

Mutinies On American Ships *Recalled By The Odessa Uprising.*



Landing Of The Four Survivors Of The Mutiny On The Brig Vanguard.



Elliott's Drawing.



How Captain Wheland Saved His Ship The Eliza—Single Handed He Drove His Schooner For Thirteen Days And Reached Port At St. Bartholomew's Island.

Navy Has Never Had a Serious Uprising in Its History.

Merchant Marine Has Had Many Desperate Revolts.

COULD such a thing happen to us? Russia is at present playing the ungrateful role of a terrible example. The things that have happened to her in the last two years have roused nations not normally given to introspection to ask whether such could happen in their well regulated households. The mutiny in the Black Sea fleet is the climax—at least, it is so hoped it is the climax—of Russia's woes. And it has aroused the powers to serious self-communings as to the possibility of such an occurrence in their navies.

On the principle that what has been can be, their perturbation is not altogether without foundation. Great Britain, particularly, has some ugly mutinies to look back upon. Uncle Sam is fortunate. Probably he treats his jackies better, and realizes more thoroughly that if he wants men behind his guns, he must treat them as men, not as cattle. The navy is essentially an autocratic institution. But so far as consists with discipline, the spirit of the brotherhood of man in which this nation was conceived is allowed to penetrate even her battleships. In her entire history there is not recorded a single naval mutiny. The so-called mutiny on the Somers is the nearest approach to one—and that never came to a head. It was a deplorable affair, a shadow of what might have been; but it was nipped in the bud. And it had its inception not in any ill treatment of the men; not in any wrongs, real or fancied; not in any genuine discontent on the part of the crew, but simply in the unbalanced mind of a spoiled child, in the ungovernable waywardness of the beloved son of an honorable man, who died within a year or two broken-hearted at his boy's shameful end, and unconsoled by the love and respect and sympathy of the entire nation.

"What Will Blood Tell?"

Philip Spencer should have been a shining example for those who believe that "blood will tell." Instead, he has been used to point the moral of the iconoclasts who are wont to repeat, "But what will it tell?" He was the grandson of Ambrose Spencer, one of the great jurists of the early days of the Republic, and of De Witt Clinton, the inventor. His father was John Canfield Spencer, of New York, scholar, lawyer, and philanthropist, and one of the early laborers in the vineyard of public education. He had served in Congress, and became Secretary of War under Tyler, the most esteemed member of Tyler's official family, with the exception of Webster, who held over from the Harrison Cabinet long enough to complete the Webster-Ashburton treaty.

Naturally, anything that Secretary Spencer "sawed" within the power of Government officials was his for the asking. He was a berth in the naval service for his boy Philip, his Benjamin, the son of his old age, hoping that naval discipline would do for him what parental discipline had failed. He was a wild boy, Philip Spencer. He had been expelled from Union College for more than sufficient reason. He had run away and stayed on a New England whaler, and been saved from that service only by the use of all his family's influence. Secretary Spencer got him an appointment as midshipman. He had a brief and inglorious career, serving on the Potomac and the John Adams, and being discharged and degraded



The Attempt To Poison The Officers Of The Plattsborg They Whipped Lamberson, The Colored Steward, For Not Keeping The Coffee Pot Clean.

while the latter was at Rio Janeiro for quarrelling, drunk, but in full uniform, with a British officer.

His father got him another appointment. For his sake people were willing to bear with his boy. Mr. Spencer's son must be given another chance, and in 1822 he was shipped as midshipman on the brig Somers, in spite of the remonstrances of Capt. Alexander McKenzie, who already had all the midshipmen he was entitled to, and did not relish another of Philip Spencer's character.

Wanted to Be a Pirate.

He had explained to one of his fellow officers on the John Adams that his idea of a career, both pleasant and profitable, was to "run a vessel out-fitting anything afloat, with a crew who would go to hell with me." He seems to have embarked on the Somers with a view to realizing this ideal. She was the fastest little vessel in Uncle Sam's navy. But unfortunately for Spencer's plan, while the vessel followed his specifications, the crew did not. It had no idea of sailing to hell with a boy of his type. And he struck a snag in the third man he approached after having corrupted Samuel Cromwell, a boatsman's mate, and a seaman named Eliza Small. The snag was a seaman named Wales, who was serving as purser's steward, and whom he invited to come up in the shrouds where they "could talk," when the vessel stood about two days out from St. Thomas, on her return voyage after a winter spent off the coast of Liberia, protecting American merchantmen from British cruisers that were supposed to be suppressing the slave trade there. Spencer swore Wales to secrecy by the most blood-curdling oaths, and then disclosed his plan for murdering all the officers and such of the crew as could not be counted on and seizing the vessel and turning pirate with her. They were to drop on the rich merchantmen in those waters, keep as much of the cargoes as pleased them and burn the vessels. In short, Spencer proposed to turn time back to the days of Kidd and the buccaners.

Captain Is Skeptical.

Wales took the story to the purser, who passed it along by way of a lieutenant to the captain, who simply did not believe it. But if he would not believe his ears he had to believe his eyes. Spencer and Small and Cromwell were always holding whispered conferences,

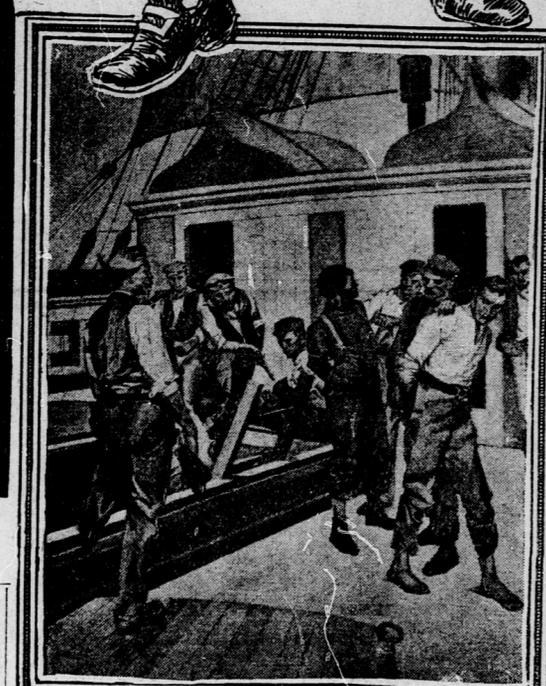
Groups of seamen melted away at the approach of an officer. The crew became surly, and so openly antagonistic to the usual discipline of a ship's routine, that he was forced to take action. So he arrested the three men. Spencer tried to treat the matter as a joke. McKenzie called a council of his officers, and they unanimously agreed, after a careful taking of testimony from the crew, that they were in imminent danger of losing the ship and that the three men accused were clearly guilty. They were sentenced and the following day executed. Spencer confessed, and admitted the justice of the finding. He even went up to having planned in the same way to seize the Potomac and the Adams. Small also confessed. Cromwell maintained his innocence, but he was deeply implicated in the confessions of the others that he was hanged with them. That night the three men were buried at sea, and within a week the Somers was in port and the news had reached Washington.

Hanging Starts Controversy.

A controversy which stirred the whole country ensued. Captain McKenzie was ultimately justified in his course. Mr. Spencer resigned from the Cabinet, nominally because he did not believe in the Mexican war, and retired into private life, a crushed, broken man, followed by the sympathy of the entire nation. Within a year he died. Within another year, on his first cruise after "the mutiny," he was killed by three French privateers, who threw his body overboard. The Eliza was four days out from the Delaware capes, when on September 12, 1820, the mutiny broke out. The three foreigners found the mate asleep on the deck; they killed him with an ax, and threw his body overboard. They went to the captain's cabin, and finding him in his berth, stabbed and beat him till he ought to have been dead. But the captain was a man with no sense of fitness, and he drove them off with a pair of pistols. They killed the supercargo and the only American sailor on board before it occurred to them that not one of them knew enough of navigation to sail the vessel. So they offered to spare the captain's life if he would bring them safe into port.

Mutinies in Merchant Marine.

Unfortunately, though, the record of the American Navy is pretty clean, that of the American merchant marine is not. There are some terrible tales of mutiny in its annals. The record of them was written a year or two ago for Munsey's Magazine by John R. Spear, and is a story as gruesomely interesting and much more realistic than any of the pirate tales of the Spanish main. The first of these in point of time is the story of the schooner Eliza, which sailed from Philadelphia for St. Thomas under Captain Wheland, in the last year of the eighteenth century. She carried only seven men all told, three of them foreigners, who subsequently claimed to be Frenchmen, though they shipped as Jacob Baker, Joseph Brous, and Peter Peterson, none of them names of a pronouncedly Gallic flavor. But one of them held a commission as captain of a French privateer, and on the strength of it, the three, when brought to trial, tried to escape punishment, pleading that their seizure of the little vessel was not mutiny, but an act of war. For five years French privateers had been preying upon American commerce, with practically no retaliation on the part of the Government.



The Punishment Of The Mutineers On The brigantine Natal. Captain Eustrom Lined Them Up And Shot The Leaders.

chance to regain control of her. Then he saw two of the men go down into the hold for a barrel of hams. The third was at work on the deck near by. Him the captain knocked down and momentarily stunned. Then he drew the cover over the hatchway, imprisoning the two in the hold. He tied his first man to a ring bolt. And thus thirteen days later he brought his men safe into port, as per contract. Of course, the wind favored him, but even at that driving a schooner single-handed for thirteen days was no child's play.

It was French territory where he finally landed, the little island of St. Bartholomew. But there was a United States brig, the Eagle, Lieutenant Campbell, commanding, in the harbor, and Wheland turned his prisoners over to him. The "act of war" plea was not accepted, and the men were hanged.

Mutiny in Coincidence.

Next comes the mutiny of the Plattsborg, the most remarkable in the history of American commerce. The Plattsborg was owned by Isaac McKim, of Baltimore, one of the foremost American merchants of his day, and commanded on this memorable cruise by Capt. William Hackett. The vessel was bound for Smyrna for a cargo of "Eastern goods," a polite euphemism for opium. She carried a cargo of coffee and American dollars—\$2,000 of the latter in coin. The crew was not signed until after she was loaded, and the loading was done as quietly as possible, for a cargo of coin was in those days regarded as scarcely less dangerous than a cargo of dynamite today.

When Master William Hackett sought his crew in the sailors' resorts along the water front he fondly imagined that the nature of the cargo was unknown. But the fact that the vessel was to carry coin had leaked out, and some desperadoes had conspired to ship as seamen with the well defined purpose of capturing the schooner and the money. In all good faith, Captain Hackett accepted John Williams, Francis Frederick, John P. Rog, Nils Peterson, John Smith, and three others, known simply as Stromer, Sacey, and Raineaux, first names not known, because they were manifestly able seamen. Frederick was even taken as a passenger, working his passage, since the crew was already full without him. Stromer was a man of such superior mental capacity that the wise men said afterward that Hackett should have known that such a man sailing "deck" the mast must be a crooked stick.

With his promising assortment of out-throats the Plattsborg sailed from Baltimore, July 1, 1816. Trouble began early. While anchored off the capes, Frederick Yeiser, the first mate, ordered John Smith to sweep the deck. Smith set overdid the thing, and used so large a dose that it acted as its own antidote; and Lamberson, the negro cook, was whipped for not keeping the coffee-pot clean.

A day or two later the real outbreak came. On the night of Saturday, July 31, Mate Yeiser had the deck from 8 o'clock till midnight, when Second Mate Stephen B. Onion came on duty. It was so dark that he could see only a few feet ahead. He was horrified as he walked forward, to hear John Williams, the lookout, cry "Sail ho!" He ran forward to the lee bow, where Yeiser joined him. As the two officers leaned over the rail peering into the darkness trying to see what was coming, they were set upon by the mutineers, and knocked down by clubs. Yeiser was thrown overboard, but Onion managed to escape, and hid himself in the bread locker.

The captain, coming on deck to find out what the row was about, was knocked down and thrown overboard. Onion supercargo followed the captain. Onion was spared to help them navigate the ship, Stromer taking command. They were then about a day out from St. Mary's, but they turned north, and sailed their stolen ship to an obscure port in Norway. There they got drunk and, instead of smuggling the coffee, as they had planned, the crew abandoned the vessel.

Some of them went to Copenhagen, where they spent money so freely as to arouse suspicion, and when Onion, the second mate, who had been impressed by the mutineers, took Lamberson, the colored cook, and told the whole story to the American consul, six of the mutineers, then in Copenhagen, were arrested, a seventh being captured at Christiansand. These arrests should have brought about the recovery of \$2,000, but the men had been ashore for two weeks, and they had but \$2,000 among them. Four of them—Rog, Peterson, Williams, and Frederick—were convicted of murder and hanged. A fifth, White, was cleared on the ground that he was forced into the mutiny, and the state witnesses, the others escaped.

The vessel had acquired such a bad name in this affair that no decent crew could be found to sail her; so her owner sold her at auction. Eventually when sailing as a merchantman under the United States sloop of war Cyane, as a slaver.

Mutiny Going Out of Fashion.

But mutiny is fast going out of fashion. Sea strikes there are, and there probably will be, increasingly, because unionism has spread from land to sea, and organizations of seamen for mutual protection are as common on board ship

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as they are ashore. But they are not of the murderous or practical order. Millions of dollars in gold are carried between Europe and the United States every year. Frequently a single cargo is valuable enough to entice the entire crew of the vessel carrying it for life, and fifteen or twenty determined blackguards of the old type of pirate mutineer could easily capture such a ship and make off with her gold. But no score of such rascals will ever under modern conditions band themselves together on any one ship for such an enterprise.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, two remarkable mutinies occurred on American ships, one in the name of Allah, and the other apparently in the name of the devil. It was in 1855 that Capt. Robert K. Clarke, of the American ship Frank N. Thayer, shipped at Manila, two Malay sailors from the island of Sulu. They were Mohammedans, and members of a fanatical pirate clan of Sulu, who regard their religious duty and the surest methods of winning their way to paradise, to kill as many infidels as possible. At midnight of January 2, 1855, as the watches were being changed and the two mates were discussing the weather, the Malays approached them complaining of illness. As soon as they got within reach, however, they stabbed both the mates to death, and then turning on the crew, which seems to have been paralyzed with fear, killed five of them and wounded two more. Captain Clarke, however, had his wits about him, and when they came to his cabin he was ready for them, though unarmed. He drove them out with his fists and was badly cut in the scuffle. Eventually both the Malays were killed, but the last one before he died managed to set fire to the ship and the crew was obliged to take to the boats, in which they managed to reach St. Helena.

Last Mutiny a Fizzle.

What it is believed and hoped will prove the final chapter in the history of mutiny on American ships was written as late as 1880 on the brigantine Natal. Peter F. Eustrom, captain. The vessel was bound for Irishane. The mutineers must have known that even if they took the ship they would eventually be captured and punished, and really there was nothing on her worth taking—that is, no money or anything easily convertible into money. So just what they did it for has never been explained.

The ship's carpenter and a seaman named Toton were the leaders of the affair. They were taken to the brig another seaman, Johansen, to join them. They were to take the ship at midnight, and the first things they were always done at midnight. To that they brained the captain's son, a boy of fifteen, who was serving as second mate, with an ax as he was washing his face over a bucket of sea water. They threw his body overboard and went after his father, whom they found asleep in a lounge in the cabin. The carpenter struck at him with his ax, but the blow inflicted was not mortal. Captain Eustrom rose to fight for his life, and the steward with a sheath knife and Johansen with a capstan bar joined in the attack.

Toton meanwhile having fired four shots at the mate, whom he had found asleep in his bunk, and believing that he had killed him, started to help his fellows in their fight with their wounded captain. He dropped his revolver on the way, and the mate, who was not seriously hurt, picked it up and went to the captain's rescue. The mutineers were driven from the cabin and the two officers locked themselves in and dressed up their wounds. Then with a rifle and three revolvers, they went after their bold mutineers, who seem to have tucked their tails between their legs and run for the hold. They were starved out of that after four days and surrendered. Captain Eustrom lined them up on deck, and shot the carpenter and Toton, the leaders in the affair, dead. The others were spared.

Thus ended the last mutiny on board a vessel flying the American flag. That any American battleship should ever fall into the hands of mutineers, as the Kaluz Potemkin did, the Government should be proud to prevent. Any American fleet should be destroyed to prevent its falling into the hands of unscrupulous jackies, seem beyond the wildest range of human probabilities. The American navy is now built for war, nor does his treatment in any way warrant it. It did, he says, that they can secure redress without waiting for the settlement of the entire case against him. There are many ways to the "allow" journals ready to do his story to the interested world.