolved to visit Havana secretly, and there ascertain what difficulties lay in the way of accomplishing his object, and to see how he should best surmount them. On the pretence of going on a voyage to the Fisher's Islands, he took leave of his mother and sister, without communicating to them any thing of his wishes or plans. He was now twenty years of age, tall, noble-looking, and striking in his air and carriage. His complexion was a glowing brown; his eyes dark and piercing; his teeth brilliant; his smile like sunlight; his voice deep and musical; while his whole countenance beamed with intelligence and boldness. Never was a young man better fitted for a hero in personal appearance, or better adapted by education, courage and deep feeling of filial retaliation, to head a conspiracy.

He embarked in his little vessel of only two sails and thirty feet in length, and sailed out of the bay. He coasted along the land a few leagues and then ran into a creek near which was a small village. Here he left his lugger, with orders to his men to be there that day two weeks to meet his return, and in the meanwhile to visit their native islands; for he did not wish them to return to the Bay without him. He then took his way to the village, and boldly entering the Posada, for he was clad in the dress of a muleteer, he purchased a horse, and started on his journey. The distance was sixty miles to Havana. After various adventures he reached the capital. His emotions were deep and sorrowful on entering the place where his father fourteen years before had been executed.

He remained ten days in Havana, and by means of money of which he had unlimited command, and no little address, he was able to obtain all the information he required. He also saw the Governor General, by whose order his father had been executed. He stood in his presence thrice, unsuspected as the son of Don Lazaro the Conspirator, himself no less a conspirator than his father!

He formed his plan of action, and then prepared to put it, when fully ripe, into execution. In the disguise of an African trader, he contracted for, and ordered to be built, a vessel of one hundred and eighty tons, of which he furnished the model. She was to be one hundred and fifty-five feet in length, polacca rigged, with three masts; with a large capacity for burden, yet with an eye primarily to speed. Having left these instructions, he returned across the island to his lugger after two weeks absence. Remaining a day or two at home he set sail for the Fisher's Rocks, and came to at night in a little inlet where they were in the habit of congregating with their shallops. He was hailed with great pleasure, for he had got to possess an influence over them that a lord of a hundred vessels might envy him. They were about two hundred in number, men, women and children; and he had succeeded in obtaining over them the most supreme authority, receiving from them in return the most devoted attachment.—Among the young men were at least thirty that from time to time had been with him in his shallop; for he would every few months change his crews, returning one and taking another. Though a fierce, untractable race of men, and regarded as lawless and little better than buccaneers, young Basilio had made good sailors and faithful adherents of those who had been attached to his shallop; while the older men were ready to do his bidding to the death. To have succeeded in wielding such authority without the exertion of force or discipline of fear over a colony of wild fishermen, savage in appearance, who obeyed no laws, was proof of great tact, courage of character, and of the possession of great qualities of the heart and head.

Basilio was received like a lord returning to his affectionate dependants. He told them briefly that he had come to ask their aid.—That his father had been slain (he did not say when or how) and that he had determined vengeance upon his assassins.

'I want fifty of the young men!' he said, 'who will follow me and do my will!'

Every fisherman, boy and man, cast their caps in a shower at his feet, in token of their submission to his

wishes!

'I thank you all, generous friends, I want only those who have been my companions in the last four years.'

'We are fifty-three in all,' answered one of the youths who was called Isidore, and whom Basilio had heretofore made next to himself in command; bold, handsome, dark-eyed young man of twenty, with a spirited expression of features, with long, flowing locks, that a maiden might covet. 'None will be left behind, senor!'

'Then let all come with me! Senoras, I will leave you gold for your sons services while away,' he said to the women. 'They will also return rich to you once my end is accomplished! In two, or three months at the farthest, I shall be here with a new vessel now building for me. It will hold all my tried friends. She will be armed, and I will have on board arms for you all. I now leave you in the shallop with its crew, who will be enough to enable me to bring the vessel here for the rest of you. Be ready here to meet me. In the meanwhile breathe to no one you may meet what I have said, or your own intentions. My success will depend on secrecy!'

At the end of ten weeks, young Don Basilio, was once more in Havana. This time he sailed thither by doubling Cape St Antonio, disguising his shallop as a molasses droger, and himself and his men as her crew. He thus passed into port without notice. He found his vessel nearly completed. In a few days she was finished and ready for sea. She was the admiration of every seaman in port; and even the Governor-General visited her. To Basilio, who represented himself as a merchant of Cadiz and had built the vessel for the Mediterranean and Morocco trade, he proposed to purchase her. But Don Basilio respectfully declined, while his heart was on fire and his eyes flashed at having before him his father's executor.

'I regret, Senor General,' he said with assumed politeness; 'that I cannot sell her to your excellency. It is my intention after I have made first a short voyage to New Orleans in her, that your excellency shall also make one!'

'You are very civil, good Senor Captain,' said the Governor-General. 'I should be most happy to take a run up as far as Matanzas in her on some occasion when my duties called me there! She must sail very fast.'

'That is but sixty miles,' answered Don Basilio. 'I mean your excellency shall have a longer sail in her.' And he bowed as he spoke to the Governor-General with great courtesy; and a smile on his lip covering the vengeance in his heart.

'You do me honor, Senor Captain. You deserve credit for having so fine a vessel built. It is an honor to the Island.'

'Your excellency is very kind!' answered Don Basilio, with a low bow as he escorted the Governor-General and his suit to the gang-way.

Don Basilio loaded his vessel with bags of coffee, and took out his papers for New Orleans. In a few days afterwards he set sail with his crew of eight young men besides Isidoro his first officer. This small crew with her freight of coffee lulled suspicion; for it had began to be whispered that she was a slaver or would hoist the free flag when she got on blue water. This arrangement originated in her young commander's deep policy and sound discretion.

Three days afterwards he was lying off the Fisher's Rocks in his graceful Three-masted schooner. Here he took on board the remainder of his party, and then set sail for Vermilion Tower Bay, and thence to Havana.

It would require a romance of itself to follow Don Basilio upon his bold adventure. Three weeks after he had left it he re-entered Havana harbor in ballast, having landed his coffee at Vermilion Tower, instead of New Orleans. He anchored near the quay and then waited upon the Governor-General. Previous to his conversation with this dignity, he had contemplated seizing him by force or stratagem in his palace and conveying him off by a *coup de main* on board his goleta, which he intended to anchor just beyond gun-shot from Moro castle, conveying his distinguished guest to the vessel in his boats. This was a bold plan and one not very likely to succeed; yet he had resolved to undertake it. He had thought also of seizing him as he came out of the theatre and aided by his fifty young men hurry off to the boats. He also thought of attacking him in his carriage as he rode out at evening upon the Alameda. A hundred schemes had occurred to him, all of which had for their end taking the Governor-General prisoner and conveying him to Vermilion tower! He might have assassinated him in his palace, but he did not wish his life *there*.

This uncertainty was at once changed for decision after his conversation with his intended victim during his visit on board the goleta. The wish of the Governor-General to purchase his beautiful craft, and his desire to run to Matanzas in her when he should take his voyage towards Cadiz, suggested to him a plan of action which promised success. When therefore he reached Havana, with a visible crew of only eight men, the remainder being

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

concealed below, he waited on the Governor-General and offered him his vessel to take him to Havana. But business prevented him from accepting it then and Don Basilio was requested to wait a week. This was a long time to keep his men confined below, but he promised to do so. In the meanwhile he was often at the Palace, attended the theatre and other places of amusement, and was distinguished both for his noble appearance, apparent wealth and affable manners. Among the ladies whom he met, was the beautiful and only daughter of Don Patricio Garcia. With the lovely Elena the young Don Basilio became enamored. She knew him only as Don Anito Basilio, he having assumed his sister's name in the masculine terminature before his own christian name, omitting the well known name of the conspirator *Marial*. No one suspected his relationship with the traitor Don Lazaro. He passed everywhere as a wealthy young merchant from Cadiz. By the time the week expired Don Basilio had lost his heart to the fascinating Habanera belle. But his love did not cause him to forget his object in being in Havana. He saw the Governor-General often and won his confidence. At length his excellency said to him,

'Senor Don Basilio, I shall be ready tomorrow to take passage in your beautiful vessel as far as Matanzas. I am desirous of testing her sailing qualities; as it is my intention, if she proves what she promises to be, to construct three or four of the same size and on the same model to cruise against the pirates that begin of late to trouble us. I will dine on board with you to-morrow before sailing, with some of my staff and a few fair senoras, who desire to see your vessel; especially my friend La Senora Elena Garcia!'

Don Basilio colored and was confused! How could he refuse? The Governor's wish was a command. Donna Elena's was no less so. Yet, with forty men quartered between decks, how could he safely entertain a party on board without their presence being detected; especially as ladies would be of the party who are famous for finding out secrets? He bowed in acquiescence and left his excellency's presence, feeling he had been caught in his own trap; for he had given strict orders to admit no one on board while in port, save the custom-house officer, who when he had gone below stumbled over a small bag of gold which Basilio, knowing his species, had purposely dropped across the step of the companion way. The man took it up and quite quite forgot there was any way leading below. '

On reaching his vessel Don Basilio consulted with Isidoro, his faithful friend and officer, and it was decided to let the party come on board; and on pretence of showing the governor how the goleta worked propose to run a short distance out of the harbor beyond the Moro.

The Governor-General and party appeared, in all, including himself, six gentlemen, one of them Don Praticia Garcia and another a priest; and five ladies, Donna Elena Garcia being one of the number. The Governor readily consented to the proposal to run a little ways out of the harbor as the day was fine and a steady six knot wind blowing, and the anchor was weighed and they set sail.

'Now,' said Basilio to Isidoro in a low tone, 'if any discovery is made I have the whole party in my power. I shall not return into the harbor but send the ladies, unless Donna Elena will consent to share my fortunes as my bride, on shore in a boat, keeping the Governor-General and his aids my prisoners.'

This bold plan he spoke of to Isidoro with a coolness and quiet of manner that was in striking contrast with the daring character of the deed he contemplated.

But the good star of the Governor-General or the evil star of Don Basilio prevailed to defeat this well-conceived plan of abduction. As the goleta was flying, like a tri-winged bird beneath the overhanging battlements of the Moro Castle with the open sea all before her, they were startled by a loud hail through a trumpet from the skyey height above their heads, commanding the *goleta* to heave too!

Surprised at this order, Don Basilio who was engaged in a delightful *tete-a-tete* with Donna Elena at once obeyed it; and at the same time saying in an under tone to his lieu-tenant,

'This looks suspicious. Go below and bid the lads be ready to come on deck at a stamp of my foot. I fear mischief.'

A barge from the castle well filled with soldiers with the captain of the fortress in her, put off and came alongside. His countenance was stern and menacing.

'Your excellency,' he said as he stepped on deck, speaking in a loud tone, 'you have been betrayed! This vessel is a pirate! I take possession of her in the King's name. And I congratulate your excellency and the party present on their escape from the basest lieutenant!'

'T is false!' cried Don Basilio indignantly. 'I am no pirate!'

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

'Seize him!' cried the Governor-General after the captain of the Castle had said in haughty reply, that two pirates who were at work in chains upon the ramparts had given him the information as they saw the captain upon her deck.

The soldiers had began to board the goleta from the barge when Don Basilio finding affairs had reached a crisis, went below seized his arms, shouted to his men, who led by isidoro poured upon deck cutlass in hand through the companion-way, steerage, main-hatch and fore-castle. The astonishment of the gentlemen who found themselves prisoners, and the soldiers who found themselves confronted by thrice their number of fierce, daring looking young men, cannot be described. There was no resistance. Don Basilio had the victory in his own hand.

'I am *no* pirate, I fling the word back with scorn into your teeth, senor captain!' he cried. 'I am, your excellency, a patriot! I am a foe to the Spanish rule and would see the fair island of Cuba *free*! To this I am devoted—I and these men! To this we are sworn. To aid this cause this vessel was constructed! No, senores, I am no free-booter! You are in my power. Ladies, be not alarmed. You shall be set on shore with these gentlemen in the castle's boat now alongside. Gentlemen, you will assist them in and follow yourselves. The boat may return for the soldiers. Nay here is one passing which will hold them.

The boat which was a lugger, pulled by six men, and capable of holding twenty, was hailed and ordered along side. The soldiers were disarmed and made to enter her, which they did without urging. The ladies, save Donna Elena, had been assisted into the boat. Don Basilio took her hand. She did not withdraw it.

'Do you despise me? Do you believe me to be a pirate?' he said impassionately.

'No,' was her firm reply, while tears filled her fine dark eyes.

'Will you remember me?' he said, tenderly.

'In my heart, even though we meet no more!'

'May I hope?'

'When you prove to me you are only a patriot.'

'This I may do. You should be a patriot by these words! Your uncle was one!'

'If you were only a patriot, Don Basilio, I should deem you still an honorable man!'

'Then believe me honorable. I am only a foe to tyranny!'

'Then I do not ask you to forget me.'

'We shall meet again. God bless you, noble Senora!'

Don Patricio being impatient at this whispered interview with his daughter, he pressed her hand to his lips, and she entered the boat. The Governor General who had been detained last by Isidoro, who addressed him, was about to follow when Don Basilio said, with an ironical smile

'You, Senor Governor-General are to be my guest to dinner. I cannot let you depart fasting.'

'Do you dare detain me?' cried his excellency; and drawing his sword to defend himself he sprung to the opposite gangway and leaped into the lugger among the soldiers who at the same moment pushed her off. Don Basilio was about to leap after him, when Isidoro caught him.

'It would be madness! You will fall short of the boat into the water and be beaten to death with their oars. We must let him escape this time. Before we could put off an armed boat they would be out of our reach. See with what speed both boats are pulling towards the Moro.

Don Basilio was convinced that to attempt to retake his prisoner would be folly. He saw also that now that the party were no longer on board, his vessel would become a target for the guns of the castle as soon as they could be brought to bear upon it.

'We must put up with this defeat! Yet he escapes me not! I will wait my time. We must now take care of ourselves. This little affair has been witnessed from the battlements and there are soldiers now ranged upon them. The captain of the fortress shouts for them to fire their musketry down upon our decks. Below every man that can be spared. We must now run the gauntlet. There it comes.'

His voice, while he was speaking, was drowned by the roar of musketry and the humming and rattling of bullets upon the deck and among the rigging. The helmsman fell dead at his post. Basilio sprung to his place. The goleta was moving about five knots with a flowing sheet, and standing out to sea. A second discharge followed. Only a few shot struck the vessel's deck splintering the planks as they ploughed their angry way across their smooth surface.

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

'In a few moments more and we shall be out of reach of this hail-storm,' coolly said the young patriot chief; but it will be only to exchange it for cannon-shot. There goes an eighteen pounder. The shot flies a hundred feet above our main-truck and strikes a half a mile ahead! We must not run out so far as to come within range, but creep along shore. By this means we will escape their heavy guns. The smaller pieces they will depress, perhaps, so as to make some of their shot tell. But this can't be helped. We must let them do their best and we will do ours, Isidoro.'

The goleta instead of standing boldly out as she had done hauled her wind and hugged the shore so as to keep under the shot of the great guns of the castle. When this manoeuvre was understood at the fortress they ceased firing the heavy cannon which sent the balls too high, and depressing some sixes at an angle of forty-five degrees began to fire. But the goleta was each moment changing her situation and after ten minutes firing but two shot had struck her: one entering her main-hatchway and wounding two men; the other passing through the mizzen. She was now out of range, though the firing ceased not for a quarter of an hour afterwards. A man of war brig was now despatched out of the harbor in chase. But the goleta out-sailed her three to two, and night setting in favored her escape. The third day afterwards the three-masted schooner was anchored in a secret bayou concealed by trees that penetrated the land as far as the base of the Vermilion Tower, in the shadow of which she lay protected and defying discovery.

Don Basilio remained quiet a few months until the affair should have passed over, and then in disguise by land visited Havana with the double purpose in view of seeking the hand of Donna Elena and planning a way to get the Governor-General into his hands. Here he discovered that the pirates who had denounced him were of the party from whom he had once escaped in his shallop.

His love was now seemingly more successful than his conspiracy. Of Donna Elena, finding her as he believed—a true patriot, he had unbosomed himself. He made her the confidant of his name, fortune and plans; plans which he had not even yet revealed to his sister or mother. She promised to favor him and aid him. But she advised delay both in love and vengeance, and to this he consented with impatience. At length she told him that if he would bring his vessel round to Havana on a certain day he might take her away in it as his bride to his home, and also bear off the Governor-General as his captive.

To this plan, though replete with danger Basilio consented; and leaving Havana taking a tender adieu of Donna Elena, he crossed the island to the Vermilion tower. Here he found that his mother had just died. After a suitable time of mourning, he prepared his goleta for sea and informed his sister that he was going to Havana to bring home a bride! He had now been absent several days over the time he had set; and it was to watch for his return from this two-fold expedition of love and filial revenge that Donna Anita had mounted to the summit of the tower.

CHAPTER VI.

The distant sail which Jose and his mistress had been watching from the top of the 'Traitor's Tower,' had now got abreast of the narrow entrance to the Bay, and was about four miles from them. She was distinctly made out to be a polacca of two masts, and much smaller and a heavier sailer than the goleta.

'Although it is not El Cinto, senora,' said Jose, when it was plain that it was a stranger, 'yet as it is making for the passage into the Bay, perhaps she bears some message from Don Basilio to you.'

'She can only be a messenger of evil tidings, if she bear not my brother,' said the maiden sorrowfully.

'She is running direct for the Needle rock, as if she knew the channel. Now if she hauls her wind and puts her helm hard down and runs sharp eastward after she passes the Penas she has some one to pilot who has been in here before. See, my lady! She keeps the channel like an arrow. Now watch her! She has doubled the Needle, and look! See how she turns towards us her broadside and stretches easterly. They are friends! They are friends! Now she keeps away and stands in again to clear the Tiger Rock! There is no mistaking her, Donna Anita! There are friends on board if the vessel is unknown to us.'

'All this only increases my anxiety and fears' That any of my brother's companions should return in another vessel tells me that danger has befallen him and his. See, she displays a flag.'

She caught up the glass and looked earnestly. The stranger had now got within the chain of rocks that stretch from one headland nearly to the other across the Bay, and was almost two miles off, standing in under a flowing sheet.

'What do you make out of the colours, senora?' asked the old man eagerly.

'It is the Spanish ensign, with Basilio's pennant flying above it. It is lowered again! Hoist the answering signal, Jose. It is my brother. He is safe!'

In a few minutes a blue and scarlet answering flag was fluttering upon the flag-staff above the tower. With a countenance radiant with joy Donna Anita cried to the old man,

'Come, Jose, let us fly to the beach and there meet them. I would embrace him the earliest moment.'

'I fear Don Basilio has had some difficulty, returning in another and inferior craft,' said Jose looking grave.

'We shall soon hear. Let us hasten to the shore. By the time we reach the end of the path by the water, she will have come to an anchor.'

With a rapid step they descended from the tower, into the court or *patio*; and thence by a gate, opening on the side of the Bay, she struck into the forest, closely followed by old Jose, whose less agile limbs could with difficulty keep pace with her swift progress. The way led first through a thick wood, then wound along a precipice for a hundred yards, then descending into a dark ravine, through which it followed the banks of the bayon in which the goleta had been secreted; and after a little while it thence emerged beneath a terrace of gigantic rocks, upon the open beach, upon a level with the blue waters of the bay.

On reaching the beach Donna Anita saw the vessel only half a mile distant standing in towards the deep water at the mouth of the bayon. She had not brought the spy-glass and vainly strained her eyes to catch a glimpse of her brother upon the polacca's deck!

Like a huge-winged bird stooping to her nest the vessel as she came near folded her canvass, swept gracefully round and dropt her anchor within a hundred fathoms of the shore where they stood. Donna Anita could see nothing of her brother.

'Where is he? Do you see him, good Jose?'

'No, by my faith, senora, I see him not. I behold Don Isidoro, and many more familiar faces. But I discover not Don Basilio. Peradventure he is in the cabin.'

'I fear the worst. Their countenances are sad! I dare not ask! See, they are letting down a boat! Isidoro and others jump into it! My brother is not of the number. He is slain! He is lost to me forever!

'Nay, take comfort, Donna Anita! The boat is pulling rapidly towards us. We shall soon know!'

'I know all already! My heart tells me I have no brother. Speak, Isidoro!' she cried rushing into the water as the boat grounded within a few feet of the beach. 'Where is Don Basilio? Where is my brother? Why do I not see him with you? And this strange vessel that you return in! Oh! for the love of heaven torture me not by those sad looks!

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

Speak. Tell me he is dead, and pierce my own bosom.'

'Don Basilio, lady is not dead. He lives, but is a captive.'

'Do you say truly that he is not dead but is a captive? Do you dare come back and tell the sister of Don Basilio this? Captive and you have left him. Base coward! Were I a man senor Isidoro, you should not live to tell the tale of your master's captivity twice!'

'Lady, I am here by his command! Every effort that could be made by man was made to rescue him, but in vain. If you will give me leave I will relate to you the circumstances, as he desired me to do!' and Isidoro stepping on shore walked with her as she paced impetuously up and down the hard white beach.

'Then he sent you to me! Where does he lie imprisoned?'

'In the Moro Castle, I grieve to say.'

'And by whom was this done?'

'By the Governor-General.'

'I feared this. I suspected much of this. I knew Basilio meditated avenging our father's bloody death. I had prayed him to let vengeance remain in God's hands. But he never answered me openly but looked dark and menacing. I have feared this. So he made an attempt upon the Governor's life!'

'No, senora, not upon his life but upon his liberty. He has long been forming a scheme to get him into his power.'

'A conspiracy. Then will he perish!' she cried clasping her hands in agony. But go on! Let me hear all. For I would know how to act—what steps to take, for Basilio shall not lie in chains while I am free.'

'The circumstances are briefly these, senora; for he desired me to make you fully acquainted with them. He left here twelve days ago for the double purpose of bringing home as his bride the daughter of Don Patricia Garcia and with whom he had become deeply enamored in his first visit to Havana, and as prisoner his Excellency the Governor-General.'

'Do I hear you, Don Isidoro?'

'You hear rightly. He had communicated his plan to surprise the Governor to Donna Elena his betrothed who professed herself a warm patriot.'

'And was she not?'

'Hear the issue, senora. She entered into his scheme, and promised to aid it by giving a party to the Governor-General; and while he was there to open a secret gate in her father's garden, admitting Don Basilio and his associates. A carriage was to be in waiting to convey both herself and the Governor to the sea-shore, where a boat would take them on board the goleta, which I was to keep lying too off the land within three miles of the city. This plan would have been feasible and would have been successful, if the treachery to which Don Basilio is now the victim, had not stepped in.'

'Treachery! By whom?'

'You shall shortly learn, senora. Don Basilio came hither in accordance with the plan between himself and Donna Elena, to man the goleta and proceed to Havana. Twelve days ago he parted from you for this purpose.'

'Only as he told me to bring back a beautiful bride. I knew nothing of all this deep conspiracy, nor his intentions against the governor! Now who was this traitor?'

'It was none other than Dona Alena, the very lady he had expected to make his wife, and whom he had made a co-partner in his conspiracy!'

'Is it possible this woman betrayed him?'

'You shall hear, Senora. We came in sight of Havanna just at sunset, and then shortened sail standing off, so that we might run under the land in the dark. It was the night on which Dona Alena was to give the ball to the Governor-general. Every thing was favorable. As soon as it was dark enough to run into the land, Don Basilio disembarked in a solitary place near the ruins of the old San Mateo, not three miles from the city. He found in waiting, a carriage which, Pablo, one of our men, who had been left behind for the purpose, had driven to the beach to receive him. With six men brave and true, two of them mounted behind and two before, and the other two in the carriage with him, all well armed, he started for the city, which he entered by the Pasco. In a few words, he entered by the private gate, the gardens of the Casa, leaving the coach without and privately met Dona Alena, who was expecting him.'

'All is ready,' she said to him after a few moments conversation, with unusual animation. 'The Governor

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

General is here. In five minutes he shall be in your power. I will go for him to walk in the garden, and I will lead him round by the gate so that you can seize him without giving alarm to the guests within!

She left him. He felt the moment of his triumph and vengeance had come. He hastened to the gate, from which he had been gone about half an hour, to place his party so as to seize his prisoner if he offered any resistance. He found the carriage and men there, scarcely visible in the darkness. Though he could hardly see them, he gave them his orders how to proceed, and then leaving the gate hardly open he stood within it, the men silently drawn up by its side. After waiting impatiently a quarter of an hour, he saw two figures approaching. They passed a lamp suspended from a tree, and he recognized the Governor General and Dona Elena. They came near when a third person who seemed to have leaped over the wall, he appeared so suddenly, stood before them. Raising his cap he said,

‘All is safe, your Excellency! Proceed without danger!’

Don Basilio heard these words, though spoken in an under tone, but they understood them not. The man disappeared as abruptly as he had made his appearance, and the two advanced seemingly in absorbing conversation towards the gate. At the moment that they seemed to be passing it in their walk. Don Basilio stepped out and presenting his sword at the breast of the Governor, commanded him to surrender himself as his prisoner. ‘It is in vain for your Excellency to resist, as I am supported by eight men!’

‘Treachery, ah!’ cried the Governor, half drawing his sword. He then sheathed it, adding, ‘If you say truly, and from those dark figures you seem to speak truth, then am I your prisoner! But to whom do I surrender myself?’

‘That you shall know Senor, in good time. Pass through this gate. My carriage awaits you!’

‘Whither do you conduct me?’

‘That you shall know also, soon. May it please your excellency to enter!’

‘And the lady!’

‘She will accompany you. To her I am indebted for this happy fortune!’

‘Ah, Dona Elena! Is it thee! am I betrayed by you! the daughter of one of my counsellors!’

The lady made no reply; and assisted by Don Basilio followed the Governor General into the carriage.

‘Now my men to your stations,’ cried Don Basilio. ‘The two who were with me in the coach, must ride back as postilions!’ The carriage started, and the horses flew rapidly. They had rode about eight minutes when Don Basilio looked out of the window, being struck by the strange appearance of the house.

‘Are we retiring the same way we came?’ he called to the box.

There was no reply. The next instant while he was yet looking out of the window of the carriage and about to give an order to take the Pasco road, he was astonished to see the carriage turn short from the street and roll thundering beneath an arch, both sides of which were lined with mounted dragoons. As the coach passed under the mansion gateway he saw an iron port-cullis fall behind it while the vehicle stopped suddenly. Lights were carried about in hurrying hands, voices of command were heard and glancing round, Don Basilio saw himself in the interior of a miliary fortress!

‘What means this?’ he cried confounded and bewildered, shouting to his men upon the box. To his surprise he saw by the torches that they were not his own men, but soldiers dressed in the costume worn by his own party. He looked behind the carriage and soldiers were there! The postilions were soldiers also. He could discover no face that he knew. He at once suspected that he had become the victim of treachery, and was himself a prisoner to his prisoner!

The door of the carriage was opened by an officer in a gorgeous uniform, when Don Basilio drawing his sword, cried,

‘Am I betrayed? Dona Alena how is this?’

‘That I am the traitor, Don Basilio,’ she said firmly. Iloved you till I knew you were a traitor and the son of a conspirator. Then I ceased to love, you then became my enemy. I have encouraged your confidence and entered into this conspiracy for the purpose of defeating it. I am too good a friend to my country to wed one who conspires against it, or plot with him in a conspiracy to overthrow it. I trust now, Don Basilio that you will do my patriotism justice, though it is not such patriotism as your own!’

‘The arch traitress!’ cried Dona Alena with a glowing cheek. ‘My poor, noble brother! Well?’

His Excellency then said,

‘To this brave and loyal maiden, sir, do I owe my liberty, and perhaps my life. She has communicated to me all

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

the steps of your conspiracy. I gave myself to her plan to get you and your vessel into my hands. It has, you see, been successful. Armed boats have been sent to capture your schooner which was seen in the offing from the Moro long before night set in. You were taken by a stratagem; for Dona Elena knowing all your plans had provided a second carriage precisely like the first with men attired like yours to lie in wait a short distance from the gate. After you had entered a messenger as from you was sent to tell your party that a mistake had been made and that the carriage must drive round the gardens to a postern on the farther side. They obeyed, and on reaching the postern the carriage was surrounded by a detachment of soldiers, and every one of your party taken into custody. In the meanwhile the other carriage with its party had taken the place of yours at the gate. Of this I was informed before I reached by one of my messengers! '

'I see—I see how I have been ensnared!' cried Don Basilio bitterly. He was too proud of spirit to reply to, or reproach the traitress. For a moment he looked as if he would have sprung from the carriage and cut his way through the dragoons; but a moments reflection showed him that this would be fatal to him. He therefore quietly surrendered his arms to the officer who had opened the carriage door and delivered himself up as a prisoner! '

'Poor Basilio! My unfortunate brother! My life will be the forfeit of thy crime,' cried his sister ringing her hands in despair.

'Nay, lady, we hope to rescue him,' said Isidoro boldly. 'Never! You said the Moro held him prisoner. Whoever enters there, sees no more the sun's light! Yet you have seen him and discoursed with him, Isidoro! or else you had not learned all this you have related to me, for my brother only could have told you.'

'I have seen him, Senora!'

'Where and how?'

'I was left in charge of the goleta after he disembarked. I stood off and on waiting for the return of the carriage. At the end of two hours, as agreed upon I sent a boat for him. I took the command of her leaving the schooner half a mile from land. On landing I saw a carriage about fifty yards from the water and approached it. I was instantly seized and bound and thrown into it by half a dozen soldiers. It was all done in an instant! My men at the boat had not time to understand what had happened and come to my rescue before the carriage was driven off at full speed. I learned from an officer within the carriage that Don Basilio had been betrayed and was then in prison. In half an hour I was thrown into the same prison with him. Here he told me all that had occurred. He was calm and firm. He was only grieved that one whom he loved should have proved a serpent in his bosom! Yet he spoke no word of bitterness against her. He lamented the result of his conspiracy and spoke with confidence of being yet able to succeed if he could effect his escape. I remained with him only till morning when he was removed as I was told, to the Moro Castle. His last words were for me, if I escaped to see you, or send you word; to bid you not despair and send to his agent in Havana all the money you could command. If the governor sent troops to occupy the Quinta, to resist them with all the force you can command!'

'Noble Basilio. I will be worthy of you and regard your slightest wish! Oh, that you had made me a confidant in your plans and I might have saved you from this treachery. As it is I will not rest till you are free! I will to Havana at once! But, you came not in Basilio's vessel! You lost yours! How happened this! And how have you escaped?'

'Our vessel was taken by treachery. Before my men, finding me a prisoner, could decide what step to take, a party of soldiers were upon them. They escaped in their boat leaving several of their assailants dead on the sands. Before the boat reached the goleta those in her saw these barges pulling towards her also. They were also seen from her deck. But suspecting no treachery there was no suspicion raised until the goleta's boat come along side, when the men at once gave the alarm. The barges come up at a rapid rate, with at least twenty soldiers in each, armed with muskets and carbines.

Carlos, whom I left in charge, saw at once that there was no escaping this superior force, as there was a dead calm. The only way was to desert the goleta and leave her to the enemy. With great presence of mind he ordered the boat round to the side opposite to that on which the barges were advancing, and also lowered the quarter-boat into the water upon the same side. He then commanded all the men to jump into them armed and as the barges came up on one side pull away on the other!'

'Could he not have fought them!'

'Not so near the walls of the Moro. It was calm, and if he had beaten off these boats he would have been overpowered by others. Carlos did well, though the vessel was lost to us. He had no time to scuttle her. He was

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

the last to leave her decks and as he did so, he applied a torch to the rigging. The barges came on and the soldiers boarded her, no doubt, surprised at finding her deserted. There being no wind to spread the flames, they were soon extinguished. In the meanwhile the boats containing our men pulled seaward as rapidly as they could force the boats through the water. After getting a league beyond the goleta, which the captors had began to tow towards the harbor, Carlos, after consulting with his men resolved to capture the first vessel that they should fall in with. They kept on about three leagues from the land until after sun-rise, when not seeing any thing they resolved to stand in towards the port as most likely to meet one. About nine o'clock in the morning they descried a polacca schooner coming out and standing westward along the shore. But I must now tell you of my escape!

After Don Basilio had been removed from me, the governor sent for me to question me about the conspiracy, and to learn its extent. Under the pretence that I had something of importance to communicate I requested to be left alone with him. After searching my person for arms he consented to my request. I immediately locked the door and sprung past him through a window which opened upon a balcony. I placed my hand upon this and leaped to the ground. I found myself in a garden. Behind me I heard the alarm. I flew with the speed of a greyhound along the walks. I reached a high wall. The bell of the palace tower was ringing as I climbed its sides, and an alarm gun was fired from the battlements as I sprung into the street on the opposite side. A man drew a knife to dispute my way. I snatched it from him, and thus armed cleared my way. I reached the harbor. I cast myself into the water among the fleet of fishermen's boats and diving beneath them rose between two some distance from the shore. I heard shouts of pursuit. I dove again and rose near a vessel. I dove again and come up under the bows of a polacca-schooner which was under weigh. Her gib fortunately overhung her bows so low that by pulling it a little it concealed me completely while it afforded me support. I remained thus until the polacca was well out of the harbor when I made my appearance over the bows. I pretended to have been upset in a boat outside and they let me remain, promising to land me at some convenient spot. I had not been fifteen minutes on board when I discovered, for I was searching for them, two boats filled with men at a great distance off. I knew they must be our men; for the governor told me that they had escaped in the dark and were probably landed somewhere; and as he had despatched soldiers to scour the coast he hoped to entrap them. But I knew that Carlos was too wise to land. At my suggestion the Captain stood for the boats, as I told him they were doubtless in distress. As we come near them, and he saw they were armed and pulling for him, the captain became alarmed and would have put about. But drawing my knife I with a blow cut the tiller rope and severed the halyards of the main-sail. The polacca come up into the wind and lay perfectly unmanageable. The captain and his crew of five men assailed me, but I defended myself and kept them at bay until the boats come along side and the polacca fell into their possession. The surprise of Carlos and the men at seeing me on board I need not describe to you. That lady is the polacca!' he said as he ended his narrative, pointing to the vessel as she lay at anchor off the beach.

CHAPTER VII.

The Story of the Licutenant of Don Basilio—The Tornado in the Indian Seas—The Siesta, and the appearance of a stranger at the Vermillion Tower—A scene upon the Azotea.

Isidoro, the young lieutenant of Don Basilio, having ended his narration, remained watching the face of Dona Anita. During his recital of the events which had led to Don Basilio's imprisonment he had been walking by her side up and down the silvery sands, the rocky cliff towering darkly above and flinging its shadow far beyond them. The bay outstretched before them just rippled by the breeze; and abreast upon its surface rode the polacca. The bold wooded arms of the Bay curving and connected by the chain of islets at its mouth, formed a noble frame to the beautiful and romantic scene. The boat from which Isidoro had landed was grounded upon the beach, the men grouped around it in picturesque attitudes. Old Jose, leaning upon his staff at the entrance of the defile, watched anxiously the faces both of his mistress and of Don Isidoro, that he might catch from their expression such portions of his tale as his ears were not able, as they moved away from him in their pacing to and fro, to catch with distinctness.

As Isidoro's story ended, Dona Anita stopped short and gazed full into his countenance as if she sought therein to read it reflected and re-confirmed. Her lovely eyes were full of tears yet the fire of determined purpose burned in them. Her cheeks were pale during the recital, but now were flushed with deep emotion, the stirring feelings to which a knowledge of her brother's fate had given rise. Her graceful person was drawn to its full height, and a calm dignity, approaching sternness sat upon her fine brow. The deep fountains of her sisterly affection were stirred within her, and bold and daring plans for his release flashed rapidly across her mind. With her sculptured lip compressed, her eye intently fixed in meditation, she stood silent and seemingly unconscious that they rested upon Isidoro. At length, after the lapse of several minutes, she spoke:

'Isidoro this is sad news you bring me! I have been trying to realize my brother's danger. Our father perished by the hand of the dreadful man into whose power Basilio has so unhappily fallen. I can foresee, unless we can effect his escape, only his father's fate! The Governor-General is a man of a stern and unfeeling nature. He regards no man's life, when its continuance would menace his own safety or the peace of his government. My brother, alas, has menaced both. He is in his power, and will die!'

'Never while Isidoro has a life to give for his!'

'You are Don Basilio's friend, Isidoro. I thank you. Forgive my harsh language a while ago. I know you and all these would die for my brother. But his fate is clear! But he will not die in the Moro! He will not be privately slain in his cell. God forbid! he will be brought to trial. He will be taken from the Moro to the Court of the Governor's Palace, as my father was, and then tried.— Sentence will be death! Before he dies *we must save him*, Isidoro, or die with him!'

'I swear to free him or perish!'

'So say we all! Basilio's freedom, or *death!*' cried the young men at the boat, hearing Isidoro's words.

'*Basilio or death!*' shouted the crew from the polacco, catching up the generous shout. 'Freedom to our noble captain or *death!*'

'You hear that, Dona Anita?' said Isidoro with a sparkling eye.

'I hear it,' answered the maiden with emotion. And waving her snowy hand towards them she added, turning to him; 'with devotion such as this I do not despair of again embracing my brother!'

'What means, Senora, would you propose? We are ready to do your bidding. Our lives are yours and Don Basilio's!'

'Thanks, good and noble youth! I will think what course to take. I am now too much agitated by the fresh intelligence you have communicated to form any plan at once. Yet the time admits of no delay. Each moment is precious to him who is my life! I wish you to have the polacca ready to sail within an hour if need be!'

'She is ready, Senora, to depart now!'

'I shall now proceed to the tower! Come to me by noon when I shall have decided on some course of action. Adios, Don Isidoro!'

Thus saying this beautiful Spanish girl, folding her mantilla about her head, half-concealing her exquisite features, moved with a graceful tread, but with an air singularly determined and earnest. She walked like one who is influenced by strong feelings and an elevated purpose. Her brother's danger was her own. From childhood her heart had been bound up in him; and so secluded had she lived that to the age of nineteen she had not knowledge of any other love or any other attachment than a sisterly one. She did not know that there was any other love or any other emotion, than that which her affection for Basilio elicited, which could find existence in her heart. 'Love' to her, was to love her brother. If she experienced any thing like tenderness of which Basilio was not the object it was for Old Jose; who in his sixtieth year and venerable beard, was not likely to take the place of a very dangerous rival to Basilio in her breast. Isidoro, though young, handsome and grave had not drawn a single glance of regard from her; although it could not be concealed that when she met him or discussed with him, which was but seldom, she did it with a heightened glow upon her cheek and without meeting his large black eyes, as she was accustomed to those of Basilio and old Jose. But this was not love; only the instinct whereby it manifests its indwelling; only the fragrance which is shed from the folded bud of the Carlinda. Isidoro was not the sun to whose warmth the bud was destined to unfold its leaves; the light to which it was open shone from other eyes than the young lieutenant; who, albeit, was the sun of a fair flower, in the shape of a brown maiden who dwelt in the cot adjoining his father's in his native island, and whose young heart followed him over the sea.

One afternoon, it was the third after Basilio's departure from the Tower on his expedition which had so fatally terminated, Donna Anita was sleeping upon the roof of her casa, for it was the hour of the *siesta*. Above her was an awning of blue silk fringed with silver, and gathered so as to exclude the sun on the western side. Her lovely head reposed upon a cushion of velvet rose-colored and worked in silken flowers of such exquisite beauty and truthfulness that her head seemed pillowed on living flowers. By her side sat a negreas, with soft round features, and lus trous black eyes, half-closed in sleep. In her hand she held a gorgeous fan of feathers of the bird of paradise, which she would slowly wave with a gentle motion above the head of the sleeper. A soft breeze blew from the sea, with just force enough to stir the pendulous leaves of a palm which grew at the corner of the house. The top of the house overlooked the forests, the bay, the islands and distant sea. Above the house-top full thirty feet higher rose the Vermilion Tower, a far-seen beacon both on land and sea. In the *patio* or court beneath, slept in the shade of the walls the slaves, and swinging in a hammock beneath an arch through which the cool wind circulated, was old Jose with a cigarito in his mouth, which he was trying to keep alight and keep asleep at the same time. All was still and wore that indolent air of repose and dreamy security which characterizes the interior of a Spanish house in that climate of luxurious indulgence.

The sea though its surface was calm yet rolled in toward the land huge underswells, glancing in the sun like vast cylinders of glass one revolving over the other; when, breaking upon the beach, they would burst into a myriad of crystals. The low sound of these waves reached soothingly the ears of Jose, and soon decided the contest between sleep and his cigar; for the latter fell from his lips while he sunk into deep slumber.

There had been the preceding night a terrific storm, to which the present agitation of the surface of the beaving Bay was owing. It was not an ordinary gale, but one of those wild, irresistible tornados, which in the hot months sweep the seas like a besom. This which had just taken place, was unusually fearful. The first hours of the night had been sultry and close, and although there was no clouds to be seen, not a star was visible; a dense steel-like atmosphere far above the region of clouds seemed to cover the sky. Not a breath of air stirred. Dona Anita placed the lightest feather of down upon the battlement and it rested there as motionless as lead. Jose as the sun had set had prophecied a hurricane, and now joined her to confirm and strengthen his opinion. A leaden hue rested upon the sea, and a singular blackness lay upon the forests. There was patches of dull light in the skies, but none could see by what they were proceeded? and occasionally a musky red glare would glow upon the cliffs surrounding the Bay.

Jose and Dona Anita sat up late upon the housetop watching the portentous signs and talking of the absent goleta, which had now been out three days. But Jose, calculating by the winds, gave it his opinion that she must before this time have doubled Cape St. Antonio, and by this have reached Havana. But Dona Anita's anxiety prevented her from taking encouragement. Just before the sun set a vessel had been seen to the South and Eastward, which Jose, by the aid of the glass made out to be a top-sail schooner, although her hull was hid beneath the convexity of the ocean line. The vessel they now thought of, and Dona Anita sent up many prayers for

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

the mariners on board; for it was clear that the storm, if it should rise, would sweep over her. The thickening gloom of night hid the sails from view when she was about nine miles distant, standing to the West.

Towards eleven o'clock the steely hue of the heavens, gave place to a white appearance, which was not light nor a reflection from light, but a fearfully wild aspect of the skies which is indescribable. It spread over the sea and over the land, and without sun or moon or stars, there prevailed such dreadful light as mortal eyes quailed to look upon! It revealed no object! All around was as invisible as in the murky darkness of a few moments before. Gradually yet swiftly, the 'light of hell,' as it is termed by the Islanders, rolled together in waves not unlike the undulations of the Aurora Borealis. It seemed to be seeking a focal centre, rather than to irradiate from one. It rolled off towards the south west, the blackness of darkness following in its train! It gathered in the sky in the south east in a vast field of light reddening as it condensed, until a fierce fiery eye burned in a single point above the horizon, casting its baleful glare over the sea. This was the eye of the storm, 'el ojo del hurican!'

Old Jose's experience, after seeing this, told him that it was now time for Dona Anita to seek shelter, and the casa to be closed. She, however, waited and lingered to watch the fearful progress of the tornado. The *Ojo del hurican* became a deeper red mingled with changing violet hues as beautiful as they were terrible to look upon; then the violet became black, and the blackness formed it self into sable clouds which rolled in vast volumes, like smoke pouring from a crater, up the sky across the fiery centre, which, in a moment was enveloped and extinguished in a frightful chaos of night. All now was darkness impenetrable over sky, land and sea. Dona Anita could not see Jose, although he stood close at her side. The silence that reigned was appalling. The heart seemed to shrink and suppress its own beating as in sympathy with the universal stillness.

'Come, Senora—let us fly for safety?' whispered Jose hoarsely.

'Nay, one moment longer. This is awful. Hark! Do you not hear a roar! Look see that whiteness upon the sea!'

'Tis the hurricane ploughing it up into fields of phosphorescent light. See how broadly it spread, and how rapidly it advances! Now the waters of the bay are seemingly on fire! God have mercy on any craft that is now abroad!'

'The roar is terrific! Let us fly!' cried Dona Anita clinging to the old man.

Scarcely had they disappeared from the *azotea* when with a noise like thunder rolling upon the earth, the tornado leaped from the sea upon the land leaving a glittering track a league broad in its career as it came on. Hurling from their heights, rocks and trees flew through the air and plunged into the water! the forest bowed before it with a crash and uproar of sound that no words could convey any idea of. All at once it burst upon the tower and casa beneath. Stones from the battlements were shot through the air like feathers, and the foundation of the dwelling shook as if shaken by an earthquake. The rain descended amid sheets of flame, and thunder—peal followed thunder—peal with the noise of a ceaseless cannonading.

In two hours the tornado had passed away! the clouds rolled back! Stars glittered through openings to the blue sky, and the spent winds were lulled! Only the roar of the subsiding sea could be heard as it dashed lazily upon the beach which it had so lately lashed with terrific strokes.

Unable to rest Dona Anita and Jose once more ascended to the roof. The scene was wild but beautiful; and they stood a few moments gazing upon the serene heavens, in thankfulness for their escape.

'Alas, for the mariner,' said Anita. Some vessel must have been in the destroyer's path. I shudder at the fate of those on board!'

'No doubt, lady, the vessel we saw—the topsail schooner that hove in sight just before sun—down, and which looked to me like a schooner of war, I have little doubt, lady, but that she has gone down all standing! If she lay in the course of the hurricane she is sure to be lost! But the sea is the mariner's proper grave, and the snowy lap of the storm—wave his winding sheet!'

The day broke and the heaving of the sea was the only sign of the late tempest. This had not subsided even towards afternoon when Dona Anita and Jose are discovered enjoying their siesta as if nothing had transpired to alarm them for their safety. The smiling, though warm sun, the pearly clouds and gentle breeze were the features of serene weather, inviting to repose and tranquility. Old Jose had swung his hammock in the arch and left the door open towards the sea to catch the cool breeze as he indulged in his siesta and cigarrita. If he had been standing in the door which commanded a view of the pathway he might have seen a person slowly making his way up the rocks from the beach. As he came nearer he would have discovered that he was without a hat, that his flowing locks of light brown were wet with the brine, and that his dress was also saturated with sea—water; which

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

dress was a blue naval undress jacket, white pantaloons, and buff vest with the small anchor button; which button was also on his blue jacket. His feet were bare and lacerated, and his appearance fatigued. Had he seen all this, Jose would have set him down as a shipwrecked officer. But being fast asleep he saw neither his approach nor suspected it.

The young man, for he was not more than five or six and twenty, if so old, approached the open gate, across the entrance of which lay fast asleep a negro whom Jose had stationed there while he took his own repose. The wanderer gazed at the high walls and higher tower for a moment and then advanced to the gate. He paused a moment as he saw the black asleep, but stepping over him he passed beneath the arch. As he proceeded he saw Jose in his hammock; when finding him also asleep he passed beneath it and found himself in the *patio* or interior of the *cása del canfa*. He looked around him with an eye of curiosity and interest. He surveyed the sleeping slaves in the corners; the fountain with its refreshing waters; the orange and lemon trees; the tessellated pavement; the rose and crimson damask curtains of the long grated windows; the foliage of a hundred flowers waving in the soft breeze and the blue sky over all. As he leaned against a column to survey the place, in which he found himself, his appearance was greatly in his favor.

His person though not tall was commanding, although now bent a little with fatigue; but there was an air of refinement and high-breeding in his features and bearing that would have showed without the aid of his officer's undress uniform, that he was a gentleman, or as Jose afterwards observed, '*un coballero noble*.' His eye was a clear blue and expressive of courage and sensibility. His countenance was altogether interesting, and invited confidence. Notwithstanding his present triste and disordered appearance he wore a cheerful look and tranquil manner.

'This place into which I have wandered seems to be the Castle of Sleep. Well, I need sleep more than food and will even yield to the potent influence of the spot. It will be time enough when these wake for them to find out who has intruded upon them and I to find out where I am. Upon the roof I see the top of a canopy. I will see if I can't find a cool shade beneath it where I can rest my weary limbs. With swimming and floating a mile, and walking two leagues over rocks and through forests, I am hardly able to mount the stairs. The inhabitants are probably asleep in their richly curtained chambers around, so I shall be undisturbed upon the flat roof. There are females here, for men never gather flowers around them like these. Perhaps young and beautiful *senoritas*. A pretty plight I am in to be presented.'

As he spoke he left the column and ascended a broad flight of stone stairs that led to an interior balcony, from which by a half a dozen more steps he reached the *azotea* or flat roof. It was spacious and running all around the patio, with the tower rising at one angle. In the shadow of the tower, was the awning, the canopy of which he had seen from below. It was but a few feet distant from him. Beneath its folds of azure silk he discovered half hidden, the sleeping form of Anita, with the slave seated by her couch also asleep! He stood still in an attitude of surprise! He gazed and then advancing a step continued to gaze. One cheek and side of her face, was presented to his view. He stood entranced by its perfection. A gentle glow warmed the delicate olive, and her rusty lips were pouted with the beautiful voluptuous swell of a child's. Her dark lashes lay in long and surving fringes upon the cheek, and a tress of her dark hair slept upon her snowy hand, which by the contrast looked like an exquisite piece of alabaster work. The elegant undulating outline of her figure was perceptible in all its bewildering beauty, and a small foot, from which the slipper had fallen, of the most lovely symmetry and diminutiveness, was visible peeping beneath the vague folds of the canopy.

He gazed with clasped hands in silent wonder! He approached with noiseless tread—nigher—nigher—and nigher still, emboldened by the deep slumber that had fallen upon her and upon the slave. He stood and bent over her. He had forgotten his fatigue, his bleeding feet! He traced the sculptured outline of the faultless profile, the statue-like beauty of the lovely head and moulded arm! The expression of her face, too, charmed his soul.

'Never have I beheld mortal beauty like this,' he exclaimed. 'If I were an idolater this should be the object of my heart's worship. Who can she be? What strange thread of destiny have guided me hither! I have found here my heart's ideal! At this shrine shall terminate my heart's pilgrimage. She moves! I will retire! Sleep is ready to overpower me. I will recline here within the shadows of this strange old red tower, for I would have my last gaze upon her that she may mingle in my dreams. Sleep! my eyes are already closing! Great will be her surprise on awaking to find me sleeping not far from her! But I can remove no farther!'

He laid his head upon the pedestal of a gigantic orange tree jar, and the next moment was buried in profound

sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

The discovery—The impression made by the stranger upon the lovely hostess—The narrative of the shipwrecked—The hospitality of Donna Anita—The growth of love—The young stranger ensnared—A struggle between passion and duty.

The sun descended low in the west behind a terrace of purple and silver-gold clouds, above which his prismatic colored beams radiated to the zenith. Gold was every where! upon the cliff-edge; upon the tops of the forests; upon the battlements of the tower; upon the clouds and upon the sea. All was gold mingled with purple. The breeze set in cool and pleasantly, and already lifted in its increasing strength the silken folds of the canopy beneath which Donna Anita slept. The same wind that tossed her dark curls awoke the negress, who began with great diligence to fan away with her gorgeous crest of feathers. The cool air upon her cheek banished sleep and opening her large dreamy eyes, Donna Anita awoke also. She sat up, throwing back her cloud of hair from her forehead, and casting her eyes round upon the glorious sunsetting, gazed upon it a few moments with calm delight.

`You have let me sleep long, Linda. The day is nearly closed. You look so bright you have been asleep too.'

`Dat must be true, missus, coz leetle bit 'go de sun up dar, and den I look agin ony a minnit and dare he be.'

`How lonely without my brother! I am delighted he is to bring home with him a bride. She will then be a companion for me in his absences. Come let us go down to the *sala*!'

`Madre de Dios!' cried the negress in alarm her eyes resting on the young man who was lying fast asleep a few feet distant.

`What do you see?' cried her mistress looking in the direction of the slave's gaze. `Santa Maria! A stranger! Asleep upon the Azotea!'

She rose to her feet, thrust her little foot into her slipper and gathering her mantilla about her form was about to fly. But he slept calmly and tranquilly. If he meant ill he would not lie there buried in profound repose. If he were an enemy he would not place himself in the power of his foe.

Such were the thoughts that passed rapidly through her mind as with her eyes fixed upon him in alarm and half-flying, she arrested her flight. His pale face, his noble countenance, his fair complexion and light brown hair that showed him to be from a northern land, his garments evidently wet with sea-water the salt brine of which encrusted his locks, the quiet, deep sleep in which he was sunk, all pleaded to her in his behalf. She paused and then timidly approached him. She stood still, and gazed upon him as he had upon her while she slept. As she looked and thought that perhaps he was a shipwrecked sailor who had sought asylum here, she felt a tender interest for him, and compassion took the place of fear. Yet how he came to lie upon the *azotea* she was at a loss to imagine. In a low voice she bade her slave go down and awake Jose. But this worthy at the same instant made his appearance at the head of the stairs.

`How is this, Jose?' How come this young man here?' she asked.

`Nombre de dios! how came he here sure enough!'

`Don't speak so loud! Don't wake him! Do you know who he may be?'

`It may be a robber or a loyalist come as a spy. I had best run him through before he wakes up and mischief come of it.'

`No, Jose! He seems to be a foreigner! An Ingles, or Americano. Go softly near and see if you can decide for me who and what he is.'

Jose obeyed advancing on tip-toe, but with his staff advanced like a pike to be ready to meet any sudden hostile demonstrations.

`Es caballero, senora,' he answered after a moment's scrutiny; `and he is an officer in the American navy. I know the button. I have seen them often in Havana. The little gold stripe on his shoulder shows that he is a lieutenant. That much I can make out.'

`I am so happy he is an American,' said Donna Anita, with earnestness; I love the Americans. They are friends of liberty. He must be taken care of when he awakes. But how came he here, Jose?'

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

'I do not know, senora, unless that he came in past me and Fingo who both fell asleep leaving the sea gate open to let the sea breeze and picaroons too, come in, for that matter! It's a mercy they didn't carry us off casa and all!'

'It is dangerous in these times, when pirates are so thickly abroad and even coming into the Bay, to leave the Quinta so exposed.'

'I will not be guilty of it again, senora. He must have come in and come up here to sleep, knowing the custom here of taking our siesta upon the house-top. But it is a wonder no one saw him. But as we were all asleep we couldn't. He must be honest or he would have robbed us. No—he is no robber. His dress is already wet and with the sea. He looks like a man who has been swimming. We have not forgotten the hurricane of last night, senora, that we should ask how he came here! He has been shipwrecked and wandered hither for shelter! I will wake him, senora! He can then tell his own story.'

'Nay, Jose, let the poor cavalier sleep. He seems wearied. He wakes!' she exclaimed, as the young stranger opened his eyes and looked around. At first he seemed bewildered, but on seeing Anita he recollected all the circumstances that preceeded his going to sleep. He rose, with some difficulty, for he felt the effects of his fatigues and the wounds in his feet, and said with courtesy, while the color deepened his cheek,

'Pardon me, senora. I am a shipwrecked sailor, and coming hither and finding all asleep, overcome with weariness I slept also. My sleep was sweet and my dreams were pleasant for I knew an angel was near me.'

Donna Anita blushed, for she could not but understand the meaning of the handsome, pale young stranger. Without meeting his deep impassioned yet respectful gaze, she said, with modesty,

'Senor you are welcome to our hospitality. The gates of the Casa del Torre were never closed against the unfortunate. I sympathise with you in your misfortune and trust that by our kindness we shall be able in some degree to alleviate that grief which you must experience for the loss of your vessel and companions. Are you the only one saved?'

'I said I was shipwrecked, senora,' answered the stranger with increased admiration of her now that he had heard her rich sweet voice and listened to her warm expressions of sympathy; 'my vessel, lady, is not lost, that I am aware of; though how she can have out-lived the hurricane I am unable to see! In the midst of it as we were running before it under bare poles, as I was standing on deck a sea broke over the stern which submerged the vessel and swept every thing from the decks. I was borne far from her, and rising upon the top of a wave saw the vessel flying away like an arrow beyond sound of my cries. I gave myself up to a sailor's death, when something struck against me. I grasped it! I clung to it, and fortunately found attached to it its lashings with which I bound myself to it by one arm. I then endeavored to reach the land which was full a league distant. The sea was as white with foam as a wintry plain over which the wild snow is driven. I was borne onward almost on the wings of the storm often lifted by its force from the waves amid clouds of spray and dashed headlong. How I reached the land I know not. I have no recollection of the remainder of the night. When the sun rose I found myself lying upon a rocky spur of a small island at the entrance of this bay.'

'God be blessed for this miraculous preservation!' exclaimed Donna Anita devoutly. Jose crossed himself and muttered 'Ave Maria purissima.'

'After coming a little to myself I looked round for some signs of human habitation and discovered this Vermilion Tower in the distance. I then set out to reach it; but my progress was attended with great pain and suffering. I had to swim from islet to islet before I could reach the main-land; and thence after a difficult journey I reached here. I found the gate open and entered. I ascended to the azotea, where I beheld you, noble lady, also asleep beneath yonder canopy, I gazed on you and forgot all I had suffered. But sleep overpowered me and I yielded to its influence, only to behold you still present in my dreams. Senora if I have offended by intruding here I hope—'

'Offended, senor! You are welcome! Heaven has directed your steps hither! Jose you will at once see that el senor has every thing to render him comfortable, food and clothing. Conduct him to Basilio's chamber and let him choose from Basilio's wardrobe.'

'Senora, your goodness—'

'Not a word, senor Americano,' answered Anita laughing. 'You must do as I bid you. Go with Jose who will see to your comfort. After you have reposed awhile and made your toilet I will visit you. Jose is a good *medico*, and will do something to heal your lacerated feet. Pobsecito! I need not assure you, senor, how much my heart

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

sympathises in your distresses. But Heaven has preserved your life, and for this we are all thankful!" If the young stranger was charmed by her beauty as she slept, he was enchanted by the grace and unaffected simplicity of her manners and the noble traits of character her conversation exhibited. The impression her loveliness of human face and person had first made upon his mind was now deepened by the superior loveliness of her mind and heart. Donna Anita could not fail to read his admiration in his expressive blue eyes, which seemed to to her — as deep and full of light, As the star-lit skies Of a summer's night.'

He left her guided by Jose who led him to the magnificent *camera* occupied by Basilio when at the tower.

'Senor is an officer of La armada Americana?' asked Jose as he ushered him into the chamber.

'Yes,' Senor, answered the young man in pure Spanish.

'You were in the schooner that was in the offing just before sun-down yesterday?'

'Yes. Did you discover us?'

Si, Senor! You were about three leagues or ten miles off! I know she was a schooner of war; and when the tornado came on I feared for her!'

'I have little hopes that she has escaped. She is, however, a good sea-boat and as dry as a teal!'

She may have taken the tornado near its edge and got out of it. But is hardly possible! What schooner was it, Escelentissimo?'

'The Porpoise, U. S. schooner of six guns. We were cruising after pirates. I was her commander. We left Matanzas three weeks ago, and during that time I have taken and burnt one piratical craft and driven two on shore. We were in chase of a heavy lugger sloop carrying a forty eight pounder amidships, and thirty men, when the tornado came upon us. The lugger aided by her sweeps run for the land and I have no doubt got shelter in some inlet before the storm burst! Whose Quinta is this in which I am so hospitably entertained, Senor?'

'It is that of El Senor Don Basilio Marial, and of his sister La Senorita Dona Anita. They are the orphan children of Don Lazaro, the Patriot conspirator who was executed at Havanna some years since! and a nobler breast was never pierced by a bullet! He was my master and friend, Senor!'

'And where is Don Basilio?'

'Like his father he is a patriot. His ambition is to see Cuba free from the yoke of Spain and governed by her own children, and by a free constitution. To this end he devotes his life, influence, energies and wealth. I speak openly to you, Senor Escelentissimo, because I know you too are a friend of liberty. I wish Don Basilio were at home now to receive you. He would be happy to have as his guest un Americano caballero. He loves the Americans, Senor. I love the Americans! Dona Anita loves the Americans!'

At the name of Dona Anita the young American's pale cheek glowed, and his eyes sparkled.

'And Donna Anita! has she lived always here?'

'She has never been away, save once to Havanna, when a child.'

'She—she—that is—is Don Basilio, her brother married?'

'No, senor. He is now gone to Havanna to bring here a bride. We expect him in a week, and trust we shall have your excellency's company until he arrives. Don Basilio would feel glad to grasp the hand of an American. '

'And Donna Anita, his lovely sister,—has she—that is—does she contemplate marriage?'

'No, senor! the Donna Anita loves no one but her brother. For that matter, secluded here all her life she has seen no one to love worthy her rank. Yet she has a noble great heart, excellentissimo, and would pour a wealth of its rich treasures into any man's bosom whom she could love!'

The young man's countenance beamed with delight. The words of old Jose filled him with a joy he could not conceal. This conversation took place while Jose was carefully binding up his wounded feet, after having bathed them, and robed him in one of Don Basilio's dressing-gowns. He was refreshed by suitable food prepared and sent into him by Donna Anita, and by Jose's direction, he laid down to repose for the night.

Jose returned to Donna Anita who had left him in the azotea, and was seated in the *sala*, her thoughts running upon the handsome young American officer, whom fortune had thrown upon her hospitality. She recalled his looks, his smile, the tone of his voice, the devoted respect and deep admiration of his manner towards her. As she suffered her thoughts to dwell upon him, his image deepened its impression upon her heart, and tender feelings began to arise in her bosom, such as she never before experienced. They were not such as she had all her life entertained for her brother, but dissimilar, and yet originating like these, in the very depths of her being. Those with which she regarded Basilio were deep, quiet, peaceful, like the tranquil flow of a summer's stream. Those

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

which the young stranger awakened were like the same stream agitated by rapids and wildly tossed by the winds. Their novelty surprised and yet pleased her, communicating to her soul a secret delight amid all the commotion that they occasioned. Love, new, fresh, pure, had taken possession of her virgin bosom, and to its hallowed influence she yielded up her senses as in a pleasant dream when one is half-waking.

It was in the gentle mood of heretofore unknown bliss that Jose found her, after quitting the young stranger.

‘How did you leave our guest, Jose?’ she asked, deeply blushing as if she feared he had read her thoughts.

‘He sleeps, Senora! He is a pleasant gentlemen— un caballero! I have dressed his wounds; they will be healed in three days. He partook of the wine and orange orgeat, and other refreshments you sent him and bade me thank you!’

‘Did he say nothing more, Jose?’

‘Oh yes, Senora! He talked a great deal and asked me a great many questions about you!’

Then Jose began in detail, with certain embellishments of his own, what had transpired and all that had been said by the young Americano. Dona Anita listened well-pleased; and the joy of her heart was deepened at the consciousness of having awakened an interest in the breast of one in whom she felt her happiness was being deeply involved.

The next morning the guest who had given his name to Jose as Walter Nevil, having signified to Jose that he was so far recovered from his fatigue as to be able to walk in the *patio*, on this being duly reported to Dona Anita she invited him to breakfast with her. Their meeting was not without embarrassment; for in both their breasts love had taken deep root. Walter scarce raised his eyes to hers, as he saluted her, and she timidly dropped her own as she replied. He took a seat opposite to her, and for a few moments both remained silent. He was too fearful of betraying too much if he spoke, and she trembling lest if she looked up or opened her lips the first word or look would betray her passion. Old Jose who stood by gazed from one to the other, gently shrugged his shoulders, and a significant expression of intelligence passed across his features. The old man saw at a glance how matters stood. The discovery gave him no little satisfaction which he betrayed by a bright sparkle in the eye and a smile that played about his mouth. Oppressed by the silence Walter raised his eyes to address his lovely hostess. It so chanced that she raised hers at the same instant! Their glances fully encountered—an interchange of expression passed—an involuntary knowledge of each other's passion, was conveyed like electricity from eye to eye thrilling the deepest toned chords of both their hearts! The glow of pleasure which deepened the cheek and brow of the young man was reflected in lovelier and softer tints from her own, and that moment their happiness was too great for utterance. Dona Anita rose as if to fly for joy and shame, but the happy youth arresting her hand caught it to his lips and reseated her, and yielding to his gentle entreaty resumed the seat she had left. Jose had discreetly left the *sala*, and the young lover did not fail to take advantage of the favored moment to plead in tones of passion the depth and purity of his first love!

Days passed, and the young lovers were happy in each other's presence. The Vermilion tower had become a paradise. Don Waltero, as old Jose had denominated him, had related all his history, and Donna Anita in return had told him the story of her family.— His sympathies as an American, was with the conspirator and his family, and he panted in his enthusiasm, to behold and clasp hands with Don Basilio, whom he began to esteem for his patriotism as well as love for his near relationship to her whom each day he more and more idolized. In her society he forgot his fatigues, his ship wreck, the fate of his companions and vessel, and even the future, with its calls to duty. Each day he was improving in his health and strength, and at the time when Donna Anita is introduced watching from the tower for the return of her brother—the vessel of Isidoro hove in sight bearing the news of his imprisonment, he had so far recovered as to ride out with her in short excursions along the retired shores of the Bay. At times the thought of rejoining his frigate then at Havana, would pass over his mind, but he would banish it, and gazing in the face of Anita banish all else but her image and his happiness in her presence from his mind.

But as he grew strong and well, and his duty would call more loudly than was welcome to the ear of his conscience, he would plead to himself the necessity of waiting the return of Basilio, who would furnish him in his vessel with a passage to the Havana.

‘It is true,’ he said, as he sat in his room on the morning on which Jose and Donna Anita discovered the sail, ‘it is true I am now quite recovered, and my honor calls me at once to report myself alive and ready for duty again. But courtesy renders it expedient I should await Don Basilio's arrival, who is daily looked for. My happiness, dear

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

Anita has placed in his hands! I must obtain his consent before I can claim the lovely girl as my bride.— I will wait. I think I shall perform my part by writing to the ship and informing the Captain of my safety, say that I shall return as soon as I can take passage in a vessel I am expecting into the Bay! This I will do; and when Don Basilio's vessel comes I will ask permission to sail in her. I will write at once!"

With this resolution he sat down and wrote a letter to the captain of the Razee, then supposed to be in Havana, giving him a flrief account of his cruise and of his being washed overboard and of his safety. Having completed it, he took horse, and without communicating with Donna Anita, who with Jose were then engaged in watching the sail they had discovered, he took his way through the sccret foot-path in the forest to the nighest post, two leagues distant in the interior. Here he deposited his letter, and then returned to the Tower, which he reached just as Donna Anita appeared from the beach where Isidoro had landed and communicated to her the news of Don Basilio's imprisonment.

CHAPTER IX.

The love-test.—The embarkation—The arrival of the polacca in Havana—The plan of Nevil—The attempt and result—The separation—Don Bazilio and Anita meeting.

The young officer had discovered Donna Anita's approach to the casa from the shore of the Bay some moments before he reached the arch of the gateway. Her eager step, her rapid walk, her pale and excited face struck him at once with alarm and curiosity. Throwing himself from his horse he advanced to meet her with a countenance of deep and tender anxiety.

`What sad intelligence have you received, senora? what sorrowful event has transpired since my absence this morning to produce such an aspect of grief?'

`My brother, senor de Nevil!' she faltered out.

`What of him—of Don Bazilio? I fear me it is sad from your sadness. Speak Anita, your griefs are mine,' he said taking her hand.

`Come in with me, Walter, and you shall hear!' she said with mingled grief and dignity.

He followed her into the sala and seated himself by her upon a divan. She wept for some moments and then said,

`It is sad sad news, senor! My brother lies at this moment a prisoner in the Moro Castle.'

`Is this true?' he exclaimed starting to his feet in his surprise. `Don Bazilio in prison?'

`It is too true, senor! A vessel has just arrived in the Bay in which came his lieutenant Isodoro and most of his men confirming the fact.'

Donna Anita then composing herself informed him of the circumstances just as Isidoro had communicated them to her. The young American listened with surprise and sorrow. His deep sympathy for Donna Anita was written in his countenance. When she had ended he said warmly,

`Don Bazilio must be rescued, senora. For your sake he must not meet the doom to which his captor has destined him. But how to aid him I cannot advise you. I am powerless. You have only my wishes.'

`You are far from powerless, senor de Nevil! You are brave—you are generous—you are a patriot.'

She suddenly ceased and looked down with a deepening color gathering in her cheeks.

`How can I serve you, Anita?'

`You profess to love me, Walter—'

`Profess! Oh, recall that word. I love you Anita, with all my soul and being.'

`Will you prove that love to me?' she said, her dark eyes lighting up with glorious beauty and her whole manner singularly earnest.

`With my life!' he answered firmly.

`Then listen to me, Walter? You have sought my hand. I have referred you to my brother. He lies in prison. I cannot think of love or wedlock while Bazilio is in chains. Rescue my brother—restore him to me free, and my hand, as my heart already is, shall be yours.'

The young American officer paused a moment as if to reflect. She regarded him an instant earnestly and then cried,

`Oh, can you hesitate, Walter? Can you pause to decide where the sufferer is my brother? Can you love Anita and be indifferent to Bazilio's fate?'

`I am not indifferent, Anita. My heart bleeds for you and my eyes weep with yours. I would risk my life to restore your brother to you. To make you happy again would fill me with joy. I paused not to decide whether I should attempt to free Bazilio or not—but *how* I could do it.'

`Foagive me, Walter. Pardon a sister's impatience. I do not doubt your love. I know you will not let my brother lie in chains while you in ease and quiet remain in safety here sharing half that love which he should share with thee. You need not deliberate upon how you shall aid him. To the brave all things are possible. If I were there instead of Bazilio, ' she said smiling as she lifted her tear-glistening eyes to his face, `would you not rescue' sh I

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

know you would, noble Walter. '

'I would save you or perish in the attempt. '

'Then regard my brother as my other-self and save him!' she cried with eloquent fervor.

'Anita,' he said taking her hand, your wish is my law. I will seek to rescue'Bazilio from imprisonment. If I succeed I shall make him happy! If I succeed I shall render you happy! If I succeed I shall be happier than both of you if the possession of this fair hand is the reward of my devotion to you. To win you, dear Anita, I would not count my life of any weight in comparison with the prize before me. I go to obey you.'

'Return and bring my brother, and from his arms I will turn and throw myself into yours, never to leave them.'

'If I return it will be with Don'Bazilio. If I do not return it will be because I have loved you too well to value life in comparison with your wishes and happiness.'

'Your words alarm me! I never thought of danger to you, dear Walter, so lost were my thoughts in my brother's! You must not perish. I must not lose you both! I must not loose either of you. To me you have become as dear—nay, dearer, if possible, than my brother! yet he must not perish!'

'I will save him, Anita. I will proceed to Havana, and there are every effort to obtain his release or aid his escape. Perhaps, as an American, I can gain access to his cell. I will try to do so, and furnish him with instruments to free himself from his irons. As I think upon it, hope inspires me! I will at once leave!'

'I will accompany you. I cannot remain here in suspense to learn the issue. I will go too, Walter. The vessel in which Isidoro came is now ready to sail. The wind, though light, is fair. Let us set sail at once. The vessel shall be placed under your command. We can run in safety into Havana, as the capture of the polacca is not known there, Isidoro still holding the crew prisoners on board. We will go on shore in disguise. I will work with you as a sister by a brother's side, till he be rescued. I have money. I am bold and resolute. I can aid you with my advice and encourage you in disappointment!'

'Noble woman! how can I render myself worthy of you!'

'By regarding Basilio your brother as well as mine, and restoring him to my embrace!'

'The attempt, full of difficulty and danger, as it appears, shall be attempted. Let us at once embark, Anita! Your presence will bless my efforts!'

'Isidoro says that my brother is to be brought from the castle to the city for trial.— It is then I hope to rescue'him. They transport their prisoners in barges under a guard of soldiers. When we reach Havana, Isidoro will learn when my brother will be conveyed across the water, and at that time the attempt to rescue'him must be made! If it fail, then I shall despair!'

'It will be successful,' answered the young sailor, with animation. 'I give myself to this enterprise, heart and soul. I shall think only of you, dearest Anita, and of Don Basilio till he is free, and smiles again reanimate your face. Till I achieve this happy result I shall forget that I have ship or country, to whom I owe duty and allegiance!'

It was late in the afternoon of the fourth day after this interview just described, when the polacca-schooner appeared two or three leagues from Havana, standing for the harbor. The stately battlements of the Moro, the West Indian Gibraltar, towered dark and menacing above the port with its thousand marts, and the city with its domes and towers. The sight of this fortress brought tears into Anita's eyes. Numerous craft were coming in and going out of port; several vessels of war were at anchor or under sail; and as the polacca proceeded just inside the Moro, Nevil recognized the well known warlike outline of his own vessel—the Razee of 60 guns,— which he had left five weeks before to cruize in the Porpoise; and as he advanced, to his surprise and joy, he saw the schooner from which he had been swept, and which he supposed lost in the tornado, snugly at anchor under the lee of the frigate.

He drew Basilio's scarlet cap, that with the rest of the young conspirator's wardrobe, he wore, lower over his brow, and sending all his men below but enough to work the schooner, (for he had taken command of her, making Isidoro his lieutenant,) he boldly ran into the harbor just as the sunset gun had fired from the castle and the ships of war; at which signal the flags waving above the fortress and the quarter deck descended like huge birds of gay plumage stooping to the ground.

The shades of twilight were gathering over the harbor and town as the schooner came silently to anchor *directly under the stern of the three-masted goleta*, which Isidoro, who was at the helm, had with joy discovered in port, and near which he now purposely steered his little vessel; perhaps with some daring purpose in his mind! Anita had also recognized the goleta of Don Basilio, amid the thickly surrounding craft, and with an exclamation

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

of pleasure pointed it out to Nevil. He gazed upon it with an expression of singular interest; and Donna Anita thought she could read the thoughts which were passing through his mind!

'Oh that Basilio was free!' she cried with animation. 'Once more would he tread his own vessel's deck, rescue her, and spread her sails upon the open sea, in spite of castle and guard-ship!'

'I was just thinking if he was at liberty, how soon he would again be her master. It would not be impossible for a bold man with thirty such men as he commands, to cut her out! It shall be done! Basilio shall be free! I will go on shore to-night, and by some means find out what the Government intend to do, where he is imprisoned, and obtain all the information that will be of service in our purpose to rescue him. I know some Spaniards connected with the Government, and as I fortunately speak the language with finency, and am an American, I can do perhaps better than Isidoro, in whose faithful charge I will leave you. Early in the morning I will come on board. I shall preserve my present disguise of face and costume, lest I fall in with any officers of the Razee; as I am not yet ready to rejoin her till Basilio is at liberty. To him only, for your sake, dear Anita, do I give my thoughts!'

The following morning Nevil returned to the polacca, which was too small and ordinary a craft, of which great numbers almost precisely like it lay in port, to attract any special notice. He said that with a good deal of difficulty, he had ascertained that Don Basilio was still confined in the Moro; that his trial was to take place that day, when he would be conveyed in an armed barge to the quay, and thence escorted before the tribunal.

'He will be guarded by twenty soldiers in the boat, and through the streets. It will be impossible to effect his liberation by attacking such a body. But do not despair, Senora! I have meditated a plan. It is as follows. The escort will leave the stairs at the Moro precisely at eleven o'clock to-day. At this hour there is always a seaward breeze blowing at this time of the moon. You recollect we had it off land yesterday, and run seven and eight knots under it. It is now calm, as it is only six o'clock, but it will rise by eight. You may listen, Isidore, for I would have your advice as to the feasibility of my plan. It is a bold one, but I doubt not will be successful; for you command brave and faithful men; and the sight of Don Basilio will animate you all to the utmost! Hear my plan! As the wind freshens, which will be about ten o'clock, we will lift our anchor, and, raising our foresail, run to windward of the three-masted goleta, which I learn has only a guard of six soldiers on board, to keep her until the Governor hauls her into the dock, to refit and arm her. When we get to windward, we must drop anchor in a position that will enable us at any moment to slip the cable and drift aboard of her as if by accident. Once alongside, we can take possession of her with the force of thirty eight men you command. But we must wait our time to slip the cable, timing it so that we may be able, after getting her into our possession, to make sail and fall in with the guard-boat, which at eleven will be conveying Don Basilio across the Bay. It is my purpose to steer for the guard-boat so as to strike her amid-ships and sink her. Three of you be ready with ropes to aid Don Basilio, who will not be ironed, and to whom Isidoro you must shew yourself upon the bows before we come in contact that he may know we are friends, and that we expect him to take advantage of the confusion to get on board! We must then get out of the harbour the best way we can; but if the goleta sails as she looks there will be but few shots strike her. But we must run the risk. I only fear in this event for your safety, Anita!'

'Think not of me, if Basilio be saved!' she said with strong emotion.

Nevil's plan was further discovered and approved of. At nine o'clock the wind was blowing from the south and west directly out of the harbor. At two o'clock the polacca raised her anchor and hoisting her fore sail changed her ground and came again to anchor, to windward of the goleta. With great caution Nevil now began to reconnoitre the latter; and was satisfied that his information respecting the number of men on board had been correct. He could discover only some five or six Spanish soldiers lounging about upon her decks smoking and one stationed at the gangway as a sentry. He was satisfied that he could carry her without difficulty. He was not insensible to the danger that would attend its successful issue in the midst of a fortified harbour. But love for Donna Anita rendered him blind to consequences. Brave, daring, and chivalrous, he only regarded in his future her hand, as the reward of all he should risk on Basilio's freedom and his own happiness were bound together inseparably by her own fiat.

Towards eleven o'clock he began to watch the stairs at the base of the Moro castle for any signs of the escort and its prisoner. The boat in which they were to cross he knew would pass not very far to leeward of the position held by the Goleta. At length, with a glass he saw the boat full of soldiers leave the castle landing. It was the signal for Isidoro to slip the cable. This was done silently and the polacca began to drift rapidly toward the three masted schooner. The soldiers on board shouted to warn them that they would run aboard of the Goleta, while

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

Nevil called loudly for them to catch a rope he held coiled in his hand, saying that they had got adrift and wanted to fetch up by the goleta. The soldiers seized their muskets and ordered them to keep off, saying they were commanded to fire on any strange craft that came near! The vessels came in contact, the bowsprit of the polacca with the stern davits of the goleta. Before Nevil and his men could secure them together, the soldiers who yet forebore to fire believing the approach accidental, cut away the stays and fall which momentarily held the polacco when she separated from her and drifted to leeward!

'We are defeated,' cried Nevil, with intense disappointment in his looks and manner, 'by not taking into our reckoning the current that set us toward astern! But for that we should have drifted broadside on and carried her! But we must do our best in the polacca. The barge is under full weigh and will soon be near us. They will not suspect us as they would have done the goleta. We must escape afterwards in this vessel, as we can!'

'Once on board the goleta we could have flown out of the harbor,' said Isidoro.

'Set the fore-sail, main-sail and jib!' cried Nevil, 'And order all the men on deck with pistols and cutlasses! There we are under swift way. Every thing draws, and she runs six knots through the water!'

'This is force enough to run the barge under, Senor, said Isidoro as he went forward to take his place on the bows where Don Basilio could see him. Nevil took the helm. Before him not a great ways off was anchored the Razee to which he belonged, and from which he was absenting, and concealing himself under his disguise. The track of the barge from the castle to the Quay lay almost within her huge shadow. But Nevil turned away his eyes from his ship and thought only of love and Don Basilio! By his side stood the inspirer of his bold attempt, his lovely temptress from his duty. He had eyes but for her, and for the approaching barge!

The boat pulled by twelve oars came nearer and nearer! The polacca was moving swiftly before the wind so as to intercept her. Nevil made his calculations closely and steered the vessel with coolness and precision. As the barge advanced Donna Anita uttered an exclamation of mingled joy and fear; for she discovered her brother seated in the stern sheets, with an officer on each side of him. He was not chained. He was pale but his countenance was firm and composed. He looked like a brave man resigned to his destiny!

The space between the polacca's bows and the barge lessened rapidly. She was not ten fathoms off pulling directly across her course! Nevil managed his helm so that he might meet her full upon the beam. The proximity of the polacca now alarmed those on board the boat, and the officer in command rising up and waving his sword called out to Nevil to put his helm hard up or he would be into them!

Nevil made no reply, save by giving an order to the men not to let Basilio perish! Isidoro caught his eye and waved his hand. The conspirator sprung to his feet with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure! The soldiers stood up to present their muskets, not to fire but to ward off the bows. The oarsmen did the same, while cries, shouts, oaths and commands filled the barge with confusion. The next moment the bows of the polacca struck the huge boat full amidships crashing and surging over her, while the air was filled with shrieks and cries and the roar of muskets discharged by the soldiers as they were hurled into the foaming vortex. Don Basilio on seeing Isidoro well knew that this was a plan to rescue him; and on the instant the bows struck he leaped over the stern of the barge to escape being involved in the watery death to which the soldiers in their heavy uniforms were destined. The boat divided in two and the schooner scarcely checked by the shock went surging over the ruin she had made, while the thirty men were struggling in the flood. The pieces of the boat in an instant after it was struck went down leaving every man to take care of himself. Basilio after striking out from the mass, swam towards the polacca's quarter, where ropes were thrown and where he beheld Dona Anita calling upon his name. The officer in charge of him who was in the water near him, hearing them and seeing him swimming, and fearful of the consequences if he escaped, threw himself upon him with a strong grasp. Don Basilio caught him by the throat and both sank together! The polacca was in the meanwhile moving apidly on leaving him; and Anita wringing her hands over the stern gazed on the spot far astern where he had disappeared. But he rose to the surface without the officer!

'Heed me not! I can swim ashore!' he cried. I shall be safe! Escape out of the harbor with the schooner, Isidoro!

At least a dozen of his men sprung into the water when they saw the Spanish officer grasp him, some with ropes, which they were compelled to let go, and others with knives. They reached him swimming and surrounded him; but the polacca was full fifty fathoms to leeward.

'My brave men,' said Basilio, 'you have taken to the water to save me and I thank you! We cannot reach the

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

schooner! Here comes a boat to pick us up! Let us get in and taking possession of it pull to the shore on the side of the Reglars. We can then escape to the country or conceal ourselves 'till we can mature a plan to recapture the golets. I am now as free as the soldiers who are struggling there and shouting for help!

The boat came up containing three fishermen. Basilio and his men filled it and pulled swiftly towards the land on the country side half a league distant!

The officers and soldiers were picked up afterwards by boats from American vessels; but as they could not speak English they were not able to explain that their prisoner was escaping and that they wanted them to go in pursuit. Thus Bazilio and his men, who were nine in number, had the start and were rapidly making for the shore.

The polacca in the meanwhile kept on her way. Nevil had at first shortened sail but seeing Basilio and his men get into the boat and take possession of it, he resolved to try and escape with the polacca out of the harbor; for he well knew he had by his act identified himself with the prisoner and his party. The whole occurrence had been witnessed from the deck of the razee; and to every one who beheld the polacca's progress in coming towards the barge, it was apparent that it was her intention to run her under. The event justified their expectations; and when they saw her decks instantly crowded with men and heard the cries to the prisoner and those of the Spanish officers of "El presenero! El presenero!" they guessed that the guard boat contained a pirate and that the polacca was his vessel making a bold push to rescue him from the soldiers. When the captain of the razee saw the soldiers struggling in the water, he ordered his boats along side from the boom, and throwing an officer and men into them gave orders to one pick up the soldiers and to the other to board the polacca and take possession of her.

Nevil saw the boat approaching to board him, and not fully justifying himself as an American officer in the part he had played in this daring affair, he resolved not to be known in it. He therefore gave orders to repel the boat while he pressed every inch of canvass to escape. He had passed the razee and was full two cable's length to leeward when the boat came up. He was hailed and ordered to heave-to, but made no reply. The boat came along side and an officer and two men sprung upon the polacca's deck. The two seamen were instantly driven back, but the officer after defending himself with great bravery, was run through the body by Isidoro and fell dead upon the deck.

Nevil was appalled! He had not anticipated such a fearful catastrophe. He uttered a cry of anguish and leaving the helm caught Anita's hand and pointing to the body of the officer said,

'For thee, Anita, I have slain my fellow-officer! Yonder majestic ship is mine! For your love I have plunged myself into infamy and despair! But I reproach you not! For you I would die at any moment! But honor—the loss of honor! How can I explain this dreadful occurrence to my commander? how acquit myself to my country.'

'Walter!—de Nevil!' cried Anita, 'henceforth let the land of my birth be your home? Forget other lands and let us be happy together! Let us escape to the Tower, where doubtless we shall be soon met by Basilia, who will now escape to the country! Do not despond! If you love me smile again and charge me not with your friend's death!'

'I do not, Anita! But I regret it—I must regret it! See the boat is reinforced and we are again to be attacked! I will surrender! I will not again resist my own countrymen!'

As he spoke, he was about to bring the polacca to the wind, when Isidoro sprung forward:

'With your own person you may do as you please, senor, but not with us! We must not be taken. If you would leave us take the boat and return to your countrymen! It is my duty to escape from the harbor if possible. I take the command!'

He put the polacca before the wind but finding the battery would open upon him if he tried to ran past, he hauled the tacks close aft and run for the green shores on the opposite side of the Bay. The boats continued in pursuit. The polacca grounded the men escaped to the shore by aid of the sunken rocks and by swimming. Nevil remained on board resolved to surrender to the boats. Anita determined not to leave him.

The boats boarded her and took possession of her. The surprise of the officers on discovering in the Captain of the polacca Walter Nevil, needs no description. He surrendered himself and was taken on board the razee. Dona Anita accompanied him. Nevil made known his history in confidence to his captain, who in reply told him he sympathized with him, but it was his duty to take him home in irons to be tried for the death of the officer; adding,

'The Spanish authorities, if they knew I had you in my possession, would demand you to be given up. You would be executed as a pirate. It is better you should be tried by the laws of your country!'

Dona Anita implored to be permitted to share her lover's imprisonment. The captain sent her on shore to the

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

house of a friend. Her parting with Nevil was touching and characterised with the most eloquent despair. Yet Anita was not the one to despair. She was courageous and love made her bold in planning and persevering in action. On reaching the shore, instead of going to the house to which she was ordered to be escorted by the midshipman in charge of her, secretly left him and sought the abode of one whom she knew to be Basilio's friend and a friend of her father. The address she had learned from Basilio. This friend, an old Spaniard, received her with open arms and entered fully into her wishes. He told her that if Basilio had escaped he would be there that night.

That night she embraced her brother in the old Spaniard's mansion!

CHAPTER X.

The bold adventure of Don Basilio—The three-masted-schooner— The escape from the harbor— The scenes return to Boston Bay.

It was an hour after dark the night following the escape of Bazilio and the arrest of Nevil when a band of eleven persons might have been seen standing close to the water, near a ruined wall not far from the public quay. They consisted of Bazilio, Anita (in the disguise of a Spanish youth) and nine men, who had swam with the former to the shore. They were well-armed, and had just arrived at that spot by different ways. They seemed to be waiting for some one. At length a boat approached creeping along the shore. It was filled with men.

`El torre!' said a low voice in the boat.

`Libertad!' answered Bazilio.

The boat approached and Isidoro sprang ashore.

`I was fearful you had miscarried in your efforts to get the boat, Isidoro.'

`Every thing favored me, Don Basilio. I have twenty-eight men with me. Some have fallen and others been taken.'

`I have nine here. There is room for all of us. Now aboard before the patrol appears and let us pull silently from the shore. This cloudy sky favors us.'

The long pirogue filled with men and almost level with the surface of the dark water shot swiftly out from the shadow of the wall and with Isidoro at the helm and Don Bazilio at the bow. They steered directly for the Three-masted-schooner, which lay where she had done before; though it was, as Basilio knew, the intention of the Governor to haul her next day into the dock as well for safety as for refitting.

They came in sight of her and then with but two oars moving, silently approached her quarter. They were alongside before they were discovered and in an instant Basilio stood upon the deck with the sentinel disarmed and beneath his feet. The rest of the guard were secured, gagged and bound and all were thrown into the pirogue, and set adrift. The cable was slipped, the sails set and in five minutes after being boarded the goleta was in motion out of the harbor. Two of her sails were only set that she might be supposed to be only a polacca schooner, and swiftly and unchallenged she passed guard-ship, battery and Moro castle, and once more, tree like her master, she spread all her canvass to the ocean breeze.

Basilio now embraced Anita and then Isidoro and congratulated his brave companions, whom he thanked with grateful warmth for all they had done for him.

At the house of the old Spaniard he had heard from Anita's lips the history of Walter Nevil's visit—of her love, of his own, and of his daring efforts to effect his rescue. He was also informed of his present condition as a prisoner in chains about to be taken to his native land to be tried for the death of the officer who was killed in boarding the polacca.

Don Basilio's grateful and generous nature was deeply moved by what he heard of the young American and he pledged himself to his sister that if he could recover his goleta he would save him from an ignominious death. All his energies were then directed to this end. The success of his plans have been witnessed. The goleta was once more his.

He now detailed his project in full to Isidoro. Anita being already acquainted with it.

`Isidoro, my brave friend,' he said `to this young stranger, not forgetting your own part also, I owe my present liberty and the possession of this vessel again with you by my side and surrounded by my brave companions. In the attempt to restore me to liberty this noble youth has lost his own. He lies in chains on board the razee. He is charged with piracy and murder. He will be taken to his own land and there tried for his life. He may perish ignominiously. He must be saved. I owe him my life. Fortune has smiled on us to-night. Let Nevil share with us our happiness, which so long as he is in chains can never be complete.

`I swear, senor, to devote myself with you to effect his liberation.'

`Thanks, good Isidoro!' exclaimed Anita fervently.

`We all swear to obey you, noble captain,' cried his crew. `We have seen Don Waltero and know he is a brave

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

man and a true sea-man. He must be rescued, for we love him who risks his life for Don Basilio.

`Hear then my purpose!' said Basilio. `By means of a spy I have learned that the razee sails for Boston in New England in the ebb to-night. Diego, a man who lives in Havana when ashore, and to whom I have shown favors and who also owes his life to this very American officer who rescued him three years ago from an assassin in the streets of the city, this Diego has by my order, got himself shipped on board the razee as a steward, speaking English fluently. He has entered fully into my plans and will prepare the way for senor de Nevil's escape by the time the razee reaches her port. To this port is my own destination. I shall lay off here till the frigate comes out and then keep ahead of her if possible. She is a fast sailer but we can out sail her. As she leaves to-night she will not have heard of the capture of the goleta and its appearance in Boston Bay will not draw suspicion upon us. Once there and with Diego's good aid the escape of this brave young American may be effected. At all risks, it becomes us to make the attempt.'

The goleta lay off about a league from the Moro, until after midnight ebb, when Basilio beheld a large ship standing out. With his glass, as she came nigher, he made her out to be a frigate of the largest class and no doubt the razee that he was expecting. To make sure, he lay by until she came within half a mile, when he could no longer be deceived. It was the sixty gun frigate. Having satisfied himself of the fact, he gave orders to make all sail and stand Northward. At sunrise the frigate was nearly hull down astern. Convinced of his superior sailing, Basilio kept his own distance from her, sometimes ahead, sometimes hovering on the horizon to windward, and the next day as far off to leeward. In this way he watched her, scarcely losing sight of her until the day before they came in sight of Cape Cod lights, when the goleta shot freely ahead and the next day entered Boston Bay before her. The passage of the two vessels up the harbor, the anchorage of the *razee* and the subsequent mysterious movements of the goleta in her neighborhood have already been noticed. The reader has also visited Nevil in his confinement and witnessed an interview between him and Diego, which had been interrupted by the entrance of the sentry, just as the faithful Spaniard was about to inform of the presence of the goleta in the harbor.

After the sentry had returned, Diego reentered the port and proceeded to explain to Nevil the reason of his visit.

`You must know senor, that you have friends stronger than I am who are at hand to serve you. For this I bade you hope. You see after you were taken, and Don Basilio escaped to the shore!'

`Did he escape?' asked Nevil earnestly.

`Yes safely. Hear me senor and you shall learn all. He got to land and nine good men men with him, besides those that leaped from the polacca after she struck when you run her upon the rocks. He took to the *bosque* and there hid 'till night; and favored by the darkness made his way to the city to the house of a friend, where he met Dona Anita?'

`Dona Anita! What news of her? How heard you this! Speak! What know you of this lady?'

`That she is safe, senor.'

`Safe! I have not dared to think of her lest I should go mad! For her sake I have done all this and yet she is lost to me forever! If I could behold her once more, Diego, I would not care for these chains! Her presence would make a dungeon a palace! Tell me more! You are a messenger from Heaven! What more of Dona Anita. Till this moment I have been left in darkness and doubt as to her fate and that of Don Basilio her brother!'

`Soon, senor, all will be made clear. While I am talking with you let me be engaged in filing this band of iron round your ancle. After I leave you you can complete it!'

`What means this Diego?'

`That friends are near and ready to aid your escape!'

`Shall I escape, and thus give an air of truth to the charge of piracy? Do I fear to meet my destiny? No, Diego, I will not escape. I will encounter my fate like a man it I must die I will die like one! no; I am no criminal that I should escape!'

`Senor, you have not heard me out. I will file here while I speak It will do no harm!' and Diego began to work away with his file at the iron shackle upon his leg. `I told you Don Basilio had met Dona Anita. She told him of all you had done and had suffered, and a good deal more about her attachment to you and yours to her, begging your pardon, Don Waltero! Well he swore like a brave man and true friend to try and get you free. But he must first have his goleta in his possession, for he could do nothing without her, not he! So he got together his men, met Isidoro and got his party together and the night after you were taken they got a boat and seized the three masted

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

schooner at her anchors?

‘Recovered the goleta!’

‘Si, senor! They set the soldiers adrift in a boat and made sail, and before a fair wind run out of the harbor! I knew what they intended and was in the fore shrouds of the frigate watching for her; and saw her pass with only her fore and mizzen set, looking like a polacca; but I know her in that disguise; and I saw her more than once at sea after that!’

‘Seen her at sea?’

‘Si, senor!’

‘But Dona Anita? Did Basilio leave his sister in the Havana with his friends,’ demanded Nevil eagerly.

‘No, senor, he took her on board with him! This iron is as hard as if it had been steeled to make razors of!’

‘And where did they go from Havana?’

‘They steered North and kept us company; for you know we sailed just after midnight the same night!’

‘Tell me, Diego! Is my sudden suspicion right? Has the goleta followed the frigate from Havana?’ he cried taking him by the arm and earnestly grasping it as he spoke.

‘You have guessed it, senor. She has hovered round us like a hawk the whole passage, now ahead now abeam, but always just under the horizon so that no body could make her out or suspect her to be always the same vessel. But I knew her as far as I could see her.

‘And when did you see her last?’

‘This afternoon, when coming into the harbor she was only a mile ahead of us!’

‘Can this be possible?’

‘It is, senor!’

‘And Donna Anita on board?’

‘She is, Don Waltero.’

‘And they have come thus far to endeavor to effect my escape!’

‘They have, senor. And it would be ungrateful for you to disappoint them. I shipped on board her, by Don Basilio's orders, to serve you. I have nearly filed off the ring.’

‘And where is the goleta now?’ demanded Nevil, agitated with joy and hope, and hardly able to realise that he had heard truly; that it was not a dream.

‘She is not half a cable's length from the Razee, lying about two and a half points off under her quarter, waiting for my signal!’

‘Can this be real?’

‘As real as that you are free from your irons, senor,’ said Diego, as he softly removed the shackles from his limb, and noiselessly laid them down by the side of the gun carriage.

‘Diego, I am in your hands! Anita's presence is an argument for my attempting to regain my liberty that I am incapable of resisting. I will abide by your directions!’

‘Love always makes a man reasonable, senor,’ answered Diego, smiling. ‘I knew you would not object after you had learned who was near you!’

‘This is wonderful. The goleta's arrival here the same night and now is miraculous!’

‘She outsails the Razee; and having the same winds was able to measure her time and distance. She has, moreover, been a lucky vessel, senor.’

‘Noble Basilio! devoted Anita! What is your signal, Diego?’

‘It was agreed upon in Havana, that if the goleta reached here when the Razee did, that she should anchor near her, and that I should free you from your irons, whether by day or night. If in the day that you should disguise your head in a cap, and jump from the port, when I was to sing out—‘a man overboard,’ and jump over, as if to rescue’ you. That you should swim for a boat, in which would be Basilio and two of his men, who would take you in and pull for the goleta, which would be already under sail. Basilio trusted to his good fortune to get out of reach with you before your absence would be discovered.’

‘This would have been rash and dangerous. Yet it might have succeeded.’

‘I am positive it would. Don Basilio always succeeds, except there is treachery in the way, as at Havana, when he was taken prisoner. But we have nothing to do now with that. It is night now; and our plan for the night was for you to let yourself down from the port into the water, and swim for the goleta with the tide; to get the advantage

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

of which the goleta was to take up a particular position. If you were seen I was to cry out a man overboard, and throw over half a dozen tarpaulin hats, which I was to collect for the purpose, and at the same time take to the water myself. The hats would look like men in the water, and under cover of the confusion we could reach the schooner! This now my plan, senor! You are freed from your irons The tide will soon serve. Here is a rope to lower you without noise into the water! Look out of the port, and you will see the goleta not a pistol shot distance off! Hearts true and devoted are on board waiting for you!

`What was your signal?'

`When you were safe down in the water, I was to discharge one of the carronades with my cigar, as if by accident!

`This would be dangerous and needless, even if you could do it undiscovered. I will drop into the water and swim to the goleta.— You can follow me. The night is too dark to apprehend discovery!'

`This will be the safest, to be sure, senor. But I thought the discharge of the piece at night would create a confusion in the midst of which your escape would be sure!'

`There is no need, good Diego. Go down into the water. I will follow you!'

`Go first, senor. I must see you in safety out of the ship before I leave her.'

With a light heart and spirits buoyant with hope the young officer threw his weight upon the rope and lowered himself into the water. He was instantly followed by Diego. Together they struck out, swimming below the surface and only rising to take air, until they had got half way to the goleta, when they were discovered by Basilio, who had kept his eyes steadily fixed in the direction of the frigate. He instantly called to the young Spanish youth who was sleeping upon the mat on the deck, who was none other than Donna Anita herself.

`There two dark objects on the water!— They approach us!' said Basilio.

`It may be Diego with Don Waltero,' said Isidoro.

`But we have had no signal!' answered Basilio.

`It is painly two men swimming towards us,' said Anita, breathless. `I can hear them pant!'

`Yes! they are men!' cried Don Basilio, with intense emotion. `Let us throw them ropes. If they are enemies, we need not fear two!'

The two swimmers came nigher still, and Diego raising his arm from the water said, distinctly,

`Don Basilio, he is safe.'

`It is Diego,' exclaimed Basilio with joy.

`And Walter?'

gasped Anita.
`He is with him!'

The next moment they had caught the ropes thrown to them, and Nevil was just drawn on board Anita with a glad cry flung herself into his arms, dripping as he was.

`The sea gave you to me just, and the sea has now restored you to me, dear Walter!' she said with joy. `This is Basilio my brother?'

`Don Waltero, let me embrace you also! I owe you my life. Friend and brother with happiness indisscribable I clasp you in my arms and to my heart!'

Nevil returned his embrace, while Diego received scarcely a less ardent welcome than himself. Isidoro without waiting to welcome them had first thought of duty; and scarcely had they touched their feet to the deck before the line which secured the goleta to the cable of the Kennebec sloop was severed, and the Steel Belt moving on her way through the water, each moment with increasing speed. Soon the Razee was lost to sight hid by the intervening vessels, past which one after another the goleta glided running at the rate of five and a half knots on a bowline. The towers of the city grew dim in the distance, castle Independence with its white walls glistening in the moon beams was swiftly passed; island after island was left behind; the light houses in the bay were approached and thrown astern; and broad and blue before them spread the ocean.

The ensuing morning when Captain Eben Pinkham of the Polly Ann on weighing anchor discovered fifty fathoms of line fastened to his cable with a double turn and two half-hitches, he was not a little puzzled to guess how it came there. But in an hour or two afterwards he heard of the escape of the prisoner from the *razee* and that the three masted schooner had been seen hovering about her in the night, and was supposed to have carried him off on board of her, he was no longer at a loss to account for the line being fastened to his cable.

`It's jest as I know'd and suspicioned,' he said to his friend Captain Pettingell; `the darn'd chap wanted to take

Steel Belt; or, The Three Masted Goleta. A Tale of Boston Bay

the Polly Ann in tow as prize, and the rop bruk! wall, I got a good piece o' runnin rigging, and I hope it 'll make a halter yet for him and all his tarnal crew o' pirates! That ar' officer as boarded me this morning to see if I'd seen or heard any thing on his prisoner told me how he was supposed to have been taken off in that three-masted outlandish craft! He said her motions in the first watch had been mity queer and suspicious like, and she'd oughter had an eye kep' on her. But who'd look for mischief in Bosting harbor! Wall it's a fact the prisoner, who they say was a sort of a pirate and the three-master have both gone together. Somebody, they tell, helped him to a file and so he lowered himself down and swam off to her. I am quite sure it was 'Bunker Hill' as saved both on us last night, Capting Pettingell! I mean to keep her reglar charged, and when I get back to Agusty I mene to mount in the Polly Ann the old Hallowell gun we captured in the Hook war jist a purpose to navigate these seas in; for its getting dangerous I tell ye! Thar was a pirate schooner called the jumpin' feather—

'Dancing Feather you mean, Capting.'

'Wall dancing or jumpin' either, it makes little odds. I've hearn tell how she robbed a brig between this and York with a hundred sail right in sight! There's a brig o' war gettin under weigh and they are hailing her from the frigate! I reckon she is going in pursuit

'It looks very like it,' answered the Penobscot skipper. Both now watched the brig, which, after being boarded from the frigate squared her yards and made all sail before a fair wind down the harbor. She passed the castle about seven hours after the Steel Belt, and evidently was crowding on all sail in pursuit of her.

Shall we, in one brief sentence, here ends our story with the marriage of Nevil and Donna Anita, like a true story-writer, or shall we in the pages of another romance follow their flight over the sea and gradually unfold the events which subsequently occurred, intimately affecting the destinies and fortunes of our characters? THE END.