

ROBBED AT SEA.

By CHARLES B. LEWIS (M. QUAD).

The English trading firm of Farwell, White & Underhill at Yokohama, with a branch house at Kelung, in the island of Formosa, owned a fleet of small coasting vessels, and upon a certain date, when it was desired to transfer \$20,000 in silver from the former to the latter port, the brig Dolphin was selected. The money could have been sent by steamer, but the brig was bound down and considered just as safe, and there would be no charges to pay. The money was put up in boxes, \$1,000 to a box, and each box was then headed up in a barrel of flour. This was of course done in the warehouse and very secretly, as that sum of money would have tempted the most honest trader to turn pirate.



HALF A DOZEN MEN SPRANG OVERBOARD.

produced an unfavorable impression on all hands except the captain, who seemed to be attracted to him from the first glance. A sailor instinctively feels that there is something wrong with an officer who doesn't do more or less cursing and growling, and when we were three days out of Kelung and Mr. Williams had not uttered an oath nor threatened a man with a belaying pin, it was the general verdict of the fo'c'stles that he was a queer man and probably a bad one. We hoped he would leave us at Yokohama, but if he had any such idea the captain persuaded him to remain. When the 30 barrels of flour came down with the other cargo, they created no suspicion among the hands, although we seldom carried it. The captain knew of the \$20,000, and he ought to have been the only one aboard having any knowledge of its presence. It appeared, however, that while his native shrewdness was maddled by drink he boasted of it to Williams, and the latter had two days and two nights in which to lay his plans.

We left Yokohama one morning with a fair wind for a direct run to Kelung, and for four days all went well. Every body aboard the brig had noticed a Ghinno lorcha hanging in our wake, but she might be as honest a trader as the Dolphin, and no particular interest was taken in her except by myself. There were several reasons for this. The Dolphin was a slow sailer, and the lorcha ought to have come up hand over hand. She was not a pleasure craft taking things easy, and after she had hung to us for three or four days I began to wonder at her actions. I was Mr. Williams' watch. He had to make use of the working force and take his truck at the wheel. On the third watch, when he took his truck from 10 to 12 o'clock, I accidentally discovered that he had hung a lantern on the stern as if for a beacon. I relieved him at midnight, and the light was still there.

Just before 2 o'clock he took the wheel and sent us forward, and when we turned in the lantern had disappeared. On the fourth day the sight of the lorcha astern, following us like a hungry wolf, excited considerable comment forward, but our captain seemed to give her no attention. The main was nervous and uneasy all day, and when night came on cloudy and dark, but with no increase of wind. I was almost determined to go to the captain and state my suspicions. Had I done so I should have been kicked out of the cabin for my trouble. Feeling somewhat of this, I prepared for what I suspected would happen.

At Kelung I had bought a revolver of an American sailor for a couple of dollars. I put this in my pocket, and just as my watch was turned out I got the key, one of three of the bracelet men. I do not mean the sheath knife which every sailor carries, but the weapon of offense and defense which the lower class of Japs make use of as the American negro does the razor. I added to the knives a double barreled pistol belonging to the cook, which I knew to be loaded, and 10 minutes after going on deck I had hidden all the weapons in the yawlboat hanging at the davits.

One of the natives took the wheel as the other watch turned in, but after a few minutes the mate relieved him. I was stationed on the bows as lookout and could see nothing at all, but nevertheless I felt sure that the lantern went over the stern within a short time after the mate took the wheel. We were holding our course and jugging along at the rate of five or six miles an hour, and a couple of hours had passed since I came on deck, when I suddenly heard the flap of canvas, followed by a shock. I had no need to run aft to know what had happened. I added to the knives a double barreled pistol belonging to the cook, which I knew to be loaded, and 10 minutes after going on deck I had hidden all the weapons in the yawlboat hanging at the davits.

While I believe the plot was unknown to any of the crew, they were only temporarily surprised at the capture of our craft. When told that there was a thousand dollars in each barrel, they begged permission to join the pirates, and all but the cook were accepted. He had sailed with Captain Hope for several years and was not to be tempted from duty. When the fellows began breaking open the cargo, the mate ordered me to put a bag of biscuits and a breaker of fresh water into the yawl. As soon as the last barrel was over the rail the mate and one of the crew went below and bored holes in the brig's bottom. When they returned to the deck, Mr. Williams said to the captain, who was on his feet again:

There was no shouting, shouting or knocking down. Williams called to me to relieve him at the wheel, and as I took his place for about twenty minutes, the mate, jabbered away for a minute, and then all went into the cabin. The captain had been asleep, but aroused by the shock was preparing to go on deck when confronted by his mate and the strangers. When he demanded to know what was going on, Williams answered him in a civil way:

"Captain Hope, I and my friends have taken possession of the brig and that \$20,000, but no one has been hurt or will be unless we are driven to it. You are perfectly helpless in the matter, and the best thing you can do is to keep quiet."

Thereupon the captain of course proceeded to raise a row and was knocked senseless for his foolishness. The strangers were Chinese and a hard looking lot, but they had no desire to shed blood. They left a guard over the captain and came on deck and threw the brig up into the wind, and then proceeded to break out the barrels of flour and transfer them to their own craft.

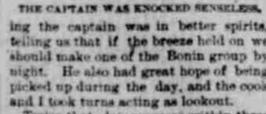
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"Captain Hope, I have scuttled the Dolphin. My idea was to leave you and the boy aboard to go down with her, but as there is no possible show of our being captured, I shall give you a chance for your lives. You will be sent adrift in the yawl."

We begged him for sail or oars, but he stubbornly refused. We would have remained on the brig and tried to plug up the holes, but he insisted on our going at once. The boat was lowered, and Captain Hope, the cook and myself were almost tumbled into it. In five minutes the wind and sea had drifted us out of sight into the darkness, and we never saw the brig again. The lorcha probably remained near until it was certain she would go down.

For about half an hour after we were set adrift the captain hadn't a word to say, appearing to be stunned by the disaster which had overtaken him. Then he began cursing and raving and kept it up for a long hour. He blamed the mate and every one of us, though his own imprudence had caused all the trouble. When he had disgusted himself with his ravings, he began to figure on our position. The noon observation had put us to the west of the Bonin islands by 200 miles. We were now drifting before a northwest breeze. We tore out a thwart to make a couple of paddles, but as the sea was not heavy enough to be dangerous one after another sank down and went to sleep, and it was 7 o'clock next morning by the captain's watch before any one opened his eyes.

The wind had then hauled into the west and was stronger, and we were obliged to make a drag and bring the boat head to the sea to prevent disaster. Lying thus, she drifted along at the rate of four or five miles an hour. The captain was silent and sulky, and during the entire day scarcely uttered a word. We sighted several sails, but they were too distant to observe a signal. The breeze increased at night, but all of us slept as before. On this second morn-



THE CAPTAIN WAS KNOCKED SENSELESS.

ing the captain was in better spirits, telling us that if the breeze held on we should make one of the Bonin group by night. He also had great hope of being picked up during the day, and the cook and I took turns acting as lookouts.

Twice that day we were within three miles of sailing vessels which did not see us, and a big freight steamer plowed along considerably nearer than that without paying any attention to our signal of distress. It was about 4 o'clock in the afternoon when we sighted Sunflower island, the southernmost of the group and one of three lying about five miles apart. We should have been driven ashore and probably drowned in the surf but for our paddles. We finally got a landing on the south side of the island

and had scarcely set foot on shore when we heard the report of firearms. Knowing the island to be uninhabited, we at first thought a trading craft or a whaler might be anchored in the bay on the east side. Captain Hope ordered the two of us to remain by the boat while he entered the woods to investigate. This was about sundown. In the course of an hour he returned and reported that the lorcha in the bay and the crew making merry ashore. He could not see Williams, and two of our sailors who had joined were also missing. Everything went to show that the men ashore meant to stop there all night. There were nine of them, and they were feasting and drinking by the light of a big fire.

I had not yet told Captain Hope of the weapons I had stowed away in the yawl. When he observed that if he had a couple of men with him he would try to capture the lorcha, I brought out the weapons and offered my assistance. The cook also volunteered, and within 15 minutes we had determined on a plan. We launched our boat and peddled her around to the bay, which was about three miles distant. The bay extended inland for a mile, and we found the lorcha anchored within 200 feet of the beach. It was 10 o'clock when we sighted her, and the men ashore were still awake. We hung off and on for them to get quiet, and it was after midnight before we moved. They had gone ashore in a boat, and our first move was to secure it. We landed the cook half a mile away, and he crept along the beach to the boat and set her adrift just as the tide turned. When we had picked him up again, we headed for the lorcha and made fast to her bows without being challenged. Removing our shoes and the captain leading, we boarded her, to find she was taking care of herself. There was no one in the fo'c'stles, but lying fast asleep on the floor of the cabin were two men who had been left as anchor watch. They were not made prisoners, but were killed by the captain and cook where they lay and speedily consigned to the waters of the bay. Our next step was to look for the barrels. We found them in her hold just as they had been transferred. The three of us were enough to manage the craft after a fashion, and the binnacle cable by which she was anchored was severed, and she went drifting down the bay. When we made sail on her, we headed to the west and before daylight were well out to sea. Captain Hope was to speak a craft and obtain a couple of men to continue the voyage to Kelung, but things happened better than he hoped for. At 7 o'clock we sighted an English man-of-war on her way from Formosa, and in her company ran back to the bay.

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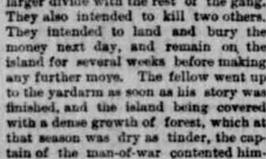
A landing was made, but only one of the gang was captured. He stated that Williams and two of our sailors had been murdered before the lorcha entered the bay, the object being to make a larger divide with the rest of the gang. They also intended to kill two others. They intended to land and bury the money next day, and remain on the island for several weeks before making any further move. The fellow went up to the yardarm as soon as his story was finished, and the island being covered with a dense growth of forest, which at that season was dry as tinder, the captain with starting a conflagration, which swept the island as bare as a rock.

The flames must have driven every man of the gang into the sea and to his death. We got two men from the naval vessel to make up our crew, and the specie was safely landed at Kelung. The firm lost about \$2,000 on the difference between the value of the brig and the lorcha, but there were no complaints. Captain Hope was made a hero of for a year or two subsequently, and though I heard him relate the story twice and have read portions of it a dozen times in the papers, I never could hear or find any name but his own. The cook and I shared his misfortunes, but when it came to the glory we were referred to as the "cook and a boy."

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