GOOD STORIES OF THE PRESENT DAY.

The Murder Done by Thomas Hope, Mate of the Nomad.

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It was in the second year of my apprenticeship on board the English bark Nomad that we lay in the port of Bombay waiting for a charter. I was only a lad then, and as there were many things connected with my story which I did not understand then, I shall connect the chain of events to make things more intelligible to you. At an early date in the great uprising in India, commonly known as "The Mutiny," the wife and three children of an English Sergeant stationed at or near Hyderabad were cruelly murdered, with others. From that hour the Sergeant, whose name was Thomas Hope, became a fiend. Several books have been published in which he is referred to, but only his comrades knew his hatred for the natives and the number of lives he demanded in return for the four taken. I have heard men who were in his detachment say that the number of his victims was above 200. He not only killed in battle, but when there was a lull he acted as a scout, and showed no pity for sex or age. He came to be known to and dreaded by the natives, and during the last three months of the war they would rather have captured him than any English General in the field.

In the space of two months there were sixteen murders of which his comrades believed him guilty. He was finally discharged from the army and got a place in the public service at Bombay. After awhile his mania died out, or seemed to, but several mysterious murders in Bombay were laid at his door.

On the other hand, many attempts were made to assassinate him, and twice within a year he was almost fatally poisoned. He had been a sailor before entering the army, and his friends finally induced him to return to that calling and leave Bombay. He made several voyages, and at the time my story opens was mate of the Nomad. This was the first time he had been in Bombay for three years, and no one aboard except the Captain knew his history. The Custom House officers no doubt knew of his presence, and no doubt Capt. Strong was advised against allowing him to go ashore.

One night the weather was so oppressively hot that I among others left the fo'castle for the deck. We were in the dockyards at the time, with only a watchman on deck. At about midnight the voice of the watchman warning away a prowler awoke me, and it was just in time to see the mate disappear over the rail on his way ashore. I knew him by his figure and could have sworn to him in any court in the land. He moved quiety and craftily, and my impression was that he intended to surprise some fellow lurking about. It was a bit curious that after a few minutes I again fell asleep, and was awakened at exactly 3 o'clock by the same cause as before. The watchman was on the bows of the vessel threatening some one who was after junk. I sat up and looked around, and just then Mr. Hope came aboard from the runway at the port quarter. He acted like one who wished to avoid observation, and when he crossed the deck it was on tiptoe. I got a better look at him this time, though he did not see me, and was sure he had on false whiskers and a hat I had never seen him wear before.

A sailor has no right to question the action of an officer, either in port or at sea, and while I looked upon the mate's action as a bit queer it never occurred to me that it was not all right and proper nor to speak of it to any of the men. About 9 o'clock in the morning one of the crew who had been ashore all night came aboard and brought with him copies of a daily paper giving along account of a cold-blooded murder which occurred the night before. A native of wealth and prominence, who had remained late at a club and started for home on foot, had been stabbed to death in front of the Government Savings Bank. There were policemen only a block away at the time, and the street was well lighted and people were passing at short intervals.

The body was found within two minutes after the stabbing had been inflicted, and the victim lived for a quarter of an hour, though not conscious. The police had three or four clues to the murderer, but it was generally believed that he was a sailor. A man whose gait betrayed his profession had passed an officer not two minutes before the body was found, coming from that direction, and the officer furthermore asserted his belief that the man had on a false beard.

For a week the police force, assisted by various social societies and by scores of individuals incited by the large rewards offered, turned the city upside down in their efforts to discover the murderer. The victim had not been rifled of money or jewelry, but yet it was the fixed idea that robbery was the motive. At least 100 arrests were made, but nothing came of them, and after awhile it was generally concluded that the murderer had made good his escape. Certain members of the club to which the victim belonged got the idea that this was another of Sergeant Hope's cases. Having heard that he was in Bombay, they would naturally suspect him. Twelve days after the murder they caused his arrest. Then I put this and that together and figured out that he was the man, but had nothing to say to any one about it. About 9 o'clock that morning I was sent to a storehouse in the yards after some oakum. While getting it I heard a police officer asking the watchman about the Nomad and Mr. Hope. I hurried aboard the ship at once to tell the mate, but he was in the lower hold. Whatever made me do as I did has always been a puzzle.

Not being able to speak to Mr. Hope, I ran to his stateroom and began looking around. I could not have told what I was looking for, but I found no trace of anything save that from the gallows. Under the mattress in his bunk I found a set of false whiskers, and in a locker a wicked-looking knife, such as no sailor could have use for. I pocketed the two articles and ran out, and five minutes later the mate was under arrest and his room was being searched. While he stood in the dock at the trial the party below was giving his stateroom an overhauling he looked pale and anxious. I moved around to a point from which I could catch his eye, and the sign I gave him was instantly understood. Yes, I was an accessory after the fact and was doing my best to shield this murderer. The only excuse I could have urged in court was that Mr. Hope had been very kind to me, and that I had read and heard the story of Carlotta Crespino.