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Manuel Pereira

F. Colburn (Francis Colburn) Adams

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MANUEL PEREIRA

or, The Sovereign Rule of South Carolina.

With Views Of Southern Laws, Life, And Hospitality.

**By
F. C. Adams.**

Written In Charleston, South Carolina. Washington, D. C.:
1853.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.

MANUEL PEREIRA.

CHAPTER I. THE UNLUCKY SHIP

CHAPTER II. THE STEWARD'S BRAVERY

CHAPTER III. THE SECOND STORM

CHAPTER IV. THE CHARLESTON POLICE

CHAPTER V. MR. GRIMSHAW, THE MAN OF THE COUNTY

CHAPTER VI. THE JANSON IN THE OFFING

CHAPTER VII. ARRIVAL OF THE JANSON

CHAPTER VIII. A NEW DISH OF SECESSION

CHAPTER VIII. A FEW POINTS OF THE LAW

CHAPTER X. THE PROSPECT DARKENING

CHAPTER XI. THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

CHAPTER XII. THE OLD JAIL

CHAPTER XIII. HOW IT IS

CHAPTER XIV. MANUEL PEREIRA COMMITTED

CHAPTER XV. THE LAW'S INTRICACY

CHAPTER XVI. PLEA OF JUST CONSIDERATION AND MIS-
TAKEN CONSTANCY

CHAPTER XVII. LITTLE GEORGE, THE CAPTAIN, AND MR. GRIMSHAW

CHAPTER XVIII. LITTLE TOMMY AND THE POLICE

CHAPTER XIX. THE NEXT MORNING, AND THE MAYOR'S VERDICT

CHAPTER XX. EMEUTE AMONG THE STEWARDS

CHAPTER XXI. THE CAPTAIN'S INTERVIEW WITH MR. GRIMSHAW

CHAPTER XXII. COPELAND'S RELEASE, AND MANUEL'S CLOSE CONFINEMENT

CHAPTER XXIII. IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN PAUL, AND JOHN BAPTISTE PAMERLIE

CHAPTER XXIV. THE JANSON CONDEMNED

CHAPTER XXV. GEORGE THE SECESSIONIST, AND HIS FATHER'S SHIPS

CHAPTER XXVI. A SINGULAR RECEPTION

CHAPTER XXVII. THE HABEAS CORPUS

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE CAPTAIN'S DEPARTURE AND MANUEL'S RELEASE

CHAPTER XXIX. MANUEL'S ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK

CHAPTER XXX. THE SCENE OF ANGUISH

CONCLUSION.

APPENDIX.

INTRODUCTION.

OUR generous friends in Georgia and South Carolina will not add among their assumptions that we know nothing of the South and Southern life. A residence of several years in those States, a connection with the press, and associations in public life, gave us opportunities which we did not lose, and have not lost sight of; and if we dipped deeper into the vicissitudes of life and law than they gave us credit for at the time, we trust they will pardon us, on the ground of interest in the welfare of the South.

Perhaps we should say, to support the true interests of the South, we should and must abandon many of those errors we so strenuously supported in years past; and thus we have taken up the subject of our book, based upon the practical workings of an infamous law, which we witnessed upon the individual whose name forms a part of the title.

Imprisoning a shipwrecked sailor, and making it a penal offence for a freeman to come within the limits of a republican State, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, seems to be considered commonplace, instead of barbarous in South Carolina. This may be accounted for by the fact that the power of a minority, created in wrong, requiring barbarous expedients to preserve itself intact, becomes an habitual sentiment, which usage makes right.

This subject has been treated with indifference, even by the press, which has satisfied itself in discussing the abstract right as a question of law, rather than by disclosing the sufferings of those who endure the wrong and injustice. When we are called upon to support, and are made to suffer the penalty of laws founded in domestic fear, and made subservient to various grades of injustice, it becomes our duty to localize the wrong, and to point out the odium which attaches to the State that enacts such laws of oppression.

A "peculiar-institution" absorbs and takes precedence of every thing; its protection has become a sacred element of legislative and private action; and fair discussion is looked upon as ominous, and proclaimed as incendiary. But we speak for those who owe no allegiance to that delicate institution; citizens to all intents and, purpos-

es (notwithstanding their dark skins) of the countries to which they severally belong; peaceable persons, pursuing their avocations, to provide a respectable maintenance for their families, and worthy of the same protective rights claimed by the more fortunate citizens of such countries. In doing this we shall give a practical illustration of the imprisonment of four individuals in South Carolina, and ask those who speculate in the abstract science of State sovereignty, to reflect upon the issue of that lamentable injustice which inflicts punishment upon persons guiltless of crime. We prefer to be plain, and we know our Southern friends will not accuse us of misconstruction, for we have their interests at heart, as well as the cause of humanity, which we shall strive to promote, in spite of the struggles of modern barbarism, seeking to perpetuate itself. Fear, the inventor of such pretexts as are set up, and mantled in Southern modesty, must remodel its code for South Carolinians, before it can assert a power unknown to law, or trample upon the obligations of treaty, or enforce nullification of individual rights.

CHARLESTON, S. C., July 17, 1852.

MANUEL PEREIRA.

CHAPTER I. THE UNLUCKY SHIP.

THE British brig Janson, Thompson, master, laden with sugar, pimento, &c. &c. left Kingston, Jamaica, in the early part of March, in the present year, bound for Glasgow. The skipper, who was a genuine son of the "Land o' Cakes," concluded to take the inside passage, and run through the gulf. This might have been questioned by seamen better acquainted with the windward passage; but as every Scotchman likes to have his own way, the advice of the first officer—an experienced salt in the West India waters—went to leeward. On rounding Cape Antoine, it was evident that a strong blow was approaching. The clouds hung their dark curtains in threatening blackness; and, as the sharp flashes of lightning inflamed the gloomy scene, the little bark seemed like a speck upon the bosom of the sea. It was the first mate's watch on deck. The wind, then blowing from the W.S.W., began to increase and veer into the westward; from whence it suddenly chopped into the northward. The mate paced the quarter wrapt in his fearnought jacket, and at every turn giving a glance aloft, then looking at the compass, and again to the man at the wheel, as if he had an instinct of what was coming.

He was a fearless navigator, yet, like many others who had yielded to the force of habit, was deeply imbued with that prevalent superstition so common to sailors, which regards a particular ship as unlucky. Imagine an old-fashioned boatswain, with north-country features strongly marked, a weather-beaten face, and a painted south-wester on his head, and you have the "Mister Mate" of the old brig Janson.

"Keep her full, my hearty. We must take in our light sails and go on the other tack soon. If we don't catch it before daylight, I'll miss my calculation. She's an unlucky old craft as ever I sailed in, and if

the skipper a'n't mighty careful, he'll never get her across. I've sworn against sailing in her several times, but if I get across in her this time, I'll bid her good-by; and if the owners don't give me a new craft, they may get somebody else. We're just as sure to have bad luck as if we had cats and parsons aboard."

Thus saying, he descended the companion-way, and reported the appearance of the weather to the skipper, who arose quickly, and, consulting his barometer, found it had fallen to near the lowest scale. After inquiring the quarter of the wind, and how she headed, what sail she was carrying, and the probable distance from the cape, he gave orders to call all hands to take in the topgallant-sails, double reef the fore, and single reef the maintop-sails, and stow the flying-jib—dressed himself, and came on deck. Just as he put his head above the slide of the companion, and stopped for a minute with his hands resting upon the sides, a vivid flash of lightning hung its festoons of fire around the rigging, giving it the appearance of a chain of livid flame.

"We'll catch the but-end of a gulf sneezer soon. Tell the boys to bear a hand with them sails. We must get her snug, and stand by to lay her under a double-reefed maintop-sail and jib, with her head to the northward and eastward. We may make a clear drift—chance if it lasts long," said Skipper Thompson, as he stood surveying the horizon and his craft. Scarcely had he given the orders before the storm burst upon them with all its fury. Its suddenness can only be appreciated by those who have sailed in the West India passages, where the sudden shocks of the short-chopping sea acts with a tremendous strain upon the hull of a heavy-laden vessel. The captain ran to the windward gangway, hurrying his men in the discharge of their duty, and giving another order to clew up the coursers and foretop-sail. Just as the men had executed the first, and were about to pull on the clew-lines of the latter, a sudden gust took effect upon the bag of the sail and carried it clean from the bolt-ropes. The hal-yards were lowered and the yards properly braced up, while the Janson was brought to under the canvas we have before described. In a few minutes more the wind had increased to a gale, and, as the sailors say, several times the old craft "wouldn't look at it." Several times we had to put her helm up, and as many times she shipped those forcing cross seas which drive every thing before them, and

sweep the decks. At length a piece of canvas was lashed to the fore-rigging which gave her a balance, and she rode easy until about five o'clock in the morning, when by a sudden broach the canvas was carried away, and a tremendous sharp sea boarded her forward; starting several stanchions, carrying away part of her starboard bulwark and rail, and simultaneously the foretop-gallant-mast, which snapped just above the withe. As a natural consequence, every thing was in the utmost confusion—the old hull worked in every timber. The wreck swayed to and fro, retarding the working of the vessel and endangering the lives of those who attempted to clear it from obstruction. Thus she remained for more than half an hour, nearly on her beam-ends, and at the mercy of each succeeding sea that threatened to engulf her.

As daylight broke, the wind lulled, and, as usual in those waters, the sea soon ran down. Enabled to take the advantage of daylight, they commenced to clear away the wreck. In the mean time it was found necessary to remove the fore-hatch in order to get out some spare sails that had been stowed away near the forward bulkhead, instead of a more appropriate place. The mate, after trying the pumps in the early part of the gale, reported that she had started a leak; which, however, was so trifling as to require but one man to keep her free, until she broached, and carried away her topgallant-mast. The man on duty then reported the water increasing, and another was ordered to assist him. On an examination in the morning, it was found that she was strained in the fore-channels, and had started a but.

"She's an unlucky concern, skipper," said the mate as he brought the axe to take the battons off the forehatch. "A fellow might as well try to work a crab at low tide as to keep her to it in a blow like that. She minds her helm like a porpoise in the breakers. Old Davy must have put his mark upon her some time, but I never know'd a lucky vessel to be got as she was. She makes a haul on the underwriters every time she drifts across; for I never knew her to sail clear since I shipped in the old tub. If she was mine, I'd find a place for her at somebody's expense."

The sea became smooth, the water was found to have receded, the wind, light, had hauled to W.S.W., and Cape Antoine was judged

by dead reckoning to bear S.S.W. about thirty miles distant. The larboard fore-shrouds were found to have been scorched by the lightning, which had completely melted the tar from the after-shroud. All hands were now busily employed repairing the wreck, which by two o'clock P.M. they had got so far completed as to stand on their course in the gulf, at the rate of six knots an hour.

The skipper now consulted in his mind as to the expediency of making for Havana or proceeding on his cruise. The leak had materially diminished, and, like all old vessels, though she gave a good portion of work at the pumps, a continuation of good weather might afford an opportunity to shove her across. Under these feelings, he was inclined to give the preference to his hopes rather than yield to his fears. He considered the interest of all concerned—consulted his mate, but found him governed by his superstition, and looking upon the issue of his life about as certain whether he jumped overboard or "stuck by the old tub." He considered again the enormous port-charges imposed in Havana, the nature of his cargo in regard to tariff, should his vessel be condemned, and the ruinous expenses of discharging, &c. &c. together with the cost of repairs, providing they were ordered. All these things he considered with the mature deliberation of a good master, who has the general interests of all concerned at heart. So, if he put away for a port, in consideration of all concerned, his lien for general average would have strong ground in maritime law; yet there were circumstances connected with the sea-worthy condition of the craft—known to himself, if not to the port-wardens, and which are matters of condition between the master and his owners—which might, upon certain technicalities of law, give rise to strong objectionable points. With all these glancing before him, he, with commendable prudence, resolved to continue his voyage, and trust to kind Providence for the best.

"Captain," said the mate, as he stood viewing the prospect, with a marlinespike in one hand and a piece of seizing in the other—"I verily think, if that blow had stuck to us two hours longer, the old tub would a' rolled her futtocks out. Ye don't know her as well as I do. She's unlucky, anyhow; and always has been since she sot upon the water. I've seen her top-sides open like a basket when we've been trying to work her into port in heavy weather: and a craft that

won't look nearer than nine points close-hauled, with a stiff breeze, ought to be sent into the Clyde for a coal-droger. An old vessel's a perfect pickpocket to owners; and if this old thing hasn't opened their purses as bad as her own seams, I'll miss my reckonin'. I've had a strong foreknowledge that we wouldn't get across in her. I saw the rats leaving in Jamaica — taking up their line of march, like marines on the fore. It's a sure sign. And then I'd a dream, which is as sure as a mainstay — never deceives me. I can depend on its presentiment. I have dreamed it several times, and we always had an awful passage. Twice we come within a bobstay of all goin' to Old Davy's store-house. I once escaped it, after I'd had my mysterious dream; but then I made the cook throw the cat overboard just after we left port, and 'twas all that saved us."

Thus saying, he went forward to serve a topgallant-stay that was stretched across the forecandle-hatch from the cat-heads, and had just been spliced by the men, followed by an old-fashioned searurchin, a miniature of the tar, with a mallet in his hand. The captain, although a firm, intelligent man, and little given to such notions of fate as are generally entertained by sailors, who never shake off the spiritual imaginings of the forecandle, displayed some discomfiture of mind at the strong character of the mate's misgivings. He knew him to be a good sailor, firm in his duty, and unmoved by peril. This he had proved on several occasions when sailing in other vessels, when the last ray of hope seemed to be gone. He approached the mate again, and with a pretence of making inquiries about the storage of the cargo, sounded him further in regard to his knowledge of the Bahamas, and with special reference to the port of Nassau.

"Six-tenths of her timbers are as rotten as punk," said the mate; "this North American timber never lasts long; the pump-wells are defective, and when we carry sail upon her, they don't affect the water in the lee-bilge, and she rolls it through her air-streaks like a whale. She'll damage the best cargo that ever floated, in that way. Take my word for it, skipper, she'll never go across the Banks; she'll roll to splinters as soon as she gets into them long seas; and if we get dismasted again, it's gone Davy."

"I know the old scow before to-day, and wouldn't shipped in her, if I hadn't been lime-juiced by that villanous landlord that advanced me the trifle. But I seen she was as deep as a luggerman's sand-barge, and I popped the old cat overboard, just as we rounded the point coming out o' Kingston harbour," said a fine, active-looking sailor, who bore every trait of a royal tar, and boasted of serving five years in the East-India service, to his shipmate, while he continued to serve the stay. His words were spoken in a whisper, and not intended for the captain's ears. The captain overheard him, however; and, as a vessel is a world to those on board, the general sentiment carries its weight in controlling its affairs. Thus the strong feeling which prevailed on board could not fail to have its effect upon the captain's mind.

"Well, we'll try her at any rate," said the captain, walking aft and ordering the cabin-boy to bring up his glass; with which he took a sharp look to the southward.

"I'd shape her course for a southern Yankee port. I haven't been much in them, but I think we'll stand a better chance there than in these ports where they make a speculation of wrecking, and would take a fellow's pea-jacket for salvage." "We're always better under the protection of a consul than in a British port," said the mate, coming aft to inform the skipper that they had carried away the chains of the bobstay, and that the bowsprit strained her in the knight-heads.

CHAPTER II. THE STEWARD'S BRAVERY.

DURING the worst of the gale, a mulatto man, with prominent features, indicating more of the mestino than negro character, was moving in busy occupation about the deck, and lending a willing hand with the rest of the crew to execute the captain's orders. He was rather tall, well formed, of a light olive complexion, with dark, piercing eyes, a straight, pointed nose, and well-formed mouth. His hair, also, had none of that crimp so indicative of negro extraction, but lay in dark curls all over his head. As he answered to the captain's orders, he spoke in broken accents, indicating but little knowledge of the English language. From the manner in which the crew treated him, it was evident that he was an established favourite with them as well as the officers, for each appeared to treat him more as an equal than a menial. He laboured cheerfully at sailor's duty until the first sea broke over her, when, seeing that the caboose was in danger of being carried from the lashings, and swept to leeward in the mass of wreck, he ran for that all-important apartment, and began securing it with extra lashings. He worked away with an earnestness that deserved all praise; not with the most satisfactory effect for an angry sea immediately succeeding completely stripped the furnace of its woodwork, and in its force carried the gallant fellow among its fragments into the lee-scuppers, where he saved himself from going overboard only by clinging to a stanchion.

The second mate, a burly old salt, ran to his assistance, but, before he reached him, our hero had recovered himself, and was making another attempt to reach his coppers. It seemed to him as much a pending necessity to save the cooking apparatus as it did the captain to save the ship.

"He no catch me dis time," said he to the mate, smiling as he lifted his drenched head from among the fragments of the wreck. "I fix a de coffee in him yet, please God."

After securing the remains of his cooking utensils, he might be seen busily employed over a little stove, arranged at the foot of the stairs that led to the cabin. The smoke from the funnel several times annoyed the captain, who laboured under the excitement consequent upon the confusion of the wreck and peril of his vessel, bring-

ing forth remonstrances of no very pleasant character. It proved that the good steward was considering how he could best serve Jack's necessities; and while they were laboring to save the ship, he was studiously endeavoring to anticipate the craving of their stomachs. For when daylight appeared and the storm subsided, the steward had a bountiful dish of hot coffee to relieve Jack's fatigued system. It was received with warm welcome, and many blessings were heaped upon the head of the steward; A good "doctor" is as essential for the interests of owners and crew as a good captain. So it proved in this instance, for while he had a careful regard for the stores, he never failed to secure the praises of the crew.

"When I gib de stove fire, den me gib de Cap-i-tan, wid de crew, some good breakfas," said he with a gleam of satisfaction.

This individual, reader, was Manuel Pereira, or, as he was called by his shipmates, Pe-rah-re. Manuel was born in Brazil, an extract of the Indians and Spanish, claiming birthright of the Portuguese nation. It mattered but very little to Manuel where he was born, for he had been so long tossed about in his hardy vocation that he had almost become alienated from the affections of birthplace. He had sailed so long under the protection of the main-jack of old England that he had formed a stronger allegiance to that country than to any other. He had sailed under it with pride, had pointed to its emblem, as if he felt secure, when it was unfurled, that the register-ticket which that government had given him was a covenant between it and himself; that it was a ticket to incite him to good behavior in a foreign country; and that the flag was sure to protect his rights, and insure, from the government to which he sailed respect and hospitality. He had sailed around the world under it—visited savage and semi-civilized nations—had received the hospitality of cannibals, had joined in the merry dance with the Otaheitian, had eaten fruits with the Hottentots, shared the coarse morsel of the Greenlander, been twice chased by the Patagonians—but what shall we say?—he was imprisoned, for the olive tints of his color, in a land where not only civilization rules in its brightest conquests, but chivalry and honor sound its fame within the lanes, streets, and court-yards. Echo asks, Where—where? We will tell the reader. That flag which had waved over him so long and in so many of his wayfarings—that flag which had so long boasted its rule upon the wave, and had