

How Mr. Harding Conducted the Defense

By DWIGHT NORWOOD

"Mr. Harding," said Captain Wainwright, handing his glass to his first mate, "what do you think of that thing over there?"

"I think," said Harding, "that it is one of those devilish Chinese pirates that infest these waters."

This dialogue occurred on the American tramp steamer North Star in the Java sea, a region dreaded by mariners for the villainous characters who infest it.

"What do you think of our chances in case they attack us?" asked the captain.

"That depends on our ingenuity. We can't sink them before they reach us. We'll have to prevent their boarding us if we can, and if they board us we will have to fight them for our lives."

"How can we prevent their boarding us?"

"By so manning the points they attempt to climb that they can't get on deck. One American sailor armed should be able to keep off three Chinamen from climbing a perpendicular ship's side. But excuse me, captain. I see that the villains are pointing for us; I must go below and order up the arms."

Harding left the captain peering at the junk. It was a small vessel, smaller than the North Star, but its deck was literally swarming with copper colored fiends ready for loot and murder. It had no ordnance of any caliber; it had been armed and equipped by men who had no especial means to equip it, and, as Harding said, relied on taking such ships as it could overpower by boarding.

Soon after the first officer had gone below the men began to bring up guns, pistols and cutlasses and distributed them, with ammunition to fit, along the bulwarks.

"Where's Mr. Harding?" the captain demanded of one of the men. "What's he doing below when we're in peril for our lives?"

"He's in the engine room," was the reply.

At that moment a diabolical shout went up which diverted the captain's attention from the delinquent Mr. Harding. It was a bloodthirsty cry of triumph. The pirates, having come near enough to the North Star to make sure that she had no means of sinking her adversary, were in a very hilarious state. Their junk was a tolerably good sailer, and the wind was fair to enable them to bear down on their enemy. The North Star, though a steamer, was a tub and could barely do seven miles an hour.

On came the junk, her murderous crew dancing and shouting and chattering and brandishing their weapons. The captain of the North Star was so terrified that he took no action whatever, but the second officer, Mr. Meiggs, was quietly arranging the men in groups along the bulwarks and giving them their orders. There were a few hand grenades in the stock of explosives, and Meiggs ordered them on to the fore-castle, where it was expected the Chinamen would attempt to climb the bowsprit chains, for the North Star was part steamer and part sailer. The crew was divided into two sections, the one forward, the other aft.

"Why are you leaving the ship clear for the devil's amidships, Mr. Meiggs?" wailed the captain. "Don't you suppose they've got sense enough to come aboard where they have the least

height to climb?"

"It's Mr. Harding's orders, sir."
"Harding's orders? What's he doing giving orders from the engine room?"
Again the captain's attention was distracted by a yell from the pirates, who were right under the North Star's stern. There was a volley from the men posted there, and a grappling hook that was thrown and caught on the gunwale was cast off.

Then the Chinamen were seen taking to their boats with the evident intention of stringing the fight out so far that the little crew of the North Star would not be able to keep them off from all points at once. A boat load of men well armed and with hooks and rope ladders attacked the stern, another the bow, while a boat was sent on each side.

At this time Harding, dragging a hose, and the fireman, dragging another, came up the companionway.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked the captain.

Harding had no time to reply in words, but he did reply in action. Two or three of the Chinamen had climbed up the unprotected port side, and one of them had a leg over the gunwale. Harding let drive at him with a half inch jet of steam from the boiler, and he went back over the side, doubtless glad to get into the cold water below. At the same time the fireman opened up on another party about to jump down on to the deck on the starboard side. Both Harding and the fireman, having cleared the gunwale, carried the nozzle to the side and, pointing the stream downward, gave a death scald to every one in the boats below. The bow and stern being well protected by legitimate arms of warfare and the sides being impregnable against a jet of hot steam, the pirates withdrew.

Harding, who had saved the ship by his admirable foresight and resource, became the idol of the crew, while all respect for the captain was gone. When the North Star sailed again from an American port Harding was her master.

Girls With Boys' Names.

Girls with boys' names and boys with girls' have received them in many instances no doubt by accident. It was so in the case of George Anne Bellamy, the famous eighteenth century actress, who played Juliet to Garfield's Romeo. Born on St. George day, she was to be called Georgiana, but somebody's blunder at the time of her christening split this into George Anne. The "corn law rhimer," Ebenezer Elliott, had a daughter named Noah, whose passport is said to have given her much trouble abroad. But here, as in the case of other girl Noahs, it was only other people's Biblical ignorance that was at fault, for turn to Numbers xxxvi, 11, and you will find that Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah were the daughters of Zelophead.—London Graphic

Flowers on Icebergs.

Flowers blooming on icebergs would certainly be a rare sight, but travelers in the northern portions of the Pacific and sometimes in the north Atlantic have witnessed this strange but very beautiful spectacle. It appears that some animals carry on their feet a growth of moss, which is deposited on the ice while it is attached to the mainland in polar regions. In time this decays and forms a shallow soil, in which the seed of buttercups and dandelions often find a lodging, borne by currents of wind that doubtless caught them up in some southern clime. These take root and bloom when the great gleaming iceberg floats out to sea and is carried southward, where the soft winds melt the surface and give the plants the moisture they need.

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