

to speak. He then went on: "If the three bottles of wine stolen out of the cellar are still in the house, they *shall* be found—here is a search warrant, and at the door is a policeman, ready to enforce its execution. There is no escape, and in confession is the best chance of mercy." Mary Wild looked at the cook. I shall never forget that woman's face at that moment. She seemed choking with feelings that she tried to hide, and uncertain what it would be the best for her to do; she went at last toward the door, and suddenly opening it, was rushing out of the room and up-stairs. "Stop!" cried my master, following her—"I must go," she said, "I am ill. This sudden shock—to think that I—that it should come to this—to be suspected."—And then she screamed, and tried to throw herself into a fit; but the fit would not come. Mr. Morgan said, "You had better be quiet, and submit quietly to what you can not escape from."—"I will," she screamed out; "I have nothing to fear—I am innocent; only let me go up-stairs; only let me have a few minutes to—" "Not an instant," said my master. He then opened the window, and called to the policeman, who had been waiting in the garden. The boxes of each of the servants were examined. In the cook's box were found two of the bottles, besides many things belonging to my mistress—cambric pocket-handkerchiefs, chamber-towels, silk-stockings, and many other articles, marked with the names of visitors who had been staying in the house. Folded up in some crumpled bits of paper, and put into the sleeve of an old gown, was a silver fork, that had been lost more than a year ago, and that mistress had supposed to have been stolen by the housemaid who had lived there before Mary Wild came. In the nurse's box were several things that looked very unlikely to be her own, but they did not belong to mistress. In a corner of the nursery cupboard was the third bottle of wine; that also had been opened. In Mary Wild's box there was nothing to excite suspicion.

When the examination was over, master gave the cook in charge to the policeman. The nurse was told to leave the house within an hour. She would have had much to say, but master would not hear her.

A month's notice was given to Mary Wild. I was glad of it; for though I knew that she had entered into many of the wicked cook's deceptions, there was a something about her that made me think she would have been good, if she had not been under such evil influence. All had been so sudden, that I almost fancied it had been a dream. For a few days we went on without other servants, and I thought things had never been so comfortable as they were during this time; but Mary Wild was taken so very ill, that a doctor was sent for. She became worse and worse, and I scarcely ever left her. In her delirium she would talk about things that had passed between the cook and herself; and though she did not know what she was saying, I felt sure that what she said *had been*. A very long time

she was ill; then a sudden change took place; and she was out of danger. Poor thing! how quiet, and patient, and sorrowful she was: and how grateful for every thing that was done for her! Mistress was so much touched by the many signs of sorrow Mary had shown, that she allowed her to remain in her place. Though I was so young, only just seventeen, my mistress, knowing that I was fond of the children, trusted them to my care. She engaged another nurse for three months to "put me in the way." At the end of that time she sent to the school for another girl to fill the place which had been mine. Very great was my delight to find that she was the one who had been my most favorite schoolfellow; the very girl who had given me the handkerchief.

The cook was committed for trial; her sentence was six months' imprisonment. What became of the nurse I never knew.

THE POINT OF HONOR.

ONE evening in the autumn of the year 1842, seven persons, including myself, were sitting and chatting in a state of hilarious gayety in front of Señor Arguellas' country-house, a mile or so out of Santiago de Cuba, in the Eastern Intendencia of the Queen of the Antilles, and once its chief capital, when an incident occurred that as effectually put an extinguisher upon the noisy mirth as if a bomb-shell had suddenly exploded at our feet. But first a brief account of those seven persons, and the cause of their being so assembled, will be necessary.

Three were American merchants—Southerners and smart traders, extensively connected with the commerce of the Colombian archipelago, and designing to sail on the morrow—wind and weather permitting, in the bark *Neptune*, Starkey master and part owner—for Morant Bay, Jamaica; one was a lieutenant in the Spanish artillery, and nephew of our host; another was a M. Dupont, a young and rich creole, of mingled French and Spanish parentage, and the reputed suitor for the hand of Donna Antonia—the daughter and sole heiress of Señor Arguellas, and withal a graceful and charming maiden of eighteen—a ripe age in that precocious clime; the sixth guest was Captain Starkey, of the *Neptune*, a gentlemanly, fine-looking English seaman of about thirty years of age; the seventh and last was myself, at that time a mere youngster, and but just recovered from a severe fit of sickness which a twelvemonth previously had necessitated my removal from Jamaica to the much more temperate and equable climate of Cuba, albeit the two islands are only distant about five degrees from each other. I was also one of Captain Starkey's passengers, and so was Señor Arguellas, who had business to wind up in Kingston. He was to be accompanied by Señora Arguellas, Antonia, the young lieutenant, and M. Dupont. The *Neptune* had brought a cargo of sundries, consisting of hardware, cottons, *et cetera*, to Cuba, and was returning about half-laden with goods. Among these, belonging to the American mer-

chants, were a number of barrels of gunpowder, that had proved unsalable in Cuba, and which, it was thought, might find a satisfactory market in Jamaica. There was excellent cabin-accommodation on board Captain Starkey's vessel, and as the weather was fine, and the passage promised to be a brief as well as pleasant one—the wind having shifted to the northwest, with the intention, it seemed, of remaining there for some time—we were all, as I have stated, in exceedingly good-humor, and discussing the intended trip, Cuban, American, and European politics, the comparative merits of French and Spanish wines, and Havana and Alabama cigars, with infinite glee and gusto.

The evening, too, was deliciously bright and clear. The breeze, pronounced by Capt. Starkey to be rising to a five or six knot one at sea, only sufficiently stirred the rich and odorous vegetation of the valleys, stretching far away beneath us, gently to fan the heated faces of the party with its grateful perfume, and slightly ripple the winding rivers, rivulets rather, which every where intersect and irrigate the island, and which were now glittering with the myriad splendors of the intensely-lustrous stars that diadem a Cuban night. Nearly all the guests had drunk very freely of wine, too much so, indeed; but the talk, in French, which all could speak tolerably, did not profane the calm glory of the scene, till some time after Señora Arguellas and her daughter had left us. The señor, I should state, was still detained in town by business which it was necessary he should dispose of previous to embarking for Jamaica.

"Do not go away," said Señora Arguellas, addressing Captain Starkey, as she rose from her seat, "till I see you again. When you are at leisure, ring the *sonnette* on the table and a servant will inform me. I wish to speak further with you relative to the cabin arrangements."

Captain Starkey bowed. I had never, I thought, seen Antonia smile so sweetly; and the two ladies left us. I do not precisely remember how it came about, or what first led to it, but it was not very long before we were all conscious that the conversation had assumed a disagreeable tone. It struck me that possibly M. Dupont did not like the expression of Antonia's face as she courtesied to Captain Starkey. This, however, would, I think, have passed off harmlessly, had it not been that the captain happened to mention, very imprudently, that he had once served as a midshipman on board the English slave-squadron. This fanned M. Dupont's smouldering ill-humor into a flame, and I gathered from his confused maledictions that he had suffered in property from the exertions of that force. The storm of angry words raged fiercely. The motives of the English for interfering with the slave-traffic were denounced with contemptuous bitterness on the one side, and as warmly and angrily defended on the other. Finally—the fact is, they were both flustered with wine and passion, and scarcely knew what they said or did—M. Dupont applied an epithet to the Queen of England, which

instantly brought a glass of wine full in his face from the hand of Captain Starkey. They were all in an instant on their feet, and apparently sobered, or nearly so, by the unfortunate issue of the wordy tumult.

Captain Starkey was the first to speak. His flushed and angry features paled suddenly to an almost deathly white, and he stammered out, "I beg your pardon, M. Dupont. It was wrong—very wrong in me to do so, though not inexcusable."

"Pardon? *Mille tonnerres!*" shouted Dupont, who was capering about in an ecstasy of rage, and wiping his face with his handkerchief. "Yes, a bullet through your head shall pardon you—nothing less!"

Indeed, according to the then notions of Cuban society, no other alternative save the duello appeared possible. Lieutenant Arguellas hurried at once into the house, and speedily returned with a case of pistols. "Let us proceed," he said, in a quick whisper, "to the grove yonder; we shall be there free from interruption." He took Dupont's arm, and both turned to move off. As they did so, Mr. Desmond, the elder of the American gentlemen, stepped toward Captain Starkey, who with recovered calmness, and with his arms folded, was standing by the table, and said, "I am not entirely, my good sir, a stranger to these affairs, and if I can be of service I shall—"

"Thank you, Mr. Desmond," replied the English captain; "but I shall not require your assistance. Lieutenant Arguellas, you may as well remain. I am no duelist, and shall not fight M. Dupont."

"What does he say?" exclaimed the lieutenant, gazing with stupid bewilderment round the circle. "Not fight!"

The Anglo-Saxon blood, I saw, flushed as hotly in the veins of the Americans as it did in mine at this exhibition of the white feather by one of our race. "Not fight, Captain Starkey!" said Mr. Desmond, with grave earnestness, after a painful pause: "you, whose name is in the list of the British royal navy, say this! You must be jesting!"

"I am perfectly serious—I am opposed to duelling upon principle."

"A coward upon principle!" fairly screamed Dupont, with mocking fury, and at the same time shaking his clenched fist at the Englishman.

The degrading epithet stung like a serpent. A gleam of fierce passion broke out of Captain Starkey's dark eyes, and he made a step toward Dupont, but resolutely checked himself.

"Well, it must be borne! I was wrong to offer you personal violence, although your impertinence certainly deserved rebuke. Still, I repeat I will not fight with you."

"But you *shall* give my friend satisfaction!" exclaimed Lieutenant Arguellas, who was as much excited as Dupont; "or, by Heaven, I will post you as a dastard not only throughout this island but Jamaica!"

Captain Starkey for all answer to this menace

coolly rang the *sonnette*, and desired the slave who answered it to inform Señora Arguellas that he was about to leave, and wished to see her.

"The brave Englishman is about to place himself under the protection of your aunt's petticoats, Alphonso!" shouted Dupont, with triumphant mockery.

"I almost doubt whether Mr. Starkey is an Englishman," exclaimed Mr. Desmond, who, as well as his two friends, was getting pretty much incensed; "but, at all events, as my father and mother were born and raised in the old country, if you presume to insinuate that—"

Señora Arguellas at this moment approached, and the irate American with some difficulty restrained himself. The lady appeared surprised at the strange aspect of the company she had so lately left. She, however, at the request of the captain, instantly led the way into the house, leaving the rest of her visitors, as the French say, *plantés là*.

Ten minutes afterward we were informed that Captain Starkey had left the house, after impressing upon Señora Arguellas that the *Neptune* would sail the next morning precisely at nine o'clock. A renewed torrent of rage, contempt, and scorn broke forth at this announcement, and a duel at one time seemed inevitable between Lieutenant Arguellas and Mr. Desmond, the last-named gentleman manifesting great anxiety to shoot somebody or other in vindication of his Anglo-Saxon lineage. This, however, was overruled, and the party broke up in angry disorder.

We were all on board by the appointed time on the following morning. Captain Starkey received us with civil indifference, and I noticed that the elaborate sneers which sat upon the countenances of Dupont and the lieutenant did not appear in the slightest degree to ruffle or affect him; but the averted eye and scornful air of Donna Antonia as she passed with Señora Arguellas toward the cabin, drawing her mantilla tightly round her as she swept by, as if—so I perhaps wrongfully interpreted the action—it would be soiled by contact with a poltroon, visibly touched him—only, however, for a few brief moments. The expression of pain quickly vanished, and his countenance was as cold and stern as before. There was, albeit, it was soon found, a limit to this, it seemed, contemptuous forbearance. Dupont, approaching him, gave his thought audible expression, exclaiming, loud enough for several of the crew to hear, and looking steadily in the captain's face: "*Lâche!*" He would have turned away, but was arrested by a gripe of steel. "*Ecoutez, monsieur,*" said Captain Starkey: "individually, I hold for nothing whatever you may say; but I am captain and king in this ship, and I will permit no one to beard me before the crew, and thereby lessen my authority over them. Do you presume again to do so, and I will put you in solitary confinement, perhaps in irons, till we arrive at Jamaica." He then threw off his startled auditor, and walked forward. The passengers, colored as well as white, were all on board; the anchor, already

apeak, was brought home; the bows of the ship fell slowly off, and we were in a few moments running before the wind, though but a faint one, for Point Morant.

No one could be many hours on board the *Neptune* without being fully satisfied that, however deficient in dueling courage her captain might be, he was a thorough seaman, and that his crew—about a dozen of as fine fellows as I have ever seen—were under the most perfect discipline and command. The service of the vessel was carried on as noiselessly and regularly as on board a ship of war; and a sense of confidence, that should a tempest or other sea-peril overtake us, every reliance might be placed in the professional skill and energy of Captain Starkey, was soon openly or tacitly acknowledged by all on board. The weather throughout happily continued fine, but the wind was light and variable, so that for several days after we had sighted the blue mountains of Jamaica, we scarcely appeared sensibly to diminish the distance between them and us. At last the breeze again blew steadily from the northwest, and we gradually neared Point Morant. We passed it, and opened up the bay at about two o'clock in the morning, when the voyage might be said to be over. This was a great relief to the cabin-passengers—far beyond the ordinary pleasure to land-folk of escaping from the tedium of confinement on shipboard. There was a constraint in the behavior of every body that was exceedingly unpleasant. The captain presided at table with freezing civility; the conversation, if such it could be called, was usually restricted to monosyllables; and we were all very heartily glad that we had eaten our last dinner in the *Neptune*. When we doubled Point Morant, all the passengers except myself were in bed, and a quarter of an hour afterward Captain Starkey went below, and was soon busy, I understood, with papers in his cabin. For my part I was too excited for sleep, and I continued to pace the deck fore and aft with Hawkins, the first-mate, whose watch it was, eagerly observant of the lights on the well-known shore, that I had left so many months before with but faint hopes of ever seeing it again. As I thus gazed landward, a bright gleam, as of crimson moonlight, shot across the dark sea, and turning quickly round, I saw that it was caused by a tall jet of flame shooting up from the main hatchway, which two seamen, for some purpose or other, had at the moment partially opened. In my still weak state, the terror of the sight—for the recollection of the barrels of powder on board flashed instantly across my mind—for several moments completely stunned me, and but that I caught instinctively at the rattlings, I should have fallen prostrate on the deck. A wild outcry of "Fire! fire!"—the most fearful cry that can be heard at sea—mingled with and heightened the dizzy ringing in my brain, and I was barely sufficiently conscious to discern, amid the runnings to and fro, and the incoherent exclamations of the crew, the sinewy, athletic figure of the captain leap up,

as it were, from the companion-ladder to the deck, and with his trumpet-voice command immediate silence, instantly followed by the order again to batten down the blazing hatchway. This, with his own assistance, was promptly effected, and then he disappeared down the fore-castle. The two or three minutes he was gone—it could scarcely have been more than that—seemed interminable; and so completely did it appear to be recognized that our fate must depend upon his judgment and vigor, that not a word was spoken, nor a finger, I think, moved, till he reappeared, already scorched and blackened with the fire, and dragging up what seemed a dead body in his arms. He threw his burden on the deck, and passing swiftly to where Hawkins stood, said in a low, hurried whisper, but audible to me; “Run down and rouse the passengers, and bring my pistols from the cabin-locker. Quick! Eternity hangs on the loss of a moment.” Then turning to the startled but attentive seamen, he said in a rapid but firm voice: “You well know, men, that I would not on any occasion or for any motive deceive you. Listen, then, attentively. Yon drunken brute—he is Lieutenant Arguellas’ servant—has fired with his candle the spirits he was stealing, and the hold is a mass of fire which it is useless to waste one precious moment in attempting to extinguish.”

A cry of rage and terror burst from the crew, and they sprang impulsively toward the boats, but the captain’s authoritative voice at once arrested their steps. “Hear me out, will you? Hurry and confusion will destroy us all, but with courage and steadiness every soul on board may be saved before the flames can reach the powder. And remember,” he added, as he took his pistols from Hawkins and cocked one of them, “that I will send a bullet after any man who disobeys me, and I seldom miss my aim. Now, then, to your work—steadily, and with a will!”

It was marvelous to observe the influence his bold, confident, and commanding bearing and words had upon the men. The panic-terror that had seized them gave place to energetic resolution, and in an incredibly short space of time the boats were in the water. “Well done, my fine fellows! There is plenty of time, I again repeat. Four of you”—and he named them—“remain with me. Three others jump into each of the large boats, two into the small one, and bring them round to the landward side of the ship. A rush would swamp the boats, and we shall be able to keep only one gangway clear.”

The passengers were by this time rushing upon deck half-clad, and in a state of the wildest terror, for they all knew there was a large quantity of gunpowder on board. The instant the boats touched the starboard side of the bark, the men, white as well as colored, forced their way with frenzied eagerness before the women and children—careless, apparently, whom they sacrificed so that they might themselves leap to the shelter of the boats from the fiery volcano raging

beneath their feet. Captain Starkey, aided by the four athletic seamen he had selected for the duty, hurled them fiercely back. “Back, back!” he shouted. “We must have funeral order here—first the women and children, next the old men. Hand Señora Arguellas along; next the young lady her daughter: quick!”

As Donna Antonia, more dead than alive, was about to be lifted into the boat, a gush of flame burst up through the main hatchway with the roar of an explosion; a tumultuous cry burst from the frenzied passengers, and they jostled each other with frightful violence in their efforts to reach the gangway. Dupont forced his way through the lane of seamen with the energy of a madman, and pressed so suddenly upon Antonia that, but for the utmost exertion of the captain’s Herculean strength, she must have been precipitated into the water.

“Back, unmanly dastard! back, dog!” roared Captain Starkey, terribly excited by the lady’s danger; and a moment after, seizing Dupont fiercely by the collar, he added: “or if you will, look there but for a moment,” and he pointed with his pistol-hand to the fins of several sharks plainly visible in the glaring light at but a few yards’ distance from the ship. “Men,” he added, “let whoever presses forward out of his turn fall into the water.”

“Ay, ay, sir!” was the prompt mechanical response.

This terrible menace instantly restored order; the colored women and children were next embarked, and the boat appeared full.

“Pull off,” was the order: “you are deep enough for safety.”

A cry, faint as the wail of a child, arose in the boat. It was heard and understood.

“Stay one moment; pass along Señor Arguellas. Now, then, off with you, and be smart!”

The next boat was quickly loaded; the colored lads and men, all but one, and the three Americans, went in her.

“You are a noble fellow,” said Mr. Desmond, pausing an instant, and catching at the captain’s hand; “and I was but a fool to—”

“Pass on,” was the reply: “there is no time to bandy compliments.”

The order to shove off had passed the captain’s lips when his glance chanced to light upon me, as I leaned, dumb with terror, just behind him against the vessel’s bulwarks.

“Hold on a moment!” he cried. “Here is a youngster whose weight will not hurt you;” and he fairly lifted me over, and dropped me gently into the boat, whispering as he did so: “Remember me, Ned, to thy father and mother should I not see them again.”

There was now only the small boat, capable of safely containing but eight persons, and how, it was whispered among us—how, in addition to the two seamen already in her, can she take off Lieutenant Arguellas, M. Dupont, the remaining colored man, the four seamen, and Captain Starkey? They were, however, all speedily embarked except the captain.

"Can she bear another!" he asked, and although his voice was firm as ever, his countenance, I noticed, was ashy pale, yet full as ever of unswerving resolution.

"We must, and will, sir, since it's you; but we are dangerously overcrowded now, especially with yon ugly customers swimming round us."

"Stay one moment; I can not quit the ship while there's a living soul on board." He stepped hastily forward, and presently reappeared at the gangway with the still senseless body of the lieutenant's servant in his arms, and dropped it over the side into the boat. There was a cry of indignation, but it was of no avail. The boat's rope the next instant was cast into the water. "Now pull for your lives!" The oars, from the instinct of self-preservation, instantly fell into the water, and the boat sprang off. Captain Starkey, now that all except himself were clear of the burning ship, gazed eagerly with eyes shaded with his hand in the direction of the shore. Presently he hailed the headmost boat. "We must have been seen from the shore long ago, and pilot-boats ought to be coming out, though I don't see any. If you meet one, bid him be smart: there may be a chance yet." All this scene, this long agony, which has taken me so many words to depict very imperfectly from my own recollection, and those of others, only lasted, I was afterward assured by Mr. Desmond, eight minutes from the embarkation of Señora Arguellas till the last boat left the ill-fated *Neptune*.

Never shall I forget the frightful sublimity of the spectacle presented by that flaming ship, the sole object, save ourselves, discernible amidst the vast and heaving darkness, if I may use the term, of the night and ocean, coupled as it was with the dreadful thought that the heroic man to whose firmness and presence of mind we all owed our safety was inevitably doomed to perish. We had not rowed more than a couple of hundred yards when the flames, leaping up every where through the deck, reached the rigging and the few sails set, presenting a complete outline of the bark and her tracery of masts and yards drawn in lines of fire! Captain Starkey, not to throw away the chance he spoke of, had gone out to the end of the bowsprit, having first let the jib and foresail go by the run, and was for a brief space safe from the flames; but what was this but a prolongation of the bitterness of death?

The boats continued to increase the distance between them and the blazing ship, amidst a dead silence broken only by the measured dip of the oars; and many an eye was turned with intense anxiety shoreward with the hope of decrying the expected pilot. At length a distinct hail—and I felt my heart stop beating at the sound—was heard ahead, lustily responded to by the seamen's throats, and presently afterward a swiftly-propelled pilot-boat shot out of the thick darkness ahead, almost immediately followed by another.

"What ship is that?" cried a man standing in the bows of the first boat.

"The *Neptune*, and that is Captain Starkey on the bowsprit!"

I sprang eagerly to my feet, and with all the force I could exert, shouted: "A hundred pounds for the first boat that reaches the ship!"

"That's young Mr. Mainwaring's face and voice!" exclaimed the foremost pilot. "Hurra, then, for the prize!" and away both sped with eager vigor, but unaware certainly of the peril of the task. In a minute or so another shore-boat came up, but after asking a few questions, and seeing how matters stood, remained, and lightened us of a portion of our living cargoes. We were all three too deep in the water, the small boat perilously so.

Great God! the terrible suspense we all felt while this was going forward. I can scarcely bear, even now, to think about it. I shut my eyes, and listened with breathless, palpitating excitement for the explosion that should end all. It came!—at least I thought it did, and I sprang convulsively to my feet. So sensitive was my brain, partly no doubt from recent sickness as well as fright, that I had mistaken the sudden shout of the boats' crews for the dreaded catastrophe. The bowsprit, from the end of which a rope was dangling, was empty! and both pilots, made aware doubtless of the danger, were pulling with the eagerness of fear from the ship. The cheering among us was renewed again and again, during which I continued to gaze with arrested breath and fascinated stare at the flaming vessel and fleeing pilot-boats. Suddenly a pyramid of flame shot up from the hold of the ship, followed by a deafening roar. I fell, or was knocked down, I know not which; the boat rocked as if caught in a fierce eddy; next came the hiss and splash of numerous heavy bodies falling from a great height into the water; and then the blinding glare and stunning uproar were succeeded by a soundless silence and a thick darkness, in which no man could discern his neighbor. The stillness was broken by a loud, cheerful hail from one of the pilot-boats: we recognized the voice, and the simultaneous and ringing shout which burst from us assured the gallant seaman of our own safety, and how exultingly we all rejoiced in his. Half an hour afterward we were safely landed; and as the ship and cargo had been specially insured, the only ultimate evil result of this fearful passage in the lives of the passengers and crew of the *Neptune* was a heavy loss to the underwriters.

A piece of plate, at the suggestion of Mr. Desmond and his friends, was subscribed for and presented to Captain Starkey at a public dinner given at Kingston in his honor—a circumstance that many there will remember. In his speech on returning thanks for the compliment paid him, he explained his motive for resolutely declining to fight a duel with M. Dupont, half-a-dozen versions of which had got into the newspapers. "I was very early left an orphan," he said, "and was very tenderly reared by a maternal aunt, Mrs. ——" (He mentioned a name with which hundreds of newspaper readers in England must

be still familiar). "Her husband—as many here may be aware—fell in a duel in the second month of wedlock. My aunt continued to live dejectedly on till I had passed my nineteenth year; and so vivid an impression did the patient sorrow of her life make on me—so thoroughly did I learn to loathe and detest the barbarous practice that consigned her to a premature grave, that it scarcely required the solemn promise she obtained from me, as the last sigh trembled on her lips, to make me resolve never, under any circumstances, to fight a duel. As to my behavior during the unfortunate conflagration of the *Nephtune*, which my friend Mr. Desmond has spoken of so flatteringly, I can only say that I did no more than my simple duty in the matter. Both he and I belong to a maritime race, one of whose most peremptory maxims it is that the captain must be the last man to quit or give up his ship. Besides, I must have been the veriest dastard alive to have quailed in the presence of—of—that is, in the presence of—circumstances which—in point of fact—that is—" Here Captain Starkey blushed and boggled sadly: he was evidently no orator; but whether it was the sly significance of Señor Arguellas' countenance, which just then happened to be turned toward him, or the glance he threw at the gallery where Señora Arguellas' grave placidity and Donna Antonia's bright eyes and blushing cheeks encountered him, that so completely put him out, I can not say; but he continued to stammer painfully, although the company cheered and laughed with great vehemence and uncommon good-humor, in order to give him time. He could not recover himself; and after floundering about through a few more unintelligible sentences sat down, evidently very hot and uncomfortable, though amidst a little hurricane of hearty cheers and hilarious laughter.

I have but a few more words to say. Captain Starkey has been long settled at the Havanna; and Donna Antonia has been just as long Mrs. Starkey. Three little Starkeys have to my knowledge already come to town, and the captain is altogether a rich and prosperous man; but though apparently permanently domiciled in a foreign country, he is, I am quite satisfied, as true an Englishman, and as loyal a subject of Queen Victoria, as when he threw the glass of wine in the Cuban creole's face. I don't know what has become of Dupont; and, to tell the truth, I don't much care. Lieutenant Arguellas has attained the rank of major: at least I suppose he must be the Major Arguellas officially reported to be slightly wounded in the late Lopez buccaneering affair. And I also am pretty well now, thank you!

CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY.

CHRISTMAS-DAY came—presents were to be exchanged. My friend Albert B—— and I were deputed to go to Bremen to make purchases, the choice thereof being left to our discretion. This, be it understood, was for the behoof of some of our gentlemen friends; the ladies

had long been prepared with their offerings, which almost, in every case, were the work of their own hands.

We started on foot; it was genial frosty weather. At Oslebshausen, which is half-way, we rested, and took a glass of wine. Then we continued our march, and at last caught sight of the windmill, which marks the entrance to the town. Breakfast was the first thing to be thought of, so we went and breakfasted in a house situated in a street called the "Bishop's Needle." Then we hunted about in various shops, and finally arrived, not a little laden, at the office of the *Lesmona omnibus*. Here we deposited our goods, and secured our places; after which, as we had a couple of hours before us, we repaired to Stelhely and Jansen's, the chief café of Bremen, to pass the time and read the papers.

Toward dusk we reached Lesmona, and our constituents immediately selected, each according to his taste, the articles we had brought them. For my part, as I was that evening a guest at the house of my friend the pastor, I betook myself thither with the trifling gifts I had bought for his children. I was destined to receive in return presents from them and other members of his family. How they were exchanged, I shall presently relate. I begin at the beginning of the ceremony; for the celebration of Christmas-day is, indeed, a ceremony in most parts of Germany.

The pastor's house is, when you look at it in front, a long, low building, with a prodigiously high thatched roof. If you go to the gable, however, you will find that there are actually three stories in it, two being in the said roof. The middle of the ground floor is occupied by a large hall, which gives access to all the chambers, and has a branch leading to one end of the edifice. At this end there is a door, on passing by which, you find yourself in the place where the cows, pigs, and other animals are kept. When I speak of the other animals, I should except the storks, who, on their arrival in spring, from Egypt or elsewhere, find their usual basket-work habitations about the chimneys all ready to receive them. One would imagine, by the way, that they brought from their winter quarters something like the superstition of the old inhabitants of the Nile valley, so great is the worship of the Germans for these birds, and so enthusiastically is their arrival hailed. No one would ever dare to murder a stork. A similar protection is extended to nightingales. The consequence is, that, being unmolested, the "solemn bird of night" becomes very tame. In the suburbs of Hamburg are numerous villas, and there, in a friend's garden, I have passed and repassed under the bough where, within the reach of my arm, a nightingale was singing. He not only showed no fear, but, being of a vain character, as nightingales naturally are, he strained his little throat the more that he saw I listened to him.

But to return to the pastor's house. In the corner of the hall of which I have spoken, was the "Christmas Tree." Some of those who