

NEW AND IMPROVED SERIES.

No. 21.

THE LIFE

AND UNPARALLELED

VOYAGES AND ADVENTURES

OF

AMBROSE GWINNETT;

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS BEING

TRIED, CONVICTED, AND HANGED IN CHAINS AT DEAL,

FOR THE

SUPPOSED MURDER OF MR. COLLINS;

HIS SURPRISING RECOVERY;

His Voyage to the West Indies, and being taken by the Spaniards, among whom he met with the supposed murdered Mr. Collins, and proposal to return to England together;

HIS BEING TAKEN BY THE ALGERINES AND CARRIED INTO SLAVERY,

AND, AFTER MANY HARDSHIPS,

HIS RETURN TO ENGLAND.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.

1850.

Price One Penny.

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THE LIFE

OF

JOHN WILKINSON

BY
JAMES M. COOK

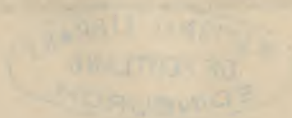
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THE
LIFE AND ADVENTURES
OF
AMBROSE GWINNETT.

I WAS born of reputable parents in the city of Canterbury, where my father dealt in hops. He had but two children, a daughter and myself; and having given me a good education, at the age of sixteen he bound me an apprentice to Mr. George Roberts, an attorney in the same town, with whom I stayed nearly five years, to his great content and my own satisfaction.

My sister, being come to woman's estate, had now been married something more than twelve months to one Sawyer, a seafaring man, who had got considerable prizes; and my father giving him £200 with my sister, he quitted his profession, and set up a public-house within three miles of the place of his nativity; which was Deal, in the county of Kent.

I had frequent invitations to pass a short time with them; and, in the autumn of the year 1710, having obtained my master's consent for that purpose, I left the city of Canterbury on foot on a Wednesday morning, being the 17th day of September; but, through some unavoidable delay on the road, the evening was considerably advanced before I reached Deal; and I was so tired, being unaccustomed to that way of travelling, that, had my life depended upon it, I could not have got so far as my sister's that night. At this time,

there were many of her Majesty Queen Anne's ships lying in the harbour, the English being then at war with the French and Spaniards; besides which, I found this was the day for holding the half-yearly fair, so that the town was filled to such a degree, that a bed was not to be had for love or money. I went seeking a lodging from house to house to no purpose, till, being quite spent, I returned to the public-house where I had first made inquiry, desiring leave to sit by their kitchen fire, to rest myself until morning.

The publican and his wife where I put up happened, unfortunately for me, to be acquainted with my brother and sister; and finding, by my discourse, that I was a relation of theirs, and going to visit them, the landlady presently said she would endeavour to get me a bed, and, going out of the kitchen, she shortly after called me into a parlour that led from it. Here I saw, sitting by the fireside, a middle-aged man, in a night gown and cap, reckoning money at a table. "Uncle," said the woman, as soon as I entered, "this is a brother of our friend, Mrs Sawyer; he cannot get a bed anywhere, and is tired after his journey; you are the only one that lies in this house alone, will you give him a part of yours?" To this the man answered, that she knew he had been out of order, that he was bled that day, consequently, a bedfellow could not be very agreeable. However, said he, rather than the young man should sit up, he is welcome to sleep with me. After this, we sat a while together; when, having put his money, in a canvass bag, into the pocket of his night-gown, he took the candle, and I followed him to bed.

How long I slept I cannot exactly determine, but I conjectured it was about three o'clock in the morning, when I awakened with the colic, attended with the most violent gripes. I attributed this to some bacon and cabbage I had eaten the former day for dinner, after which I had drunk a large draught of milk. I found my chum awake as well as myself. He asked me what was the matter. I informed him, and at the

same time begged he would direct me to the necessary. He told me that, when down stairs, I must turn to my right hand, and go straight into the garden, at the end of which it was, just over the water; but, added he, you may possibly find some difficulty in opening the door, the string being broken which pulls up the latch; I will give you a penknife with which you may open it, through a chink in the boards. So saying, he put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, which lay over him on the bed, and gave me a middling-sized penknife.

I hurried on a few of my clothes, and went down stairs; but I must observe that unclasping the penknife to open the door of the necessary, according to his direction, a piece of money, which had stuck between the blade and the groove in the handle, fell into my hand. I did not examine what it was, nor, indeed, could I well see, there being then but a very faint moonlight, so I put them very carelessly together in my pocket.

I apprehend I stayed in the garden about half an hour, for I was extremely ill, and by overheating myself with walking the preceeding day, brought on the piles, a disorder I was subject to from my youth. These seem trifling circumstances, but they afterwards turned out of infinite importance to me. When I returned to my chamber, I was surpris'd to find my bedfellow gone. I called several times, but not receiving any answer, I took it for granted that he had withdrawn into some adjoining closet for his private occasions. I therefore went to bed again, and fell asleep.

About six o'clock I arose, nobody being yet up in the house. The gentleman was not yet returned to bed, or if he was, had again left it. I then dressed myself with what haste I could, being impatient to see my sister; and the reckoning being paid over-night, I let myself out at the street door.

I will not trouble you with an account of the kindness with which my sister and her husband received me. We breakfasted together; and I believe it might be about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, when, standing at the door, my brother-in-law being at my side, we saw three horsemen galloping towards us. As soon as they came

up, they stopped, and, one of them alighting, suddenly seized my collar, crying, "You are the Queen's prisoner." I desired to know my crime; he said I should know that as soon as I came to Deal, where I must go immediately with them. One of them told my brother that the night before I had committed a robbery and a murder.

Judge, O reader, of my painful situation. You are aware of my innocence; but how was I to prove this satisfactorily to the minds of those who had arrested me, and to those who were to be my judges? Circumstances were completely against me. Would they believe my story of having received the knife from my bedfellow? If I swear I am totally ignorant what has become of him, will they believe me? These, and a thousand other things, rushed into my mind at the moment of my apprehension. But what was to be done in this emergency? they would be satisfied with nothing but my person; and to offer security for my appearance at trial, even if I could have procured friends to become surety for my so doing,—the sum, if sum they would have taken, as I was charged with murder, would have been so great that even here I would have failed. There was no course left, therefore, but to commit myself into the hands of an all-seeing Providence, trusting he would so order the course of his events as would clearly show my innocence.

Resistance, therefore, would have proved as vain as my tears and protestations of my innocence. In a word, a warrant was produced, and I was carried back to Deal by the three men; my brother, with another friend, accompanying me, who knew not what to say, or how to comfort me.

Being arrived in town, I was instantly hurried to the house where I had slept the preceding night, the master of which was one of the three men who came to apprehend me, though, in my first hurry, I did not recollect him. We were met at the door by a crowd of people, every one crying, "Which is he?" "which is he?" As soon as I entered, I was accosted by the publican's wife in tears, "O cursed wretch what hast thou done?"

thou hast murdered and robbed my poor dear uncle, and all through me, who put thee to lie with him. But where hast thou hid his money? and what hast thou done with his body? Thou shalt be hanged on a gallows as high as a Maypole."

My brother begged of her to be pacified, and I was taken into a private room. They then began to question me, as the woman had done, as to where I had put the money, and how I had disposed of the body. I asked them what money, and whose body they meant? They then said I had killed the person I slept with the preceding night, for the sake of a large sum of money I had seen him with. I fell down on my knees, calling on God to witness that I knew nothing about what they accused me of. Then somebody cried, "Carry him up stairs;" and I was taken to the chamber where I had slept. Here the man of the house went to the bed, and, turning down the clothes, showed the sheets, pillows, and bolster dyed in blood. He asked me if I knew anything of that? I declared to God I did not. Said a person that was in the room, "Young man, something very odd must have happened here last night, for lying in the next chamber, I heard groanings, and goings up and down stairs more than once or twice." I told them the circumstance of my illness, and that I had been up and down myself, with all that passed between my bed-fellow and me. Somebody proposed to search me; several began to turn my pockets inside out, and from my waistcoat tumbled the penknife and the piece of money I have already mentioned.

Upon seeing these, the woman immediately screamed out, "O mercy! there is my uncle's penknife." Then taking up the money, and calling the people about her, "here," said she, "is what puts the villain's guilt beyond a doubt: I can swear to this William and Mary's guinea; my uncle has long had it by way of a pocket-piece, and engraved the first letters of his name upon it." She then began to cry again, while I could do nothing but continue to cry to heaven to witness that I was as innocent as the child unborn. After this they took me down to the necessary, and here fresh proofs appeared against

me. The constable, who had never left me, perceiving blood upon the edge of the seat, (which probably might proceed from my being troubled with the hemorrhage the night before,) "here," said she, "after having cut his throat, he has let down the body into the sea." To this everybody immediately assented. "Then," said the master of the house, "it is in vain to look for the body any further; for there was a spring-tide last night which has carried it off."

The consequence of these proceedings was an immediate examination before a Justice of the peace; after which I suffered a long and rigorous imprisonment in the county-town, Maidstone. For some time, my father, master, and relations were inclined to think me innocent; and, in compliance with my earnest request, an advertisement was published in the London Gazette, representing my deplorable circumstances, and offering a reward to any person who could give tidings of Mr. Richard Collins, (the name of the man I was supposed to have murdered,) either alive or dead. No information, however, of any kind came to hand. At the assizes, therefore, I was brought to trial, and circumstances appearing strongly against me, I received sentence to be carried in a cart, the Wednesday fortnight following, to the town of Deal, and there to be hanged before the innkeeper's door where I had committed the murder, after which I was to be hung in chains within a little of my brother's house.

Nothing could have supported me under this dreadful condemnation but consciousness of my not being guilty of the crime for which I was to suffer. My friends now began to consider my declarations of innocence as persisting in falsehood to the perdition of my soul. Many of them discontinued their inquiries after me; and those few who still came to visit me only came to urge me to a confession; but I was resolved that I would never die with a lie of that kind in my mouth.

The Monday before the fatal day now arrived, when an end was to be put to all my miseries. I was called down into the court of the prison; but I confess I was not a little shocked when I found it was to be measured

for the irons in which I was to be hanged after execution. A fellow-prisoner appeared before me in the same woful plight, (he had robbed the mail;) and the smith was measuring him when I came down, while the gaoler, with as much calmness as if he had been ordering a pair of stays to his daughter, was giving directions in what manner the irons should be made, so as to support the man, who was remarkably heavy and corpulent.

Between this and the day of my execution, I spent my time alone in meditation and prayer. At length, Wednesday morning came, and about six o'clock I was put into the cart; but sure such a day of wind, rain, and thunder, never blew out of the heavens; it pursued us all the way; and when we arrived at Deal, it became so violent, that the sheriff and his officers, who had not a dry thread about them, could scarcely sit on their horses. For my own part, my mind, God help me! was, with long agitation, become so unfeeling, that I was in a manner insensible to every object about me; but I heard, without the least emotion, the sheriff whisper to the executioner to make what dispatch he could, and I suffered him to tuck me up like a log of wood, being unconsious of what he was doing.

I can give no account of what I felt while I was hanging, only that I remembered, after being turned off, something for a little appeared about me like a blaze of fire; nor do I know how long I hung. No doubt, the violence of the weather favoured me greatly in that circumstance. What I am now going to tell you, I learned from my brother; which was, that after having hung for about half an hour, the sheriff's officers all went off, and I was cut down by the executioner; but when he came to put the irons upon me, it was found a mistake had been made, and that the irons of the other man, which were much too large for me, had been sent instead of mine. This they remedied as well as they could by stuffing rags between my body and the hoops that surrounded it; after which I was taken, according to my sentence, to the place appointed, and hung on a gibbet, which was ready prepared.

The cloth over my face was but slightly tied, and suffering no pressure from the irons, which stood a great way from it, was, I suppose, soon detached by the wind, which was then rather violent; and probably its blowing upon my bare face expedited my recovery; certain it is, that in this awful and tremendous situation I came to myself.

It was no doubt a very great blessing that I did not immediately return so perfectly to my senses as to have a feeling of things about me; yet I had a sort of recollection of what had happened, and in some measure was sensible where I was.

The gibbet was placed in a corner of a small common field where my sister's cows usually went; and it pleased God, that, about this time, a lad, who took care of them, came to drive them home for evening milking. The creatures, which were feeding almost under me, brought him near the gibbet, when stopping to look at the melancholy spectacle, he perceived that the cloth was from off my face, and, in the very moment he looked up, saw me open my eyes and move my under jaw. He immediately ran home to inform the people at his master's. At first, they had some difficulty in believing his story; but at length my brother came out, and, by the time he arrived at the field, I was so far recovered that my groans were very audible.

It was now dusk. The first thing they ran for was a ladder. One of my brother's men mounted, and putting his hand to my stomach, felt my heart beat very strongly. But it was found impossible to detach me from the gibbet without cutting it down. A saw, therefore was gotten for the purpose, and, without giving you a detail of trifling circumstances, in less than half an hour, having freed me from my irons, they got me bled, and put me into a warm bed in my brother's house.

It is an amazing thing, that, though upwards of eight persons were acquainted with this transaction, and I remained three days in the place after it happened, not a creature divulged the secret. Early next morning, it was known that the gibbet was cut down, and it immediately occurred to everybody that it was done by my

relations, in order to put a veil over their own shame, by burning the body. But when my brother was summoned to the mayor's house in order to be questioned, and he denied knowing anything of the matter, little more stir was made about it; partly because he was greatly respected by all the neighbouring gentlemen, and, in some measure, perhaps, because it was known that I continued to persist strongly in my being innocent of the crime for which I suffered.

Thus, then, was I most miraculously delivered from an ignominious death, if I may call my coming to life a delivery after all I had endured. But how was I to dispose of my life, now that I had regained it? To stay in England was impossible, without exposing myself to the terrors of the law. In this dilemma, a fortunate circumstance occurred. There had been, for some time at my brother's house, one or two of the principal officers of a privateer, that was preparing to cruise, just then ready to sail, and the captain kindly offered to take me on board with him. You may guess that little ceremony was made on our side to accept of such a proposal; and proper necessaries being quickly provided for me, my sister recommended me to the protection of God and the worthy commander, who most humanely received me as a sort of under-assistant to his steward.

We had been six months out upon our cruise, having had but very indifferent success, when, being on the coast of Florida, then in the hands of the Spaniards, we unfortunately fell in with a squadron of their men-of-war, and, consequently, being taken without striking a blow, we were all carried prisoners into the harbour of Havanna. I was really now almost weary of my life, and should have been very glad to have ended it in the loathsome dungeon, where, with forty others of my unfortunate countrymen, the enemy had stowed me; but after three years' close confinement, we were let out in order to be put on board transports, and conveyed to Pennsylvania, and from thence to England. This, as you may believe, was a disagreeable sentence to me, taking it for granted that a return home would be a return to the gallows.

Being now, therefore, a tolerable master of the Spanish language, I solicited very strongly to be left behind; which favour I obtained by means of the master of the prison, with whom, during my confinement, I had contracted a sort of intimacy, and he not only took me into his house as soon as my countrymen were gone, but, in a short time, he procured me a salary from the governor for being his deputy.

Indeed, at this particular time, the office was by no means agreeable. The coast had long been infested with pirates, the most desperate gang of villains that can be imagined, and there was scarcely a month passed that one or other of their vessels did not fall into the governor's hands, and the crew as constantly put under my care. Once I very narrowly escaped being knocked on the head by one of the ruffians, and having the keys wrested from me; at another time I was shot at. It is true, in both cases, the persons suffered for their attempt, and in the last case a little too cruelly, for the fellow who let off the carabine was not only put to the torture to confess his accomplices, but afterwards broken upon the wheel, where he was left to expire, the most shocking spectacle I ever beheld.

I had been in my office about three months, when a ship arrived from Port-Royal, another Spanish settlement on the coast, with nine English prisoners on board. I was standing in the street as they were coming up from the port with a guard of soldiers to the governor's house. On looking in the face of one of the prisoners, it immediately occurred to me that I had formerly been acquainted with him. I could not then stop them to speak together; but, in an hour after, they were all brought down to the prison, there to be lodged till the governor had signified his further pleasure.

As soon as the poor creatures found that I was an Englishman, they were extremely happy, even in their distressing situation; though, indeed, they were treated with lenity enough, and were only sent to the prison until a suitable lodging could be provided for them, they having been, in the course of the war, made prisoners by the Spaniards as well as myself, and were then ou

their return home. I had, therefore, now an opportunity of taking notice of the man whose face I thought I knew, and I was more and more convinced that I was not mistaken; in a word, I verily thought this man was the person for whose supposed murder I had suffered so much in England, and the thought was so strong in my head, that I could not sleep a wink all night.

On the morning after their arrival, I told them that if any of them wished to walk about and see the town, I could procure them permission, and go along with them. This man said he would go, and this was what I wished. Three other prisoners who went out along with us, walked a little in advance. I now took the opportunity, and looking in his face, "Sir," said I, "were you ever at Deal?" I believe he, at that instant, had some recollection of me, for, putting his hand upon my shoulder, tears burst into his eyes. "If you have," said I, "and you be the man I take you for, you here see before you one of the most unfortunate of human kind. Sir, is your name Collins?" He answered it was. "Richard Collins?" said I. He replied, "Yes." "Then," said I, "I was hanged and gibbeted on your account in England."

After our mutual surprise was over, he made me give him a circumstantial detail of every thing that happened to me in England from the moment we parted. I never saw any man express such concern as he did while I was pursuing my melancholy adventures; but when I came to the circumstance of my being hanged, and afterwards hung in chains, I could hardly prevail on him to believe my relation till backed by the most serious asseverations, pronounced in the most solemn manner. When I had done, "Well," said he, "young man, (for I was then but in my five-and-twentieth year; Mr Collins might be about three-and-forty,) if you have sustained any misfortunes upon my account, do not imagine, though I cannot lay them at your door, that I have been without my sufferings. God knows my heart, I am exceedingly sorry for the injustice that has been done you; but the ways of Providence are unsearchable." He then proceeded to inform me by what accident all my troubles had been brought about.

“When you left me in bed,” said he, “having at first awakened with an impression I could not account for, I found myself growing exceedingly sick and feeble. I did not know what was the matter; I groaned and sighed, and thought myself going to die, when accidentally putting my hand to my left arm, in which I had been bled the morning before, I found my shirt wet, and, in short, that the bandage had slipped, and the orifice being again opened, that a great flux of blood had ensued. This immediately accounted for the condition in which I found myself. I thought, however, that I would not disturb the family, who, I knew, had all gone to bed very late; I therefore mustered all my strength, and got up with my night-gown loose about me, for the purpose of going to a neighbouring hair-cutter, in order to have the blood stopped, and the bandage replaced. He lived directly opposite our house; but, when I was crossing the way to knock at his door, a band of men armed with cutlasses and hangers, came down the town, and, seizing me, hurried me towards the beach. I begged and prayed, but they soon silenced my cries. At first, I took them for a pressgang, though I afterwards found they were a gang of ruffians belonging to a privateer, aboard of which they immediately took me; however, before I got there, the loss of blood caused me to faint away. The surgeon of the ship, I suppose, tied my arm; for, when my senses returned, I found myself in a hammock, with somebody feeling my pulse; the vessel was then under weigh.

“I asked where I was. They said I was safe enough. I immediately called for my night-gown; it was brought me; but of a considerable sum of money that was in the pocket of it I could get no account. I complained to the captain of the violence that had been done me, and the robbery his men had committed; but, being a brutish fellow, he laughed at my grief, and told me if I had lost anything I should soon have prize-money enough to make amends. In a word, not being able to help myself, I was obliged to submit; and, for three months, they forced me to work before the mast. In the end, however, we met the same fate that you did.

We were taken by the Spaniards, and, by adventures parallel with your own, you now see me here on my return to my native country, whither, if you will accompany me, I shall think myself extremely happy."

There was nothing now to prevent my returning to England; and a ship being to set sail in eight or ten days, Mr. Collins and I determined to embark in it. As soon as we returned home, I went to my master and told him my resolution; he did not dissuade me from it, chiefly, I suppose, because it gave him an opportunity of getting the little office I held for a nephew of his, who was lately come to live with him, to whom the same day I delivered the trust. And here the providence of God was no less remarkable to me than in other particulars of my life; for, the same night, eight or ten pirates, who were in the prison, watched the occasion, while the young man was locking up the wards, to seize him, taking the keys from him after having left him for dead; and, before the alarm was sufficiently given, five of them made their escape, having, as was supposed, got off the coast by means of the piratical boats, which were kept constantly hovering about.

It was on the 18th of November, 1712, that, having made all my little preparations, I sent my trunk aboard the *Nostra Senora*, a merchant-ship, bound for Cadiz; Michael Deronza, master. The vessel was to set sail that evening, and lie in the roads, about three miles from the town. About seven o'clock in the evening, being then sitting with Signor Gasper, my old friend and master, in the portico of his house, a lad came up, and said that a boat had been waiting half an hour for me at the port, and that my companion, Mr. Collins, was already on board. I ran into the house for my small bundle, and only stayed to take leave of one or two of the family. I made what haste I could to the quay; but, when I arrived, I found the boat had put off, leaving word that I should overtake them at a little bay about a mile beyond the town. The dusk was coming on. I ran along the shore, and, as I imagined, soon had sight of the boat, to which I hallooed as loud as I was able; they answered, and immediately put

about to take me in. But we had scarcely got fifty yards from land, when, on looking about for my friend, Mr. Collins, I missed him; and then it was I found I had made a mistake, and instead of getting on board my own boat, which was now a considerable way ahead, I got into a boat belonging to some of the pirates. I attempted to leap overboard, and could easily have swam ashore, but was prevented by one of the crew, who gave me a stroke on the head, which immediately laid me senseless; and I found afterwards that they mistook me for one of their own men, who had been purchasing goods in the town.

A more infernal crew than these pirates never breathed upon the face of the earth. Their whole lives was a scene of rapine and murder, which, if they had no opportunity of committing upon the wretches that fell into their clutches during their piratical pursuits, they committed on one another. During the time I remained with them, nearly four years, there were no less than eleven assassinations amongst themselves. There was an uninhabited island in the Gulf of Mexico which those villains called Swallow Island, from the great number of those birds which harbour upon it. Here they had a fortification; and the place being rendered almost inaccessible by rocks, except at one little inlet, just large enough to admit a single vessel, they defied the Spanish power.

The captain was one Bryan Walsh, an Irishman, whom I cannot help calling a most execrable and bloody villain, though the Almighty put it into his heart to be a very good friend to me. When I was brought into the ship, and immediately after into the captain's cabin, the first person that accosted me was one of the fellows that broke out of the prison, and had formerly been under my care. He knew me directly; and, without more ado, drawing out his dagger, aimed a stroke at me, which, falling on my neck, entered deep into the flesh, and must infallibly have put an end to my life had not the captain prevented it by raising his cane between him and me, and broke the force of the blow. From that moment, he seemed to take me under his protection.

At his own request, I gave him a history of my own life, which astonished him greatly; but, notwithstanding I pleaded hard to go on shore again, he absolutely refused; and, in spite of all my entreaties, brought me to the island and fortification I have already mentioned, where finding I could read and write, two qualifications he wanted himself, he thought I might be of use to him.

I have already said that with these people I remained nearly four years; on land, I acted as storekeeper, and, at sea, as a sort of purser to the ship. I may observe, that there was always a sufficient number of hands left on the island to man the fort, which was so situated as effectually to prevent the approach of the enemy. Indeed, the office of store-keeper was a place of great trust. You would hardly credit me were I to attempt to tell you of the immense riches these robbers had amassed together. One article alone will be sufficient to give you an idea of it. Under one shed, I counted three thousand eight hundred bales of English goods; and I may safely declare, that in other merchandise, of almost every kind, they fell nothing behind; and, on an average, there could not be less in their coffers than two hundred thousand pounds sterling in specie, besides an immense quantity of gold and silver in bars.

The continual terror that was upon my mind while I remained with these people, is not to be imagined; but to give you a detail of the manner of my life while I endured the worst of bondage, would be tedious, because it had no variety; and shocking, to boot, as I was forced to join in all their horrid schemes. I shall only tell you that, in one of our cruises, we met with a Jamaica ship, and hoisted our black colours. Having boarded her, because she made some resistance, and killed one of our men, the captain ordered that the whole crew should be massacred. The wicked command was executed upon the master, five seamen, and a boy; then taking the cargo out, which proved to be rum and sugar, we scuttled the ship, and returned to our fortification. But see how the avenger of wicked deeds makes the fruit of our crimes our punishment! This cargo of rum, which was of a kind not many degrees short of aquafortis, was

drunk by the men with such avidity, that, in little more than three days, out of our complement of eighteen men, seven absolutely lost their lives by it, among whom was the captain.

I cannot but confess that I had some attachment to this man, because he appeared particularly attached to me ; when, therefore, I saw him lying senseless on the floor overgorged with that infernal liquor, I did everything I could to recover him, and so far succeeded as to bring him to his senses ; but the quantity he had drunk inflamed his bowels to a degree not to be assuaged by any lenitives that were in my power to procure for him. He was seized with intermitting convulsions, that carried him off the next day ; but, about four hours before he died, he called me, in the presence of all the men, who stood about him in the cabin, and desired me to sit down with pen and ink to draw out his will. He left me sole heir to his share of the booty, signing the paper with his mark ; which paper, through a series of unheard-of misfortunes, I have preserved in my custody ever since.

We buried the captain next day ; and, on inspection, and dividing the treasure, I found myself worth considerably more than forty thousand pounds sterling. The persons now remaining in our company, were Joseph Wright, Andrew Van Hooten, a Dutchman, James Winter, and myself, the four principals ; besides four common men, to whom we assigned five thousand pounds each, which we gave to them in dollars, nor did I observe any discontent among them on account of the bequest the captain had made me.

All my thoughts were immediately bent on getting off the island to some of the English settlements. I plainly perceived that my companions again wanted to be at their old practice ; but, one day, talking of another cruise, I represented to them the danger and uncomfortable situation we were in, and that we had each a very ample fortune to support us in any part of the world, —it was my advice, therefore, that we should immediately put all our treasure on board, with as much of the merchandise as we could conveniently carry, and

make the best of our way to Jamaica, where there was no doubt but we should be well received.

They agreed to this proposal with more alacrity than I thought they would. We fell immediately to work, and, in two days, were prepared to sail. But, though we put a considerable quantity of bales on board, what remained still in the warehouse was astonishing. I warned the fellows of their rapacity, and the danger of too heavily lading the ship; but they would not give over till she could hold no more; and then the treasure packed in chests, each man's share separate to himself, we put into the cabin.

We weighed anchor on the 3d of August, and for three days had excellent weather; but, on the fourth, a storm began to threaten, and the symptoms still increasing, by midnight such a hurricane was raised between heaven and earth as I never was witness to. About three o'clock, we were obliged to heave the ship under her bare poles, and the sea ran so exceedingly high, that we could not venture to keep any lights aboard, though the night was so dark that we could scarcely see one another at a quarter of a yard's distance; the wind still increasing, the main-mast sprang about six feet from the deck, so that nothing could save it. We now began to feel the consequence of lading the vessel too deeply. The first thing we threw overboard were our guns; and, as our case became more and more desperate, everything followed them, not excepting the chests of treasure. Thus I was once more reduced to my original state of poverty. As daylight appeared, the storm abated. We then, as well as we were able, erected jury-masts, and, in about three hours, managed with the greatest difficulty to get the vessel under sail.

I was then standing by the man at the wheel, leaning against the mizen-mast, returning God thanks in my own mind for our amazing escape, when the boatswain came up to me and said, "Egad, Mr Gwinnett, you have brought us into a pretty hole here; if it had not been for you, we should not have taken this trip, and lost the substance we have been working for so many years, but you loop too, I assure you." I asked him what he meant?

He said he would soon let me see ; upon which he and two or three others came behind me, seized me by the nape of the neck and the waistband of the breeches, and forced me over the rails of the quarterdeck into the sea.

The shock of the fall, and the maze I was in from such unexpected treatment, almost bereaved me of my senses. I endeavoured, however, to keep myself above the water as well as I could, though I had no hopes of saving my life. My first attempt was to swim after the ship ; but finding that impracticable, I turned about, and I believe I had swam for three quarters of an hour, when, being very faint and weak, I began to put up my last prayer to God, and determined to commit myself to the bottom of the deep ; but, at that instant, turning my head a little aside, I saw, at a small distance from me, what at first I took for a barrel ; but what was my joy and astonishment, when, coming near, I perceived it to be one of our own boats, which had been washed overboard the night before, and, to complete my joy, the oars were lashed to the seat ! Almost spent, as I was, I made shift to get upon it ; and here I saw myself freed in a miraculous manner from the fury of the waves ; but, at the same time, I found myself in an open boat, at least sixty leagues from land, without a compass, or any kind of nourishment whatever, unless I might call tobacco some, which I found in a box in one of my waistcoat pockets ; and I believe in my conscience that it afforded me a nourishment which, in a great measure, helped to preserve me.

It was a very great blessing for me that moderate weather followed the tempest, by which means I was enabled to keep the boat tolerably steady. I could not be less than thirty hours in that situation, when I was taken by a Spanish carrick ; but I can hardly reckon that among my fortunate accidents ; for, on the same day that I entered the ship, one of the men, while I was asleep, hanging up my clothes among the shrouds to dry, emptied my pockets, and finding several papers relative to the pirates' affairs, on arriving at Port-Royal, whither they were bound, they seized me as one of the desperate gang.

I must observe to you, that, when I first went into the ship, I gave a false account of myself, which occasioned my ruin; for, now confessing the truth, and telling them that I had been forced into the pirates' service, with all that had happened to me among them, my prevarication made them suspect my veracity, and I was two years in prison; when, by what means I know not, some of the wretches with whom I left our island having been taken as pirates upon the Spanish coast of Europe, an order came to bring me over to Cadiz, in Old Spain, in order to be evidence. When I came there, I was detained for many months; but at length, when the pirates were brought up for trial, instead of being summoned for evidence, I found myself treated as a delinquent, and, with two others, condemned to the galleys for life.

I worked on board of them for several years, when a galley I belonged to was ordered to sea against an Algerine rover that infested the coast; but, instead of one, met with three of them. The issue of an engagement was fatal to us. The greater part of the crew were killed, and the rest taken prisoners, among which last I was one, having lost my leg in the action.

After this, I passed a long and painful slavery in Algiers, till, with many other English captives, I was released, by agreement between the Dey of Algiers and his Britannic Majesty's agent. In the year 1730, I returned to England. The first thing I did was to inquire after my relations, but all those nearest to me were dead; and I found that Mr. Collins had never returned home; so I suppose he had died on his passage. Though not an old man, I was so enfeebled by hardships that I was unable to work; and being without any manner of support, I could think of no way of getting my living but by sweeping the crossing between the Mews-Gate and Spring Gardens, Charing-Cross, London; and ultimately, being even unable for this employment, I depended on the generosity of a feeling and benevolent public.

THE history of Ambroso Gwinnett is one which certainly should prove a very serious warning to both judges and juries when called on to administer the law in similar cases. Better, far, to allow fifty guilty individuals to escape, than permit one innocent person to suffer. And this is not a solitary case where evidence as clear—but yet as false—has been brought against the culprit; and the truth of his innocence has been discovered when it was impossible to repair the injury. Though obliged to quit his native land for dread of being apprehended, it must have solaced Gwinnett's mind when he reflected that he was innocent of the crime for which he had to fly. How different would his feelings have been had he been guilty of the foul deed! every tempest that blew, every difficulty he encountered, every hardship he experienced,—and these were not few,—would have kindled within his breast conscience's sting, and would have made him cry out, like one of old,—“My burden is heavier than I can bear. Oh! whither shall I flee to be freed from this perpetual tormentor!” Such, reader, is the difference between the feelings of the innocent and the guilty individual.

A PERILOUS SITUATION.

I SAT watching the storm, till eight o'clock, when a flash of lightning struck the ship, and killed two of the seamen on the fore-castle. I ran to ascertain the effects of the stroke, and heard the second mate, who was between decks, cry out, ‘Fire in the hold!’ The cargo had taken fire from the electric fluid.

In a moment all hands were on deck ; buckets were supplied in abundance ; the pumps were manned, and the water was discharged on the burning cargo ; passengers and crew were all on the alert : I assisted at the pumps. When the hatches were taken off, water was poured into the hold, for flames and clouds of smoke issued forth from it, increasing every instant in heat and density. It was soon found that all exertion was in vain—the vessel must perish !

From the pumps we ran to the boats ; and the gig and yawl were lowered in a moment. Captain Dacre affirmed that the two boats could not carry all the ship's company, passengers and crew : but the trial must be made. The two ladies were first put safely into the yawl ; some other passengers and myself, with part of the crew, followed, and our weight sank it nearly to the water's edge ; the captain and others entered the smaller boat and sufficiently filled it, leaving the vessel with honourable reluctance ; while the first mate gallantly remained on board to the last.

We happily succeeded in bringing away two compasses from the binnacle, and a few candles from the cuddy table, one of them lighted ; one bottle of wine and another of porter were handed to us, with the tablecloth and a knife, which proved very useful ; but the fire raged so fiercely in the body of the vessel, that neither bread nor water could be come at.

It was now about nine o'clock : the rain poured in torrents, and the lightning continued to stream along the heavens.

Our first object was to get clear of the vessel, lest she should explode and overwhelm us. But to our great distress we discovered that the yawl had no rudder, and that in the two boats we had only three oars. From the gig, which had a rudder, they gave us a rope's end to keep us in tow ; and by means of a few spars, found at the bottom of the boat, we assisted in moving ourselves slowly through the water. Providentially the sea was very still, or our boats would have swamped and we must have perished. The vessel neared us more than once, and seemed to threaten to involve us in its own

destruction. The cargo, consisting chiefly of hams, cheeses, ale, porter, spirits, and other things equally combustible, burned with violence and rapidity, and the flames rose to an amazing height.

We succeeded in increasing the distance between us and the vessel; directing our course towards land, by help of the compasses, which we could see by the light of the candles we had with us. About ten o'clock, we saw the masts go overboard, and the sides of the vessel seemed to be burnt down to the water's edge. The spectacle was awfully grand, even contemplated abstractedly from a recollection of our own circumstances.

The destruction, by fire, of the animals on board, dogs, sheep, &c., at another time would have excited our deepest commiseration, but, at present, the total loss of property, the awfully sudden death of the seamen, our own narrow escape, and the great probabilities, even yet, that we should never again see the light of day, or set our feet on solid ground, seemed to absorb our faculties and feelings: for some time the silence was scarcely broken, and I doubt not, that many, like myself, were engaged in thoughts most suitable to immortal beings on the brink of eternity—in thankfulness and in prayer.

The number of persons in the two boats was forty-eight; and all, with the exception of the two ladies, who, I must observe, bore these awful circumstances with extraordinary fortitude, took it in turns to work at the oars and paddles. After some time, the rain ceased; the labour of bailing water from the boats was considerably diminished; we hailed each other frequently, during the night, and the honest tars, true 'hearts of oak,' occasionally gave a 'hurra,' to cheer each other, and to keep up our spirits.

The Tanjore must have risen in the water, as it gradually consumed; we saw it burning the whole night, and at day-break could distinguish a column of smoke arising from it, which, however, soon ceased, and we saw and heard no more of our favourite ship. When the sun rose, we could clearly discern land a-head; the sight of it filled us with grateful joy and nerved us with fresh vigour.