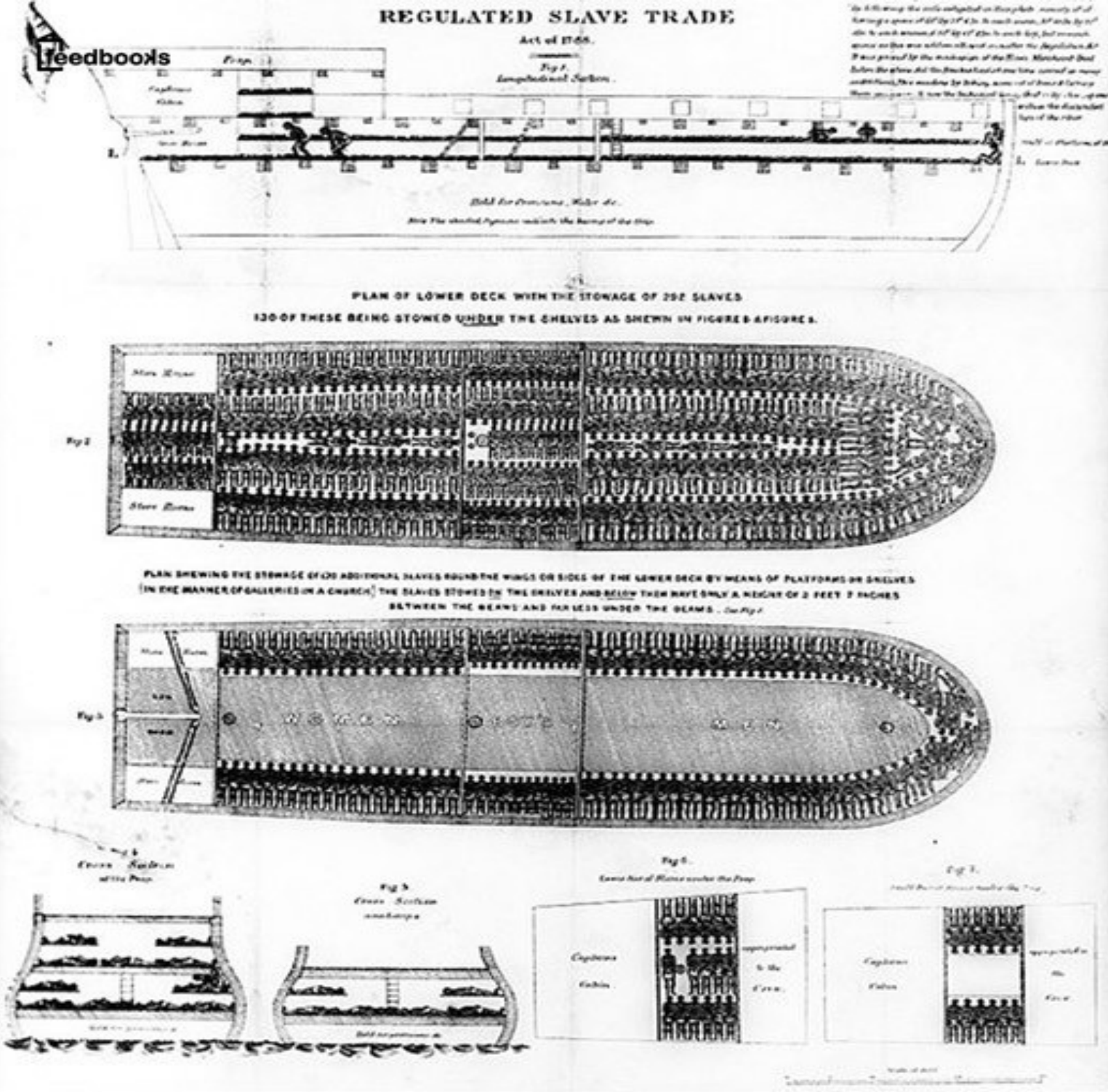

The Capture of a Slaver

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About Wood:

John Taylor Wood (August 13, 1830 – July 19, 1904) was an officer in the United States Navy who, due to his Southern sympathies, resigned after the American Civil War started and joined the Confederate forces. He became a leading Confederate naval hero as a captain in the Confederate Navy. Wood was the son of Robert Crooke Wood, an Army surgeon, and Anne Mackall Taylor, daughter of the future U.S. President Zachary Taylor and his wife Margaret Mackall Smith. He was also the nephew of Jefferson Davis (who became President of the Confederate States of America for its entire history, from 1861 to 1865). He became a U.S.

Navy midshipman in 1847 and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1853. A collection of Wood's writings is archived at The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As the Confederacy was disintegrating, he accompanied President Jefferson Davis in his attempt to evade capture and leave the country. Though briefly taken prisoner in the Civil War, Wood escaped to Cuba. He subsequently went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, where he became a businessman. His wife and family joined him there and they lived the rest of their lives in Nova Scotia. Wood died there on July 19, 1904. (Source: Wikipedia and Collection Overview of John Taylor

Wood Papers, 1858-1915, at UNC Chapel Hill.)

The Capture of a Slaver

FROM 1830 to 1850 both Great Britain and the United States, by joint convention, kept on the coast of Africa at least eighty guns afloat for the suppression of the slave trade. Most of the vessels so employed were small corvettes, brigs, or schooners; steam at that time was just being introduced into the navies of the world.

Nearly fifty years ago I was midshipman on the United States brig *Porpoise*, of ten guns. Some of my readers may remember these little ten-gun coffins, as many of them proved to be to their crews. The Porpoise was a

fair sample of the type; a full-rigged brig of one hundred and thirty tons, heavily sparred, deep waisted, and carrying a battery of eight twenty-four-pound carronades and two long chasers; so wet that even in a moderate breeze or sea it was necessary to batten down; and so tender that she required careful watching; only five feet between decks, her quarters were necessarily cramped and uncomfortable, and, as far as possible, we lived on deck. With a crew of eighty all told, Lieutenant Thompson was in command, Lieutenant Bukett executive officer, and two midshipmen were the line officers. She was so slow that we could hardly hope for a prize except by a fluke. Repeatedly we had

chased suspicious craft only to be outsailed.

At this time the traffic in slaves was very brisk; the demand in the Brazils, in Cuba, and in other Spanish West Indies was urgent, and the profit of the business so great that two or three successful ventures would enrich any one. The slavers were generally small, handy craft; fast, of course; usually schooner-rigged, and carrying flying topsails and forecourse. Many were built in England or elsewhere purposely for the business, without, of course, the knowledge of the builders, ostensibly as yachts or traders. The Spaniards and Portuguese were the principal offenders, with occasionally an English-speaking renegade.

The slave depots, or barracoons, were generally located some miles up a river. Here the slaver was secure from capture and could embark his live cargo at his leisure. Keeping a sharp lookout on the coast, the dealers were able to follow the movements of the cruisers, and by means of smoke, or in other ways, signal when the coast was clear for the coming down the river and sailing of the loaded craft. Before taking in the cargoes they were always fortified with all the necessary papers and documents to show they were engaged in legitimate commerce, so it was only when caught in *flagrante delicto* that we could hold them.

We had been cruising off the coast

of Liberia doing nothing, when we were ordered to the Gulf of Guinea to watch the Bonny and Cameroons mouths of the great Niger River. Our consort was H.M. schooner Bright, a beautiful craft about our tonnage, but with half our crew, and able to sail three miles to our two. She was an old slaver, captured and adapted as a cruiser. She had been very successful, making several important captures of full cargoes, and twice or thrice her commanding officer and others had been promoted. Working our way slowly down the coast in company with the Bright, we would occasionally send a boat on shore to reconnoitre or gather any information we could from the natives through our

Krooman interpreter. A few glasses of rum or a string of beads would loosen the tongue of almost any one. At Little Bonny we heard that two vessels were some miles up the river, ready to sail, and were only waiting until the coast was clear. Captain James, of the Bright, thought that one, if not both, would sail from another outlet of the river, about thirty miles to the southward, and determined to watch it.

We both stood to that direction. Of course we were watched from the shore, and the slavers were kept posted as to our movements. They supposed we had both gone to the Cameroons, leaving Little Bonny open; but after dark, with a

light land breeze, we wore round and stood to the northward, keeping offshore some distance, so that captains leaving the river might have sufficient offing to prevent their reaching port again or beaching their craft. At daybreak, as far as we could judge, we were about twenty miles offshore to the northward and westward of Little Bonny, in the track of any vessel bound for the West Indies. The night was dark with occasional rain squalls, when the heavens would open and the water come down in a flood. Anxiously we all watched for daylight, which comes under the equator with a suddenness very different from the prolonged twilight of higher latitudes. At the first

glimmer in the east every eye was strained on the horizon, all eager, all anxious to be the first to sight anything within our vision. The darkness soon gave way to gray morn. Day was dawning, when suddenly a Krooman by my side seized my hand and, without saying a word, pointed inshore. I looked, but could see nothing. All eyes were focused in that direction, and in a few minutes the faint outline of a vessel appeared against the sky. She was some miles inshore of us, and as the day brightened we made her out to be a brigantine (an uncommon rig in those days), standing across our bows, with all studding sails set on the starboard side, indeed everything that could pull,

including water sails and save-all. We were on the same tack heading to the northward. We set everything that would draw, and kept off two points, bringing the wind abeam so as to head her off.

The breeze was light and off the land. We had not yet been seen against the darker western horizon, but we knew it could only be a few minutes longer before their sharp eyes would make us out. Soon we saw the studding sails and all kites come down by the run and her yards braced up sharp on the same tack as ours. We also hauled by the wind. At sunrise she was four points on our weather bow, distant about four miles. We soon perceived that she could outsail our brig and if the wind held

would escape. Gradually she drew away from us until she was hull down. Our only hope now was that the land breeze would cease and the sea breeze come in. As the sun rose we gladly noticed the wind lessening, until at eleven o'clock it was calm. Not a breath ruffled the surface of the sea; the sun's rays in the zenith were reflected as from a mirror; the waters seemed like molten lead.

I know of nothing more depressing than a calm in the tropics, — a raging sun overhead, around an endless expanse of dead sea, and a feeling of utter helplessness that is overpowering. What if this should last? what a fate! The Rime of the Ancient Mariner comes to our mind. Come storm and tempest, come

hurricanes and blizzards, anything but an endless stagnation. For some hours we watched earnestly the horizon to the westward, looking for the first dark break on the smooth sea. Not a cloud was in the heavens. The brig appeared to be leaving us either by towing or by sweeps; only her topgallant sail was above the horizon. It looked as if the sea breeze would desert us. It usually came in about one o'clock, but that hour and another had passed and yet we watched for the first change. Without a breeze our chances of overhauling the stranger were gone. Only a white speck like the wing of a gull now marked her whereabouts on the edge of the horizon, and in another hour she would be invisible even from

the masthead.

When we were about to despair, our head Krooman drew the captain's attention to the westward and said the breeze was coming. We saw no signs of it, but his quick eye had noticed light feathery clouds rising to the westward, a sure indication of the coming breeze. Soon we could see the glassy surface ruffled at different points as the breeze danced over it, coming on like an advancing line of skirmishers; and as we felt its first gentle movement on our parched faces, it was welcome indeed, putting new life into all of us. The crew needed no encouragement to spring to their work. As the little brig felt the

breeze and gathered steerageway, she was headed for the chase, bringing the wind on her starboard quarter. In less than five minutes all the studding sails that would draw were set, as well as everything that would pull. The best quartermaster was sent to the wheel, with orders to keep the chase directly over the weather end of the spritsail yard. The captain ordered the sails wet, an expedient I never had much faith in, unless the sails are very old. But as if to recompense us for the delay, the breeze came in strong and steady. Our one hope now was to follow it up close, and to carry it within gunshot of the brig, for if she caught it before we were within range she would certainly escape. All

hands were piped to quarters, and the long eighteen-pounder on the forecastle was loaded with a full service charge; on this piece we relied to cripple the chase. We were now rapidly raising her, and I was sent aloft on the fore topsail yard, with a good glass to watch her movements. Her hull was in sight and she was still becalmed, though her head was pointed in the right direction, and everything was set to catch the coming breeze. She carried a boat on each side at the davits like a man-of-war, and I reported that I could make out men securing them. They had been towing her, and only stopped when they saw us drawing near.

Anxiously we watched the breeze

on the water as it narrowed the sheen between us, and we were yet two miles or more distant when she first felt the breeze. As she did so we hoisted the English blue ensign, — for the fleet at this time was under a Rear Admiral of the Blue, — and fired a weather gun, but no response was made. Fortunately the wind continued to freshen and the *Porpoise* was doing wonderfully well. We were rapidly closing the distance between us. We fired another gun, but no attention was paid to it. I noticed from the movements of the crew of the brig that they were getting ready for some manoeuvre, and reported to the captain. He divined at once what the manoeuvre would be, and ordered the braces be led

along, hands by the studding-sail halyards and tacks, and everything ready to haul by the wind. We felt certain now of the character of our friend, and the men were already calculating the amount of their prize money. We were now within range, and must clip her wings if possible.

The first lieutenant was ordered to open fire with the eighteen-pounder. Carefully the gun was laid, and as the order "fire" was given, down came our English flag, and the stop of the Stars and Stripes was broken at the gaff. The first shot touched the water abeam of the chase and ricochetted ahead of her. She showed the Spanish flag. The captain of the gun was ordered to elevate a little

more and try again. The second shot let daylight through her fore topsail, but the third was wide again.

Then the sharp, quick order of the captain, "Fore topsail yard there, come down on deck, sir!" brought me down on the run. "Have both cutters cleared away and ready for lowering," were my orders as I reached the quarter-deck. Practice from the bow chasers continued, but the smoke that drifted ahead of us interfered with the accuracy of the firing, and no vital part was touched, though a number of shots went through her sails. The captain in the main rigging never took his eye from the Spaniard, evidently expecting that as a fox when hard pressed doubles on the hounds, the chase

would attempt the same thing. And he was not disappointed, for when we had come within easy range of her, the smoke hid her from view for a few minutes, and as it dispersed the first glimpse showed the captain that her studding sails had all gone, and that she had hauled by the wind, standing across our weather bow. Her captain had lost no time in taking in his studding sails; halyards, tacks, and sheets had all been cut together and dropped overboard.

It was a bold and well-executed manoeuvre, and we could not help admiring the skill with which she was handled. However, we had been prepared for this move. "Ease down

your helm." "Lower away. Haul down the studding sails." "Ease away the weather braces. Brace up." "Trim down the head sheets," were the orders which followed in rapid succession, and were as quickly executed. The Spaniard was now broad on our lee bow, distant not more than half a mile, but as she felt the wind which we brought down she fairly spun through the water, exposing her bright copper. She was both head-reaching and outsailing us; in half an hour she would have been right ahead of us, and in an hour the sun would be down. It was now or never. We could bring nothing to bear except the gun on the forecastle. Fortunately it continued smooth, and we were no longer troubled

with smoke. Shot after shot went hissing through the air after her; a number tore through the sails or rigging, but not a spar was touched nor an important rope cut. We could see some of her crew aloft reeving and stopping braces and ready to repair any damage done, working as coolly under fire as old man-of-war's men. But while we were looking, down came the gaff of her mainsail, and the gaff-topsail fell all adrift; a lucky shot had cut her peak halyards. Our crew cheered with a will. "Well done, Hobson; try it again!" called the captain to the boatswain's mate, who was captain of the gun.

After the next shot, the topgallant yard swayed for a few minutes and fell

forward. The order was given to cease firing; she was at our mercy. We were rapidly nearing the chase, when she backed her topsail. We kept off, and when within easy range of the carronades "hove to" to windward. Lieutenant Bukett was ordered to board her in the first cutter and take charge. I followed in the second cutter, with orders to bring the captain on board with his papers. A few strokes sent us alongside of a brig about our tonnage, but with a low rail and a flush deck. The crew, some eighteen or twenty fine-looking seamen, were forward eagerly discussing the situation of affairs. The captain was aft with his two officers, talking to Lieutenant Bukett. He was fair,

with light hair curling all over his head, beard cut short, about forty years of age, well set up, with a frame like a Roman wrestler, evidently a tough customer in a rough-and-ready scrimmage.

He spoke fairly good English, and was violently denouncing the outrage done to his flag; his government would demand instant satisfaction for firing upon a legitimate trader on the high seas. I have the lieutenant Captain Thompson's orders, to bring the captain and his papers on board at once. His harangue was cut short by orders to get on board my boat. He swore with a terrible oath that he would never leave his vessel. "Come on board, men," said I, and twenty of our crew were on deck in a

jiffy. I stationed my coxswain, Parker, at the cabin companion way with orders to allow no one to pass. "Now," said Lieutenant Bukett to the Spaniard, "I will take you on board in irons unless you go quietly." He hesitated a moment, then said he would come as soon as he had gone below to bring up his papers. "No, never mind your papers; I will find them," said the lieutenant, for he saw the devil in the Spaniard's eyes, and knew he meant mischief. Our captive made one bound for the companion way, however, and seizing Parker by the throat hurled him into the water ways as if he had been a rag baby. But fortunately he slipped on a small grating and fell on his knees, and before he could recover

himself two of our men threw themselves upon him.

I closed the companion way. The struggle was desperate for a few minutes, for the Spaniard seemed possessed of the furies, and his efforts were almost superhuman. Twice he threw the men from him across the deck, but they were reinforced by Parker, who, smarting under his discomfiture, rushed in, determined to down him. I was anxious to end it with my pistol, but Lieutenant Bukett would not consent. The Spaniard's officers and men made some demonstration to assist, but they were quickly disposed of: his two mates were put in irons and the crew driven

forward. Struggling, fighting, every limb and every muscle at work, the captain was overpowered; a piece of the signal halyards brought his hands together, and handcuffs were slipped on his wrists. Only then he succumbed, and begged Lieutenant Bukett to blow out his brains, for he had been treated like a pirate.

Without doubt if he had reached the cabin he would have blown up the vessel, for in a locker over the transom were two open kegs of powder. I led him to my boat, assisted him in, and returned to the *Porpoise*. As soon as the Spaniard reached the deck the captain ordered his irons removed, and expressed his regret that it had been necessary to use force. The prisoner

only bowed and said nothing. The captain asked him what his cargo consisted of. He replied, "About four hundred blacks bound to the Brazils."

I was then ordered to return to the brig, bring on board her crew, leaving only the cook and steward, and to take charge of the prize as Lieutenant Bukett, our first lieutenant, was not yet wholly recovered from an attack of African fever. The crew of twenty men, when brought on board, consisted of Spaniards, Greeks, Malays, Arabs, white and black, but had not one Anglo-Saxon. They were ironed in pairs and put under guard.

From the time we first got on board we had heard moans, cries, and

rumblings coming from below, and as soon as the captain and crew were removed, the hatches had been taken off, when there arose a hot blast as from a charnel house, sickening and overpowering. In the hold were three or four hundred human beings, gasping, struggling for breath, dying; their bodies, limbs, faces, all expressing terrible suffering. In their agonizing fight for life, some had torn or wounded themselves or their neighbors dreadfully; some were stiffened in the most unnatural positions. As soon as I knew the condition of things I sent the boat back for the doctor and some whiskey. It returned bringing Captain Thompson, and for an hour or more we were all hard at work lifting

and helping the poor creatures on deck, where they were laid out in rows. A little water and stimulant revived most of them; some, however, were dead or too far gone to be resuscitated. The doctor worked earnestly over each one, but seventeen were beyond human skill. As fast as he pronounced them dead they were quickly dropped overboard.

Night closed in with our decks covered so thickly with the ebony bodies that with difficulty we could move about; fortunately they were as quiet as so many snakes. In the meantime the first officer, Mr. Block, was sending up a new topgallant yard, reeving new rigging, repairing the sails, and getting everything ataunto aloft. The Kroomen

were busy washing out and fumigating the hold, getting ready for our cargo again. It would have been a very anxious night, except that I felt relieved by the presence of the brig which kept within hail. Soon after daybreak Captain Thompson came on board again, and we made a count of the captives as they were sent below; 188 men and boys, and 166 women and girls. Seeing everything snug and in order the captain returned to the brig, giving me final orders to proceed with all possible dispatch to Monrovia, Liberia, land the negroes, then sail for Porto Praya, Cape de Verde Islands, and report to the commodore. As the brig hauled to the wind and stood to the southward and eastward I dipped

my colors, when her crew jumped into the rigging and gave us three cheers, which we returned.

As she drew away from us I began to realize my position and responsibility: a young midshipman, yet in my teens, commanding a prize, with three hundred and fifty prisoners on board, two or three weeks' sail from port, with only a small crew. From the first I kept all hands aft except two men on the lookout, and the weather was so warm that we could all sleep on deck. I also ordered the men never to lay aside their pistols or cutlasses, except when working aloft, but my chief reliance was in my knowledge of the negro, — of his

patient, docile disposition. Born and bred a slave he never thought of any other condition, and he accepted the situation without a murmur. I had never heard of blacks rising or attempting to gain their freedom on board a slaver.

My charges were all of a deep black; from fifteen to twenty-five years of age, and, with a few exceptions, nude, unless copper or brass rings on their ankles or necklaces of cowries can be described as articles of dress. All were slashed, or had the scars of branding on their foreheads and cheeks; these marks were the distinguishing features of different tribes or families. The men's hair had been cut short, and their heads looked in some cases as if they had been

shaven. The women, on the contrary, wore their hair "a la pompadour;" the coarse kinky locks were sometimes a foot or more above their heads, and trained square or round like a boxwood bush. Their features were of the pronounced African type, but, notwithstanding this disfigurement, were not unpleasing in appearance. The figures of all were very good, straight, well developed, some of the young men having bodies that would have graced a Mercury or an Apollo. Their hands were small, showing no evidences of work, only the cruel marks of shackles. These in some cases had worn deep furrows on their wrists or ankles.

They were obedient to all orders as

far as they understood them, and would, I believe, have jumped overboard if told to do so. I forbade the men to treat them harshly or cruelly. I had the sick separated from the others, and allowed them to remain on deck all the time, and in this way I partly gained their confidence. I was anxious to learn their story. Fortunately one of the Kroomen found among the prisoners a native of a tribe living near the coast, and with him as interpreter was able to make himself understood. After a good deal of questioning I learned that most of them were from a long distance in the interior, some having been one and some two moons on the way, traveling partly by land and partly by river until they

reached the coast. They had been sold by their kings or by their parents to the Arab trader for firearms or for rum. Once at the depots near the coast, they were sold by the Arabs or other traders to the slave captains for from twenty-five to fifty dollars a head. In the Brazils or West Indies they were worth from two to five hundred dollars. This wide margin, of course, attracted unscrupulous and greedy adventurers, who if they succeeded in running a few cargoes would enrich themselves.

Our daily routine was simple. At six in the morning the rope netting over the main hatch which admitted light and air was taken off, and twenty-five of each

sex were brought up, and seated in two circles, one on each side of the deck. A large pan of boiled paddy was then placed in the centre by the cook and all went to work with their hands. A few minutes sufficed to dispose of every grain; then one of the Kroomen gave each of them a cup of water from a bucket. For half an hour after the meal they had the liberty of the deck, except the poop, for exercise, to wash and to sun themselves; for sunshine to a negro is meat and drink. At the end of this time they were sent below and another fifty brought up, and so on until all had been fed and watered. Paddy or rice was the staple article of food. At dinner boiled yams were given with the rice. Our

passengers were quartered on a flying deck extending from the foremast to a point twenty feet abaft the main hatch from which came light and air. The height was about five feet; the men had one side and the women the other. Of course there was no furnishing of any kind, but all lay prone upon the bare deck in rows.

Every morning after breakfast the Kroomen would rig the force pump, screw on the hose and drench them all, washing out thoroughly between decks. They appeared to enjoy this, and it was cooling, for be it remembered we were close under the equator, the thermometer dancing about 90 deg. As the water was sluiced over them they would rub and

scrub each other. Only the girls would try not to get their hair wet, for they were at all times particular about their headdress. It may be that this was the only part of their toilet that gave them any concern.

The winds were baffling and light, so we made but slow progress. Fortunately frequent rains, with sometimes a genuine tropical downpour or cloud-burst, gave us an opportunity of replenishing our water casks, and by spreading the awnings we were able to get a good supply. I found on inspection that there were at least thirty days' provisions on board, so on this score and that of water I felt easy. I lived on deck, seldom using the cabin, which was

a veritable arsenal, with racks of muskets and cutlasses on two sides, many more than the captain needed to arm his crew, evidently intended for barter. Two or three prints of his favorite saints, ornamented with sharks' teeth, hung on one bulkhead. A well-thrummed mandolin and a number of French novels proved him to be a musical and literary fellow, who could probably play a bolero while making a troublesome slave walk a plank. I found also some choice vintages from the Douro and Bordeaux snugly stowed in his spirit locker, which proved good medicines for some of our captives, who required stimulants. Several of the girls were much reduced, refused nearly all

food, and were only kept alive by a little wine and water. Two finally died of mere inanition. Their death did not in the least affect their fellows, who appeared perfectly indifferent and callous to all their surroundings, showing not the least sympathy or desire to help or wait on one another.

The fifth day after parting from the brig we encountered a tropical storm. The sun rose red and angry, and owing to the great refraction appeared three times its natural size. It climbed lazily to the zenith, and at noon we were shadowless. The sky was as calm as a vault, and the surface of the water was like burnished steel. The heat became so stifling that even the Africans

were gasping for breath, and we envied them their freedom from all impediments. The least exertion was irksome, and attended with extreme lassitude. During the afternoon thin cirri clouds, flying very high, spread out over the western heavens like a fan. As the day lengthened they thickened to resemble the scales of a fish, bringing to mind the old saying, "A mackerel sky and a mare's tail," etc. The signs were all unmistakable, and even the gulls recognized a change, and, screaming, sought shelter on our spars. Mr. Block was ordered to send down all the light yards and sails; to take in and furl everything, using storm gaskets, except on the fore and main storm staysails; to

lash everything on deck; to batten down the hatches, except one square of the main; see all the shifting boards in place, so that our living cargo would not be thrown to leeward higgledy-piggledy, and to take four or five of the worst cases of the sick into the cabin and lay them on the floor.

The sun disappeared behind a mountainous mass of leaden-colored clouds which rose rapidly in the southern and western quarters. To the eastward, also, the signs were threatening. Night came on suddenly as it does in the tropics. Soon the darkness enveloped us, a palpable veil. A noise like the march of a mighty host was

heard, which proved to be the approach of a tropical flood, heralded by drops as large as marbles. It churned the still waters into a phosphorescent foam which rendered the darkness only more oppressive. The rain came down as it can come only in the Bight of Benin. The avalanche cooled us, reducing the temperature ten or fifteen degrees, giving us new life, and relieving our fevered blood. I told Mr. Block to throw back the tarpaulin over the main hatch and let our dusky friends get some benefit of it. In half an hour the rain ceased, but it was as calm and ominous as ever.

I knew this was but the forerunner of something worse to follow, and we had not long to wait, for suddenly a blinding

flash of lightning darted through the gloom from east to west, followed by one in the opposite direction. Without intermission, one blaze after another and thunder crashing until our eyes were blinded and our ears deafened, a thousand times ten thousand pieces of artillery thundered away. We seemed utterly helpless and insignificant. "How wonderful are Thy works," came to my mind. Still no wind; the brig lay helpless.

Suddenly, as a slap in the face, the wind struck us, — on the starboard quarter, fortunately. "Hard-a-starboard." "Hanl aft port fore staysail sheet," I called. But before she could gather way she was thrown down by the wind like a

reed. She was "coming to" instead of "going off," and I tried to get the main storm staysail down but could not make myself heard. She was lying on her broadside. Luckily the water was smooth as yet. The main staysail shot out of the boltropes with a report like a twelve-pounder, and this eased her so that if the fore staysail would only hold she would go off. For a few minutes all we could do was to hold on, our lee rail in the water; but the plucky little brig rallied a little, her head went off inch by inch, and as she gathered way she righted, and catching the wind on our quarter we were off like a shot out of a gun. I knew we were too near the vortex of the disturbance for the wind to hang

long in one quarter, so watched anxiously for a change. The sea rose rapidly while we were running to the northward on her course, and after a lull of a few minutes the wind opened from the eastward, butt end foremost, a change of eight points. Nothing was to be done but heave to, and this in a cross sea where pitch, weather roll, lee lurch, followed one another in such earnest that it was a wonder her masts were not switched out of her.

I passed an anxious night, most concerned about the poor creatures under hatches, whose sufferings must have been terrible. To prevent their suffocating I kept two men at the main hatch with orders to lift one corner of the

tarpaulin whenever possible, even if some water did go below. Toward morning the wind and the sea went down rapidly, and as the sun rose it chased the clouds off, giving us the promise of a fine day. When the cook brought me a cup of coffee, I do not know that I ever enjoyed anything more. Hatches off, I jumped down into the hold to look after my prisoners. Battered and bruised they lay around in heaps. Only the shifting boards had kept them from being beaten into an indistinguishable mass. As fast as possible they were sent on deck, and the sun's rays, with a few buckets of water that were thrown over them, accomplished wonders in bringing them to life and starting them to care for their

sore limbs and bruises.

One boy, when I motioned for him to go on deck, pointed quietly to his leg, and upon examination I found a fracture just above the knee. Swelling had already commenced. I had seen limbs set, and had some rough idea how it should be done. So while getting some splints of keg staves and bandages ready, I kept a stream of water pouring on the fracture, and then ordered two men to pull the limb in place, and it took all their strength. That done I put on the splints and wrapped the bandages tightly. Three weeks later I landed him in a fair way of recovery.

Gradually I allowed a larger

number of the blacks to remain on deck, a privilege which they greatly enjoyed. To lie basking in the sun like saurians, half sleeping, half waking, appeared to satisfy all their wishes. They were perfectly docile and obedient, and not by word, gesture, or look did they express any dissatisfaction with orders given them. But again for any little acts of kindness they expressed no kind of appreciation or gratitude. Physically they were men and women, but otherwise as far removed from the Anglo-Saxon as the oyster from the baboon, or the mole from the horse.

On the fourteenth day from parting with the brig we made the palms on Cape Mesurado, the entrance to

Monrovia Harbor. A light sea breath wafted us to the anchorage, a mile from the town, and when the anchor dropped from the bows and the chain ran through the hawse pipe, it was sweet music to my ears; for the strain had been great, and I felt years older than when I parted from my messmates. A great responsibility seemed lifted from my shoulders, and I enjoyed a long and refreshing sleep for the first time in a fortnight. At nine the next morning I went on shore and reported to the authorities, the officials of Liberia, of which Monrovia is the capital.

This part of the African coast had been selected by the United States government as the home of emancipated

slaves; for prior to the abolition excitement which culminated in the war, numbers of slaves in the South had been manumitted by their masters with the understanding that they should be deported to Liberia, and the Colonization Society, an influential body, comprising some of the leading men, like Madison, Webster, and Clay, had assisted in the same work. The passages of the negroes were paid; each family was given a tract of land and sufficient means to build a house. Several thousand had been sent out, most of whom had settled at Monrovia, and a few at other places on the coast. They had made no impression on the natives. On the contrary, many of them had

intermarried with the natives, and the off-spring of these unions had lost the use of the English tongue, and had even gone back to the life and customs of their ancestors, sans clothing, sans habitations, and worship of a fetich.

Of course there were some notable exceptions, especially President Roberts, who proved himself a safe and prudent ruler, taking into consideration his surroundings and the material with which he had to work. The form of government was modeled after that of the United States, but it was top-heavy. Honorables, colonels, and judges were thicker than in Georgia. Only privates were scarce; for nothing delights a negro more than a little show or a gaudy

uniform. On landing I was met by a dark mulatto, dressed in a straw hat, blue tail coat, silver epaulettes, linen trousers, with bare feet, and a heavy cavalry sabre hanging by his side. With him were three or four others in the same rig, except the epaulettes. He introduced himself as Colonel Harrison, chief of police. I asked to be directed to the custom house.

The collector proved to be an old negro from Raleigh, N. C., gray as a badger, spectacled, with manners of Lord Grandison and language of Mrs. Malaprop. I reported my arrival, and asked permission to land my cargo as soon as possible. He replied that in a

matter of so much importance, devolving questions of momentous interest, it would be obligatory on him to consult the Secretary of the Treasury. I said I trusted he would so facilitate affairs that I might at an early hour disembarrass myself of my involuntary prisoners. I returned on board, and the day passed without any answer. The next morning I determined to go at once to headquarters and find out the cause of the delay by calling on the President.

He received me without any formality. I made my case as strong as possible, and pressed for an immediate answer. In reply he assured me he would consult with other members of his cabinet, and give me a final answer the

next morning. That evening I dined with him *en famille*, and recognized some old Virginia dishes on the table. The next morning I waited impatiently for his decision, having made up my mind however, if it was unfavorable, to land my poor captives, be the consequences what they might.

About eleven o'clock a boat came off with an officer in full uniform, who introduced himself as Colonel Royal, bearer of dispatches from his Excellency the President. He handed me a letter couched in diplomatic language, as long as some of his brother presidents' messages on this side of the Atlantic. I had hardly patience to read it. The gist of it was, I might not land the captives at

Monrovia, but might land them at Grand Bassa, about a hundred and fifty miles to the eastward; that Colonel Royal would accompany me with orders to the governor there to receive them. This was something I had not anticipated, and outside of my instructions. However, I thought it best to comply with the wishes of the government of our only colony.

Getting under way we stood to the southward and eastward, taking advantage of the light land and sea breeze, keeping the coast close aboard. The colonel had come on board without any impediments, and I wondered if he intended to make the voyage in his cocked hat, epaulettes, sword, etc. But soon after we had started he disappeared

and emerged from the cabin bareheaded, barefooted, and without clothing except a blue dungaree shirt and trousers. Like a provident negro, having stowed away all his trappings, he appeared as a roustabout on a Western steamer. But he had not laid aside with his toggery any of his important and consequential airs. He ran foul of Mr. Block, who called him Mr. Cuffy, and ordered him to give him a pull with the main sheet. The colonel complained to me that he was not addressed by his name or title, and that he was not treated as a representative of his government should be. I reprimanded Mr. Block, and told him to give the visitor all his title. "All right, sir, but the colonel must keep off

the weather side of the deck," growled the officer. The cook, the crew, and even the Kroomen, all took their cue from the first officer, and the colonel's lot was made most unhappy.

On the third day we reached Grand Bassa, and anchored off the beach about two miles, along which the surf was breaking so high that any attempt to land would be hazardous. Toward evening it moderated, and a canoe with three naked natives came off. One I found could speak a little English. I told him to say to the governor that I would come on shore in the morning and see him, and land my cargo at the same time.

The next morning at sunrise we

were boarded by a party of natives headed by one wearing a black hat half covered with a tarnished silver band, an old navy frock coat, much too small, between the buttons of which his well-oiled skin showed clearly. A pair of blue flannel trousers completed his outfit. An interpreter introduced him as King George of Grand Bassa. With him were about a dozen followers, each one wearing a different sort of garment — and seldom more than a single one — representing old uniforms of many countries. Two coats I noticed were buttoned up the back.

The king began by saying that he was and always had been a friend of the Americans; that he was a big man, had

plenty of men and five wives, etc. While he was speaking, a white-bearded old colored gentleman came over the gangway, dressed in a linen roundabout and trousers, with a wide-brimmed straw hat. At the same time Colonel Royal came up from the cabin in *grande tenue* and introduced us to the Hon. Mr. Marshall, governor of Bassa, formerly of Kentucky.

In a few minutes he explained the situation. With a few settlers he was located at this place, on the frontier of the colony, and they were there on sufferance only from the natives. I told him Colonel Royal would explain my mission to him and the king. The colonel, bowing low to the king, the governor,

and myself, and bringing his sword down with a thud on the deck, drew from between the bursting buttons of his coat the formidable document I had seen at Monrovia, and with most impressive voice and gesture commenced to read it. The king listened for a few minutes, and then interrupted him. I asked the interpreter what he said. He replied, "King say he fool nigger; if he comes on shore he give him to Voodoo women." Then turning his back he walked forward. The colonel dropped his paper, and drawing his sword, in the most dramatic manner claimed protection in the name of the government, declaring that he had been insulted. I told him to keep cool, since he was certainly safe as

long as he was on board my ship. He grumbled and muttered terrible things, but subsided gradually like the departing thunder of a summer storm.

I arranged the landing of the passengers with Governor Marshall, whom I found a sensible, clear-headed old man, ready to cooperate in every way. But he suggested that I had better consult the king before doing anything. I did so, and he at once said they could not land. I told the interpreter to say they would be landed at once and put under the protection of the governor; that if the king or his people hurt them or ran them off I would report it to our commodore, who would certainly punish him severely. Finding me determined, he

began to temporize, and asked that the landing be put off until the next day, that he might consult with his head people, for if I sent them on shore before he had done so they would kill them. "If that is the case," I replied, "I will hold you on board as a hostage for their good behavior." This threat surprised him, and he changed his tactics. After a little powwow with some of his followers, he said that if I would give him fifty muskets, twenty pounds of powder, the colonel's sword, and some red cloth for his wives, I might land them. I replied that I had not a musket to spare nor an ounce of powder, that the colonel was a high officer of his government, and that he of course would not give up his

uniform. Fortunately the colonel had retired to the cabin and did not hear this modest demand, or he would have been as much outraged as if his sable Majesty had asked for him to be served "roti a l'Ashantee." However, I told the king I would send his wives some cloth and buttons. He grunted his approval but returned again to the charge, and asked that he might choose a few of the captives for his own use, before landing. "Certainly not," I answered, "neither on board nor on shore," and added that he would be held accountable for their good treatment as free men and women. He left thoroughly disappointed and bent on mischief.

In the meantime Mr. Block had

made all preparations for landing, and had the boats lowered and ranged alongside, with sufficient rice to last the blacks a week or ten days. The men and boys were sent first. When they were called up from the hold and ordered into the boats not one of them moved. They evidently divined what had been going on and dreaded leaving the vessel, though our Kroomen tried to explain that they would be safe and free on shore. The explanation was without effect, however, and they refused to move. The could only understand that they were changing masters, and they preferred the present ones. Sending three or four men down, I told them to pass up the negroes one at a time. Only a passive resistance

was offered, such as one often sees exhibited by cattle being loaded on the cars or on a steamer, and were silent, not uttering a word of complaint. By noon the men were all on shore, and then we began with the girls. They were more demonstrative than the men, and by their looks and gestures begged not to be taken out of the vessel. I was much moved, for it was a painful duty, and I had become interested in these beings, so utterly helpless, so childlike in their dependence on those around them. And I could not help thinking what their fate would be, thrown upon the shore hundreds of miles from their homes, and among a people strange to them in language.

Even Mr. Block was deeply stirred. "He had not shipped," he said, "for such work." I went to my cabin and left him in charge. In the course of an hour he reported, "All ashore, sir." I told him to have the gig manned and I would go on shore with Colonel Royal, and get a receipt from Governor Marshall for my late cargo. The colonel declined to accompany me, alleging sickness and requesting me to get the necessary papers signed. No doubt he felt safer on board than within reach of King George.

We landed through the surf on a sandy beach, on which the waves of the Atlantic were fretting. Near by was a thick grove of cocoanut trees, under which in groups of four and five were

those who had just been landed. They were seated on the ground, their heads resting on their knees, in a position of utter abnegation, surrounded by three or four hundred chattering savages of all ages, headed by the king. With the exception of him and a few of his head men, the clothing of the company would not have covered a rag baby. They were no doubt discussing the appearance of the strangers and making their selections.

I found the governor's house and the houses of the few settlers some distance back on a slight elevation. The governor was comfortably, though plainly situated, with a large family around him. He gave me a receipt for the number of blacks landed, but said it would be

impossible for him to prevent the natives from taking and enslaving them. I agreed with him, and said he must repeat to the king what I had told him. Then bidding him good-by I returned on board, sad and weary as one often feels after being relieved of a great burden. At the same time I wondered whether the fate of these people would have been any worse if the captain of the slaver had succeeded in landing them in the Brazils or the West Indies. Sierra Leone being a crown colony, the English could land all their captives there and provide for them until they were able to work for themselves. In this respect they had a great advantage over us.

Getting under way, I proceeded to

Monrovia to land Colonel Royal, and then to Porto Praya, our squadron's headquarters. There I found Commodore Gregory in the flagship corvette Portsmouth, and reported to him. Soon after the *Porpoise* came in, and I joined my old craft, giving up my command of the captured slaver rather reluctantly.

J. Taylor Wood.

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Gilbert Keith Chesterton

The Club of Queer Trades

A collection of related short stories by British author G. K. Chesterton. Each story is centered on a person who is making his living by some novel and extraordinary means (a "queer trade"). To gain admittance to the Club, one must have a unique queer trade as principal source of income. "Cherub" Swinburne describes his quest for The Club of Queer Trades with his friend Basil Grant, a retired judge, and Rupert Grant, a private detective who is Basil's younger brother. Each of the stories describes their encounter with one of the trades. In the final story, Rupert Grant rescues a lady from her kidnappers but cannot understand why she refuses to be rescued. The

answer leads to the unveiling of the mystery of The Club of Queer Trades.

First published by Harper & Brothers, London, 1905.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton

The Man Who Knew Too Much

This contains the first 8 of the 12 stories in the published book *The Man Who Knew Too Much and Other Stories*. In these 8 detective thrillers, the main protagonist is Horne Fisher. (The omitted four are individual stories with separate heroes/detectives.)

Due to close relationships with the leading political figures in the land, Fisher knows too much about the private politics behind the public politics of the day. This knowledge is a burden to him because he is able to uncover the injustices and corruptions of the murders in each story, but in most cases the real killer gets away with the killing because to bring him openly to justice would create a greater chaos: starting a war, reinciting Irish rebellions, or removing public faith in the government.

A film of the same title was made in 1934 and remade in 1956, both directed by Alfred Hitchcock, but the films had nothing at all in common (except the title) with these short stories. Hitchcock decided to use the title simply because he had the rights for some of the stories.

(Reference: Wikipedia)

Carolyn Wells

Raspberry Jam

A locked-room mystery is solved by detective Fleming Stone. Sanford Embury refused to give his wife an allowance of spending cash or even a checking account. He pays all the bills and her store charge accounts. "Eunice found it intolerable to be cramped and pinched for small amounts of ready cash, when her husband was a rich man."

"Eunice Embury was neither mean nor spiteful of disposition. She had a furious temper, but she tried hard to control it, and when it did break loose, the spasm was but of short duration and she was sorry for

it afterward. Her husband declared he had tamed her, and that since her marriage, about two years ago, his wise, calm influence had curbed her tendency to fly into a rage and had made her far more equable and placid of disposition."

Sanford is found dead in bed, alone, with the door of his second-story bedroom bolted shut from the inside. Was his wife a party to the murder, or perhaps did she commit the murder in a fit of rage? Who else had a motive? How does Sanford make all that money? How could the murderer do the deed if the room was locked from the inside? The clue that leads to the discovery of the murderer and the devious method used is — you guessed it — some raspberry jam.

A. E. W. Mason

The Four Feathers

This 1902 adventure novel by British writer A. E. W. Mason has inspired many films of the same title and is considered to be his best work, his "masterpiece". It has been made into movies 5 times and a movie for

television once.

The novel tells the story of a British officer, Harry Feversham, who resigns from his commission in the East Surrey Regiment just prior to Sir Garnet Wolseley's 1882 expedition to Egypt to suppress the rising of Arabi Pasha. He is faced with censure from three of his comrades, Captain Trench as well as Lieutenants Castleton and Willoughby for cowardice, which is signified by the delivery of three white feathers to him. He loses support of his Irish fiancée, Ethne Eustace, who presents him with the fourth feather of cowardice. His best friend in the regiment, Captain Durrance, becomes his rival for Ethne. The "coward" Feversham redeems himself, feather by feather, with acts of courage, winning back the respect of his colleagues and the heart of the woman he loves.

(Reference: Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/, and Internet Movie Database http://www.imdb.com/.)

A. E. W. Mason

At the Villa Rose

BOOK 1 IN THE INSPECTOR HANAUD SERIES.

The place: Aix-les-Bains, a lakeside town in southeast France, popular for vacations of the well-to-do.

The players:

(1) The young Englishman, Harry Wethermill, who, after a brilliant career at Oxford and at Munich, had applied his scientific genius and made a fortune for himself at the age of twenty-eight.

(2) Mr. Ricardo, approaching the fifties in age; a widower — "a state greatly to his liking, for he avoided at once the irksomeness of marriage and the reproaches justly leveled at the bachelor; finally, he was rich, having amassed a fortune in Mincing Lane, which he had invested in profitable securities."

(3) Celia Harland, the beautiful, free-spirited 19-year-old English traveling companion of wealthy Mme. Dauvray, and recently romantic companion of Wethermill.

(4) Inspector Hanaud, the cleverest of French police detectives, on vacation at Aix-les-Bains.

The newspaper article: "Late last night, an appalling

murder was committed at the Villa Rose. Mme. Camille Dauvray, an elderly, rich woman who was well known at Aix, was discovered on the floor of her salon, fully dressed and brutally strangled, while upstairs, her maid was found in bed, chloroformed, with her hands tied securely behind her back. ... Mme. Dauvray's motor-car has disappeared, and with it a young Englishwoman who came to Aix with her as her companion. The motive of the crime leaps to the eyes. Mme. Dauvray was famous in Aix for her jewels, which she wore with too little prudence...they have disappeared."

With Ricardo's help, Wethermill beseeches Hanaud to take up the case and help the local police find the missing Celia and solve the murder. He believes Celia will be exonerated once she is found. Hanaud considers the evidence and agrees to proceed, but warns Wethermill that he will see the case to the end, even if the outcome is not liked by Wethermill.

Quote, Ricardo to Wethermill:

"You are going out of your way to launch the acutest of French detectives in search of this girl. Are you

wise, Wethermill?"

Wethermill sprang up from his chair in desperation.

"You, too, think her guilty! You have seen her. You think her guilty — like this detestable newspaper, like the police."

"Like the police?" asked Ricardo sharply.

"Yes," said Harry Wethermill sullenly. "As soon as I saw that rag I ran down to the villa. The police are in possession. They would not let me into the garden. But I talked with one of them. They, too, think that she let in the murderers."

Catherine Louisa Pirkis

The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective

What is a young lady like Loveday Brooke doing in a private detective agency? She's working there, as a clever sleuth, a female Sherlock Holmes of sorts. Excerpts:

"Loveday Brooke, at this period of her career, was a

little over thirty years of age, and could be best described in a series of negations.

"She was not tall, she was not short; she was not dark, she was not fair; she was neither handsome nor ugly. Her features were altogether nondescript; her one noticeable trait was a habit she had, when absorbed in thought, of dropping her eyelids over her eyes till only a line of eyeball showed, and she appeared to be looking out at the world through a slit, instead of through a window. Her dress was invariably black, and was almost Quaker-like in its neat primness."

But what one could say affirmatively about her was that Loveday Brooke *was* a naturally talented private detective, a chosen career that had cut her off sharply from her former associates and her position in society. She demonstrates her skills in these six short stories:

The Black Bag Left on a Door-Step,

The Murder at Troyte's Hill,

The Redhill Sisterhood,

A Princess's Vengeance,

Drawn Daggers,

The Ghost of Fountain Lane,

Missing!

Grant Allen

The Thames Valley Catastrophe

Two bicyclists, one a Londoner, the other an American geologist named Ward, out for a pleasant bicycle trip in the idyllic Thames valley, meet at a small village inn on the west bank of the Thames. Their parlor chat turns to the subjects of mountains and volcanic eruptions, and the difference between small vent-hole eruptions and large fissure eruptions. The Londoner speaks:

"Let us be thankful," I said, carelessly, "that such things don't happen in our own times." He eyed me curiously. "Haven't happened, you mean," he answered. "We have no security that they mayn't happen again to-morrow. These fissure-eruptions, though not historically described for us, are common events in geological history — commoner and on a larger scale in America than elsewhere. Still, they have occurred in all lands and at various epochs; there is no reason at all

why one shouldn't occur in England at present."

Cycling the next morning, stopping on a river bridge, the Londoner hears a frantic cry and sees a man running on the river tow path as though being pursued by a wild animal.

"I glanced back to see what his pursuer might be; and then, in one second, the whole horror and terror of the catastrophe burst upon me. Its whole horror and terror, I say, but not yet its magnitude. I was aware at first just of a moving red wall, like dull, red-hot molten metal. ... I think I can recollect that my earliest idea was no more than this: "He must run, or the moving wall will overtake him!" Next instant, a hot wave seemed to strike my face. It was just like the blast of heat that strikes one in a glasshouse when you stand in front of the boiling and seething glass in the furnace. At about the same point in time, I was aware, I believe, that the dull red wall was really a wall of fire. ... a second wave from behind seemed to rush on and break: it overlaid and outran the first one. This second wave was white, not red — at white heat, I realized. Then, with a burst of recognition, I knew what it all meant. What Ward had spoken of last night — a

fissure eruption!"

How will he escape? Is Ward toasted? Will the torrent of molten rock follow the river valley to London? Can he warn people in time to flee and save lives? Will London be destroyed? ... !

Grant Allen

How It Feels To Die, By One Who Has Tried It; and Other Stories

This is a collection of stories by Grant Allen, published in various years. The title story is personal. Allen nearly drowned when he fell through the ice while skating as a boy in Canada, and wrote about the experience anonymously for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1892. He claimed to have been "as dead as he ever can be or will be" and that he had no "after death" experiences. This suited his atheistic position, of course. In fact he was not "dead" at all; just unconscious, and he was quickly revived by brandy and massage.

The stories are:

HOW IT FEELS TO DIE. BY ONE WHO HAS TRIED
IT (1892);
MERIEL STANLEY, POACHER (1900);
A STUDY FROM THE NUDE (1895);
MY ONE GORILLA (1890);
THE TRADE OF AUTHOR (1889);
A SCRIBBLER'S APOLOGY (1883).

The last two are non-fiction essays by Allen about the craft of writing in his time. Here are brief reviews by Peter Morton:

'"A SCRIBBLER'S APOLOGY'. A splendidly agonised piece about the true social worth of the journeyman writer's life, particularly the worth (if any) of the kind of 'tootler' which Allen represents himself as being. Published in the *Cornhill* in May 1883."

'"THE TRADE OF AUTHOR'. This remarkable article, published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1889, has just been identified as by Grant Allen. (It is not attributed in the Wellesley Index.) It is a brilliant analysis of the professional writer's plight at the time, worthy to be set against Gissing's *New Grub Street*."

The source of these 6 stories is the website by Peter Morton, author of *"The Busiest Man in England": Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875-1900*, published by Palgrave Macmillan, as linked from the Wikipedia page about Grant Allen.

Grant Allen

My New Year's Eve Among the Mummies

J. Arbuthnot Wilson (pseudonym of the real author, Grant Wilson) tells this short story of his strange night spent inside "the great unopened Pyramid of Abu Yilla" in Egypt. On New Year's Eve, on the night before his group was to take a guided tour and climb the still sealed pyramid, he set out on his own to walk around the pyramid to relieve his boredom. He happened to find the secret entrance stone, which he pushed open. What he experienced deep inside the pyramid was a once-in-a-thousand-years event.

"Never as long as I live shall I forget the ecstasy of terror, astonishment, and blank dismay which seized

upon me when I stepped into that seemingly enchanted chamber. ... I gazed fixedly at the strange picture before me, taking in all its details in a confused way, yet quite incapable of understanding or realizing any part of its true import."

Hanns Heinz Ewers

The Spider

"When the student of medicine, Richard Bracquemont, decided to move into room #7 of the small Hotel Stevens, Rue Alfred Stevens (Paris 6), three persons had already hanged themselves from the cross-bar of the window in that room on three successive Fridays." The last of them was a police sergeant who had volunteered to sleep in the room to learn what happens that might explain the hangings, and somehow he met with the same fate. The medical student was aware of these incidents, but...

"There was one detail about which he knew nothing because neither the police inspector nor any of the eyewitnesses had mentioned it to the press. It was only

later, after what happened to the medical student, that anyone remembered that when the police removed Sergeant Charles-Maria Chaumié's body from the window cross-bar a large black spider crawled from the dead man's open mouth. A hotel porter flicked it away, exclaiming, 'Ugh, another of those damned creatures.'"

Thus begins this bizarre mystery of "The Spider."