

out my assistance, but so it was. I was zealous enough, but for the life of me I never could find anything to do. One day the executive officer, Lieutenant Timothy Hunt, tired I suppose of seeing me "standing about" told me to see what Lieutenant Handy was doing, and to help him. I called upon Lieutenant H. and asked him what he was doing; he replied: "nothing;" "well," said I, "I've come to help you." This was all the duty I remember to have done at the yard.

CHAPTER XII.

ORDERED TO THE SLOOP-OF-WAR "YORKTOWN"—SAIL FROM BOSTON—ARRIVAL AT PORTO PRAYA—FIRST CRUISE ON THE COAST OF AFRICA—THE GAMBIA RIVER—MONROVIA—BATTLE BETWEEN THE LIBERIANS AND NATIVES—PRESIDENT ROBERTS—A CRUISE TO WINDWARD—CADIZ, FUNCHAL, TENERIFFE, PALMAS—PORTO PRAYA AGAIN—AN OLD CITY—RIDING OUT A GALE ON A LEE SHORE—RESCUE OF THE AMERICAN BRIG "COPPERTHWAITE."

In September of this year I was ordered to the frigate *Constitution*, fitting out at the Boston navy yard for the Mediterranean; but the ship was largely stocked with passed and other midshipmen and not wishing to pass another cruise on the fore-castle or quarter deck carrying messages and calling the "relief," I applied to have my orders changed to the *Yorktown*, a sloop-of-war fitting out for the coast of Africa. The Secretary of the Navy granted my request and remarked that he expected I was the only officer who had preferred a sloop-of-war on the coast of Africa to a fine frigate in the Mediterranean; but I was looking forward to promotion and a "watch," and I got it.

The *Yorktown* was a third-class sloop-of-war of 560 tons, and carried a battery of sixteen 32-pounders of 27 cwt. She was a staunch little craft and a good sea-boat. We went into commission in October, Captain John Marston. The other officers were: Lieutenants, Rootes, Spottswood, Frailey and Fleming; Sailing Master, Caldwell; Purser, Semple; Surgeon, Fox; Passed Assistant Surgeon, Potter; Passed Midshipmen, Coleman, Seawell, Selden and Parker; Midshipmen, Bruce, J. Parker, Fyffe and Means; Boatswain, Young; Gunner, Oliver; Sailmaker, Frankland, and Carpenter, Mager. Our junior lieutenant left us as soon as we got on the station,

and the passed midshipmen were promoted to fill vacancies; otherwise there were absolutely no changes in our officers, which in a two years' cruise is rather remarkable, especially on what is called a sickly station. We had a very fine crew and numbered in all 150 souls. Commodore Benjamin Cooper took passage with us; he was appointed to succeed Commodore Bolton in the command of the African squadron and intended to hoist his flag on board the *Portsmouth*, a very fine first-class sloop.

I do not propose to give a detailed account of the cruise. A two years' stay on the African coast does not, as a general thing, present much variety of incident. The object of keeping vessels on the coast was to capture slavers and protect our own lawful traders. The English and American Governments kept squadrons of a certain number of guns in accordance with a special agreement or treaty—(since abrogated). The English took many slavers but our vessels, being bound by our interpretation of the "right of search" took very few indeed. The explorations of Livingstone, Burton, Stanley and others have added very much to our knowledge of Africa in the last thirty years; and the introduction of steam-packets along the coast has no doubt made the aspect of it very different from what I remember it in 1848-9-50.

We sailed from Boston November 22, 1848, and had a very rough passage across the Atlantic. I had been in heavy gales in the Gulf of Lyons, *pamperos* off Monte Video, and "northers" in the Gulf of Mexico and thought I knew what bad weather was; but this experience in the Atlantic on the "fortieth parallel" exceeded anything I had before dreamed of. When we were not scudding we were lying to; and had not the little ship been, as I have said, a very good sea-boat she must have foundered. I have seen her hove to with only a tarpaulin in the mizen rigging and not a rag of sail on her forward rising to the seas and not *shipping* one. She had a way as Joe Seawell said of making two "butts" at a sea, and then going around it. For many days we in the steerage did not pretend to wear shoes and stockings—everything was wet

for the steerage was ankle-deep in water. However, we arrived safely at Madeira and found the *Jamestown*, Commodore Bolton, in port. Remaining but a few days we sailed for the Cape de Verde islands, looked in at Porto Grande, and early in January, 1849, anchored at Porto Praya. Here we found the *Portsmouth*, and Commodore Cooper transferred his flag to her. Lieutenant Fleming accompanied him as "Flag"; Caldwell was made junior lieutenant, and I succeeded him as sailing master. After filling up our provisions and water we sailed to make the usual four months' cruise on the coast. While crossing the Atlantic we found that our rudder-post was decayed, and as Porto Praya did not offer the facilities required we went first to Bathurst on the Gambia river to repair it. The Gambia is a pretty sheet of water and the appearance of Bathurst is picturesque in the extreme. It was from Pisanea on this river that Mungo Park set out on his last expedition to discover the mouth of the Niger river, in 1805. We found here several companies of one of the English West India regiments. These regiments have white officers, and the privates are recruited from the captured slaves. All the English posts on the coast were garrisoned by these troops. The officers of the regiment at Bathurst were individually very polite and hospitable; but I observed here, what I afterwards noticed at the other posts, that the officers did not agree well together and were split up into several small messes. I had expected to see them a "band of brothers"—exiles in a sickly clime as they were—but it was otherwise. Thinking of this curious state of affairs I came to the conclusion that it must be the effect of the climate; their livers get out of order and they become irritable and quarrelsome.

We put an iron band on the rudder-head which we thought would answer temporarily and then sailed for Monrovia. This town is situated on Cape Mesurado which is elevated about 80 feet above the ocean. The small river Mesurado enters the sea on its northern side. Monrovia was named in honor of President Monroe, one of the earliest friends of the American

Colonization Society, and is the capital of Liberia. The first settlement was made in Liberia in 1822; it remained under the protection of the Colonization Society until 1847 when it became a free and independent republic, and Mr. Roberts, formerly a slave in Petersburg, Virginia, was elected President. The republic was modeled after the government of the United States. At the time of our first visit the town of Monrovia was much excited at the probability of a war with a tribe on the southern coast. It appears that some Spaniards (slave dealers) held possession of a strip of coast which the Liberians claimed to have purchased some years before and refused to give it up. They had a factory in the neighborhood of Sinou, and a large quantity of stores, such as rum, cotton-cloths, muskets, powder, &c., &c. on hand for the purchase of slaves. It must be understood that the tribes on the coast are not opposed to the slave trade, for the reason that the "slavers" make it a rule never to carry them off—the coast tribes make war upon those in the interior and all the slaves they capture they sell to the "factors," who put them in *barracoons* until an opportunity occurs to ship them. The Spaniards, therefore, felt perfectly safe in arming the tribe at Sinou and defying the Liberians.

Great preparations were going on at Monrovia, reinforcements were arriving from the different settlements, and Queen Anne muskets, second-hand uniforms, swords, epaulettes, cocked hats and top boots were at a premium. President Roberts, a mulatto, (about three fourths white I should judge), was a man of character and some education. As he was on board the *Yorktown* a month or more I had an opportunity of observing him. He was very quiet in his deportment and modest withal. We were of course full of curiosity as to the object of the grand expedition and Roberts being close-mouthed we used to "pump" one Colonel Hicks who kept the hotel in Monrovia where we were in the habit of dining when on shore. Hicks was a regular old time darkey and very talkative. Upon one or two occasions where the Liberians had

come in collision with the natives Hicks had incontinently fled—he was a born coward, and it was well understood. Hicks, however, did not know much about matters although he was on the President's staff. As he himself acknowledged, upon his propounding a few questions to the President, he had replied: "Colonel Hicks mind your own business." "Oh!" said Hicks in relating this: "That Roberts is a smart nigger!" It was well for him that Roberts did not hear him!

When all was ready the army under Brigadier General Lewis, (also a mulatto, and a former slave in Virginia) was put on board some small schooners, and these were taken in tow by a French steam gunboat which co-operated with the Liberians. We sailed in company with President Roberts on board and soon anchored off Sinou. The force was landed the next morning and although we had orders to take no part yet at the request of Roberts our captain consented to let four unarmed boats pull in with them, for effect. I went in charge of one and had a good view of the battle.

When Colonel Hicks landed, which was towards the last, he was a sight to see, in his cocked-hat, epaulettes and top boots. Our purser, an old acquaintance, chaffed him unmercifully because he did not go to the front; but Hicks did not advance; he "saw from the beach when the morning was shining" all he wanted to see.

The opposing parties with their old fashioned arms kept up a heavy fire *at long range* the whole of the first day. The natives lay hidden in the woods or bushes and the Liberians would not leave the sea-side. The second day the French captain thinking he might be kept there a lifetime decided to take a hand in it himself; so twenty sailors were landed under a lieutenant, the woods were shelled by the steamer, and with the Frenchmen in advance the Liberians advanced into the country. Having given them a "start" the Frenchmen returned and left the army to pursue its victorious career; the enemy retreating up the country to the factory where the Spaniards had established their head quarters, and which was

General Lewis' objective. After the Frenchmen left, the advance was led by a company of Congo negroes who had been captured in a slaver and were now apprenticed in Monrovia. They were the bravest men in the army. The Liberians were absent four or five days and at night we could track them by the burning villages. They reached the factory and burned it and returned to the beach with the Spaniards as prisoners. There was great rejoicing in all the land when the victorious army got back to Monrovia. We had orders to take President Roberts on board again, which we did, and visited Cape Palmas, Grand Bassa, Tradetown, Cape Mount and other places. The president lived in the cabin and conducted himself with much propriety.

We fell in with an English man-of-war at Cape Mount and as soon as her captain saw the Liberian standard at our mast-head he came on board in full uniform to call upon President Roberts. In fact, at all the places visited he received the same honors as would have been extended to a crowned head. We carried Mr. Roberts back to Monrovia, and in June returned to Porto Praya. Here we replenished our stores of provisions and water and sailed for Cadiz in Spain. This was off our station; but our rudder-post was in such bad condition that it became necessary to replace it, and this could not be done at any port on the coast. It may readily be believed that we were glad to have so pleasant a break in our cruise. We touched at Madeira on our way for a few days. We found the *Portsmouth* in port and Commodore Cooper whose health had long been failing went home in her. In a few months she rejoined the squadron bearing the flag of Commodore F. S. Gregory.

We were in Cadiz some weeks while a new rudder-post was made for us at the dock-yard. We then sailed and spent the summer in visiting Madeira, Teneriffe and Palmas; and in October returned to Port Praya. The cruise to windward was a most delightful one, and was of much service to us all. The merchants of Funchal, Madeira, are famed for their hospitality

and the people of Palmas, Grand Canary, we found equally kind. I shall have more to say of these islands in my next chapter.

Porto Praya is on the island of St. Jago, one of the Cape de Verdes. It is a small town, inhabited by a few Portuguese, half breeds, and negroes; the latter constitute the bulk of the population. It is situated on a high bluff overlooking the bay and is not particularly unhealthy or warm.

The harbor is a good enough one during the continuance of the "trades," which blow about ten months in the year. In the months of August and September heavy gales sometimes blow from the southwest, and as the harbor is open in that direction vessels which happen to be in the port must slip their cables and go to sea.

It was to Porto Praya that Commodore Charles Stewart brought his two prizes, the *Cyane* and *Levant*, which he had captured in the frigate *Constitution* eighteen days before: February 20th, 1815. While lying there an English squadron of superior force made its appearance and the commodore fearing it would not observe the neutrality of the port stood out to sea with his ships, and endeavored to make his escape. The *Constitution* and the *Cyane* got safely to New York, but the *Levant* was recaptured.

On the north side of the island are the ruins of an old Portuguese city. It was abandoned in consequence of having no harbor; but from the appearance of the ruins it must have been rather an imposing place. I saw there the stone walls of the churches and other public buildings. Upon the occasion of my visit I went to a monastery, some portions of which are inhabitable; indeed we found several black monks in possession. There was a library there and some of the books were in a good state of preservation. These books must have been very old and rare and would be worth their weight in gold in London. Being fond of old books I have since regretted not purchasing some of them which I could readily have done.

The Cape de Verdes were discovered in 1449, and I expect

this city was founded not many years after. It was called Santiago, and it was here that the *Vittoria*, one of Magellan's squadron, touched, July 10th, 1522, upon her return to Spain after having accomplished the first circumnavigation of the globe. The old city presented a mournful appearance; but we found a few negroes there. Dr. Potter being with me all the sick were brought out for him to prescribe for as soon as it became known. It is indeed sad to fall in with people in these out-of-the-way places and witness their sufferings for the want of medical and especially surgical assistance. The fever they can manage themselves, but any accident to body or limb must go uncared for. The only people more to be pitied in this respect are the American merchant sailors.

The Government established a depot at Porto Praya some time in 1842 I believe, and it was the general rendezvous of the squadron. The island furnishes very fair mess stores—fruits in great abundance, and the oranges the best I have ever seen anywhere. The inhabitants raise turkeys in great numbers, and at all the places on the coast we found them in abundance. This rather surprised me, for I do not remember seeing them in any numbers in the tropics anywhere else.

We were caught here on this visit by a southwest gale which came near driving us ashore. The wind sprang up at night and increased so rapidly that our captain did not think it prudent to attempt to get underweigh and he decided to ride it out. All hands were called about two A. M., the topmasts were housed and the lower yards sent down. We were riding by the starboard bower anchor, and immediately let go the port bower and sheet anchors; we yeered chain on all until the starboard bower had 120 fathoms out. I had never before seen a vessel ride out a gale on a lee shore; and as the sea rose and came rolling in it seemed impossible that anything could hold the ship. The port chains did not get an even strain with the starboard bower, and as the ship rose to a sea she would straighten the latter out as stiff as an iron bar and the strain would squeeze the stay-bolts out of it. But it held. We were

in the habit of overhauling our chains once a quarter and knew that everything was in good order. The stern of the ship was not very far from the rocks at the base of a steep cliff, and if the ship had gone ashore not many of the hundred and fifty men on board would have reached the shore alive. We were up all night and well into the next day making all snug. The starboard sheet was hemp and it took some time to bend it, which we did. At noon just as the order was given to pipe to dinner an American brig—called the *Copperthwaite*, from Philadelphia on a trading voyage—dragged ashore and hoisted her colors union down. It was my special duty, as Master to attend to this kind of work so I volunteered to go to her assistance. The captain hesitated some time about lowering a boat—indeed there was such a fearful sea running that most of the lieutenants thought that a boat could not reach the shore—but he finally consented to let me make the attempt. The boatswain was ordered to call down the main hatch for volunteers and the whole ship's company promptly responded. Passed Midshipman Selden volunteered to go with me and we picked out thirteen men, most of whom were petty officers. The boat was lowered with Selden, two men and myself in her, and towed astern by a hawser; the other men jumped overboard with lines and we pulled them in the boat as best we could. Watching a favorable opportunity we let go the hawser, pulled short round, and made for the stranded brig. I cannot attempt to describe the trip; but we could only see the top of our ship's masts when we went down in the hollow of the waves, and from the ship they did not see *us* at all.

There was an American whaler between us and the shore and her boats were much better adapted to the work than ours but her crew looked upon it as our "pigeon," and contented themselves with giving us three cheers as we went flying by. The brig was lying broadside to the beach, the sea was making a clean breach over her and the men were lashed in the rigging. I pulled in under her lee to turn round, and having done so, pulled directly for her main rigging in which I saw her

captain waiting. As we got near I ran forward to be the first on board and as the boat touched the brig's side I made a spring and caught the captain's hand, at the same time the receding wave carried the boat back towards the shore. I hung on for a moment, but our hands being wet and perhaps a little greasy, my hold slipped and overboard I went. The anxiety of my men to save me came near drowning me; for as soon as my head appeared one fellow stuck a boat-hook in the back of my neck which pushed me under again, and I could not get a chance to catch my breath. When I *did* catch it I ordered them in terms more forcible than polite to let me alone, and being a tolerable swimmer I was soon on board the brig and my men after me. As is the custom in such cases I took command of the brig and gave some necessary orders as to sending down the upper yards and masts, and to execute which my men sprang aloft like cats. The captain relieved of all responsibility seemed another man, and his first words were: "Well gents, what will you take to drink?"

At sunset the gale had somewhat moderated; but fearing the brig might go to pieces during the night, and knowing that no assistance could be expected from the shore, we decided to leave her and watch her from the beach. As I had previously sent the boat ashore under the lee of the brig, where she had been hauled up by the natives, we all jumped overboard and swam ashore in a body. The gale still moderating we went off to the brig again shortly after midnight and got an anchor out to windward. About daylight the land breeze made, we set sail, and by 8 A. M. she was afloat. The brig was really not much injured; she leaked a little, but not more than the pumps could clear very handily; the men however were tampered with by the Portuguese merchants in Porto Praya and went before the American Consul and protested against going to sea in her. The Consul ordered a survey, and we sent a gang of men, discharged her cargo, and hove her down. Our carpenters stopped the leak, and we put her all *a-taunto* again; the men still refused to go in her and she was sold.

She was worth about six thousand dollars and brought fifteen hundred. A few days after, she sailed for the coast under a Portuguese captain with a full cargo of rice! Not the first American vessel sacrificed in this way in a foreign port by a long shot. I felt very much for the poor captain, and after all the men did not make very much by their motion as most of them died of fever. In spite of the exposure and hard work our men did not suffer at all. We did not have a single case of fever. For my services on this occasion I, some months afterwards, received a letter from the Hon. Secretary of State; all I remember about it is that it was tied with a blue ribbon.