

A FAMOUS FRATRICIDE.

By MAJOR MARTIN A. S. HUME.

That Major Hume is one of the greatest authorities upon the early part of the modern era is amply proved by his books, "The Courtship of Queen Elizabeth," "Sir Walter Raleigh," and "Philip II. of Spain." In the accompanying sketch he turns his attention to the 18th century, and gives an account of a famous crime that took place on one of his Majesty's ships in 1741.

IN January 1741 his Majesty's ship *Ruby* lay in the King's Roads, off the city of Bristol. She was commanded by Captain Samuel Goodeve, R.N., who had recently been appointed to her—a gentleman of good repute, only brother of a wealthy bachelor Baronet, Sir John Dineley Goodveve; and the brothers had for many years been at issue as to the right of the Baronet to deal with his extensive estates without regard to his brother's remainder rights as heir-in-tail. Sir John was elderly, eccentric, and ailing. Earlier in life he had been apparently addicted to drink; but at the time of the story he had been a strict total abstainer for two years, and had been ordered by his doctors to take a course of the fashionable waters of Bath.

Captain Goodeve had lodgings on shore, and soon learnt of his brother's presence in the neighbourhood, and, what was of more importance still, that Sir John was in treaty with a Bristol attorney, a Mr. Jared Smith, living on College Green, for an advance of £5000 on mortgage of his Worcestershire estates. This fact seems to have aroused his fury, for he had ceaselessly clamoured for years that the entail could not be cut off without his consent, although the lawyers were of a different opinion. By means of a common friend, he besought the aid of Mr. Jared Smith to bring about a reconciliation between himself and his brother; and the attorney willingly consented to do his best in the interests of peace. At first the Baronet refused to listen to the approaches. While their father, Sir Edward,

lay dead in the house, he said, the Captain had planned Sir John's murder, and he had gone armed and guarded, in fear of him, ever since. But the peacemaker was so persistent that at last he consented to see his brother when next he should come to Bristol on Jan. 13.

On board the *Ruby* there was a young Irish sailor-lad named Mahony, who had recently been pressed into the service, and was friendly with some of the rascals who formed the crew of the *Vernon*, a privateer then lying in the harbour. On Jan. 12 the Captain, dressed in a drab suit, like a farmer, and accompanied by this man, entered a common alehouse called the White Hart, opposite St. Augustine's Church, and lower down than Mr. Jared Smith's house, on the other side of the way.

Over the porch of the alehouse was a little square room commanding a view up and down the road, and the customer was loud in his praises of the beautiful prospect it afforded. He was too fine a gentleman to drink the ale he called for, but handed it to Mahony, and asked the landlady whether she could make him a dish of coffee for the next morning, when he would come and drink it in the pleasant room over the porch. When he appeared, however, in the morning the landlady was still in bed, and her husband told him he had better go to the coffee-house if he needed coffee. But the Captain would take no denial. The prospect from the room over the porch was so charming that he would go nowhere else.

By-and-by Mahony and three of his countrymen from the privateer came to the tavern, and were regaled below at the Captain's expense. Then a midshipman and a boat's-crew from the *Ruby*, with a change of clothes for the Captain, who appeared in a scarlet cloak with a sword by his side, awaiting the summons to meet his brother. But the summons came not, for the Baronet was ill and apprehensive, and could not muster resolution to face a meeting.

In the meanwhile, Sir John's mounted serving-man led his master's horse up and down the street before the tavern, and the watchers noticed that pistols were in the holsters of both horses. By-and-by the old Baronet came out and mounted. He was an old man, dressed in black, and as he rode down the hill by St. Augustine's churchyard, followed by his servant, there was a rush of the men from the tavern, with Captain Goodeve at their heels; but the wondering alehouse-keeper heard his queer customer say to Mahony as they left the house: "Look at him well, but touch him not"; and, all-unconscious of the foul plot to kidnap him, the aged Baronet rode on his way to Bath, safe for that day at least. He had promised the attorney to execute the mortgage on the following Monday, Jan. 19, and Mr. Jared Smith warned the Captain to hold himself in readiness to come and make friends again with his brother on the Sunday afternoon. This time there must be no miscarriage in the plot, or the mortgage would be executed and the mischief done. A long-boat from the *Ruby*, under a midshipman, was ordered to place itself at the Captain's disposal, and the young officer in charge was told to leave the boat with two men at an obscure brickyard on the river, and take the rest of the crew up to the White Hart on College Green. When the middy and his boat's crew arrived at the ale-house, he found there Mahony and the privateersmen.

In the meanwhile, in the house opposite, the Baronet and his brother were swearing mutual friendship and oblivion for all past quarrels. The attorney and the

Captain pledged the reconciliation in wine, but Sir John refused to drink, whereupon his brother violently banged the cork into the bottle, and swore that he would drink no more. When the Baronet rose to go, the attorney held the Captain back, and begged him to help him finish the bottle, an invitation which he roughly refused. It did not suit Captain Goodeve. The old Baronet, alone, on foot and unarmed, was descending the hill behind the churchyard; and this was the chance, if ever.

"By God, this won't do," shouted the Captain as he shook himself free and joined the ruffians who were swarming out of the ale-house.

"Is he ready?" the tavern-keeper heard him ask in a loud whisper to his men. "Then quick at him!" he continued; and Mahony and his privateersmen followed the Baronet at a run, while the middy and his boat's crew brought up the rear in wonder as to what it all might mean, and the Captain sauntered on leisurely behind. When the middy Williams reached the group before him, he found Sir John struggling in the grasp of Mahony and his gang, who were hustling him along in spite of his cries and protests, and they threatened to throw the young officer into the river if he interfered.

"Murder! Murder!" shouted the old man. Some men came running from a tavern to ask what was the matter. It was a man, they were told, who had committed murder on board the *Ruby* and was being taken to justice.

"I am Sir John Dineley Goodeve," shouted the old man from the folds of the scarlet cloak in which they had swathed him, "and they are going to murder me." But none dared to help him, for the ruffians who had him in their grasp were armed, and the Captain himself, with his gold buttons and his air of authority, silenced civilian protest. So sometimes carried, and sometimes rushed along, the old man was hurried down unfrequented ways, by dry docks and rope-walks, till he was thrust on board the *Ruby's* boat at the brickyard. The midshipman, who hated the job, sulkily obeyed his commander,

and steered his boat to the other side of the river to land the privateersman, and then brought up alongside the *Ruby* as she lay out in the Roads. By the dim lantern held by the men on the watch, the old Baronet painfully toiled up the gangway-ladder to the main instead of the quarter-deck, with many a sigh and groan.

"I have brought an old madman along with me to-night," explained the Captain. "You must not mind what he says." And then the prisoner was led down the narrow companion-hatch into the cockpit, and thrust into the unoccupied purser's cabin, with a sentry at the door.

There was only a flock bed with no covering in the cabin, which was otherwise unfurnished, even with the most simple necessaries, and here the doomed man lay groaning, while double bolts were, by the Captain's orders, screwed upon the door. When the carpenter was doing this, the prisoner asked him why his brother had brought him there to murder him; but the word had been passed that he was mad, and his groans and prayers for aid were alike unavailing. To keep up appearances, the doctor was ordered to feel his pulse, which he found regular; but when the Baronet began to complain of his treatment, the obedient medico was hastily told by the Captain that he was to listen to nothing, but withdraw from the cabin at once. During the rest of the evening, the Captain was freely distributing drams of rum to all and sundry, especially to Mahony and a seaman named Cole, who ended by getting drunk, luckily for himself, and tumbling down the companion-ladder into the cockpit, henceforward disappearing from the scene, in which it was intended that he should take a leading part.

While the prisoner was alternately groaning and clamouring for help—only once with partial success, when Mahony came and soothed him for a time—his brother was planning his murder above. He seems to have given some hints to the surgeon, but the latter either misunderstood or disregarded them; and late at night the Captain called his accomplice

Mahony to him in his cabin. Bringing out a bottle of rum, he again plied the Irishman with drink, and at length told him he must murder Sir John before four o'clock in the morning. As Mahony himself tells the story, he made some slight objections, which were speedily overcome by the officer, who told him, when he said he wanted help, to go and bring Cole to the cabin. But Cole was too drunk to be of any use, and Mahony aroused from his sleep another Irish seaman named White, and told him to follow him to the Captain's cabin. On arriving there White was invited to be seated, an invitation which he was too bashful to accept. After a bottle and a half of rum had been consumed by the two men, the Captain showed them how he wished the murder done. Taking a noose of rope, he told them that it must be slipped over the Baronet's head by one man, while the other stopped his mouth with a handkerchief.

By this time it was one o'clock in the morning, and no more time was to be lost. The purser's cabin was close to the foot of the steps which led from the gun-room on the upper deck into the cockpit, the only other cabin in the cockpit being an apartment called the slop-room, usually unoccupied, but, as chance would have it, tenanted clandestinely that night by the ship's cooper, who had his wife on board. At the top of the steps, in the gun-room overlooking the cockpit hatch and the door of the purser's cabin, was the surgeon's cabin, the occupant of which lay awake most of the night, disturbed by the noise. An armed sentry stood at the door of the purser's cabin, and another paced the gun-room overlooking the cockpit hatch.

The first thing was to get rid of inconvenient witnesses, and the Captain himself dismissed the sentry who stood at the prisoner's door, on the plea that he wished to speak to his brother in private. But the sentry was a Scotsman, and was suspicious; and though he went as directed on to the gun-room deck, he did not move far away from the hatchway into the cockpit. By-and-by Mahony

came creeping along the gun-room, which was only lit by a dim-burning candle-lantern. He was challenged by the gun-room sentry, and replied abusively as he descended into the nearly dark cockpit, where the Captain stood with a naked cutlass at the foot of the steps. Soon the two sentries above heard cries of murder from the purser's cabin; but the unsuspected cooper and his wife in the slop-room, only divided from the scene of blood by a thin matchboard scantling, heard a great deal more; and as they listened, trembling in terror, they realised that what they heard was not the raving of a madman, but the pleading of a victim being cruelly done to death.

"Must I die? Oh, must I die? Pray don't murder me! Here are twenty guineas. Take all I have, but pray spare me!" groaned the unhappy gentleman. Once, when the noise and struggling had aroused the attention of the two sentries above, and the Captain at the foot of the stairs saw them peering down the hatchway, he flourished his cutlass angrily and bade them stand away.

By-and-by, when the noise had ceased and all was still, the Captain took the candle from the cock-pit lantern and handed it to Mahony inside the cabin. Then the affrighted cooper and his wife, kneeling on their bed, could see through the cracks of the frail partition the two murderers, White and Mahony, rifling the body of their victim.

"Damn ye, get his watch!" said one. "The old hunks has nothing but silver in his pocket," growled the other. But by lugging the corpse upright, at last they got the gold, and then they threw the body in a heap on the cabin-floor and thought of escape. The cooper swore that he saw then a white hand grasp the dead man's throat, and another voice say, "'Tis done, and well done," and then the murderers were heard scurrying away.

The surgeon, lying awake in his cabin, the two horrified sentries craning down the hatchway, the cooper and his wife, knew well that foul murder was being done, but the presence of the Captain with his drawn sword had awed them into silence.

But when he had withdrawn to his own cabin the spell was broken. Horrified whispers ran from one to another as to what was to be done. A midshipman had been ordered overnight to leave with the ship's yawl by four in the morning, ostensibly for letters, but really to carry the murderers ashore; but none dared stop them, for they had the Captain's leave, and discipline was strict. When the winter's morning dawned, the Lieutenant, second in command, with the surgeon and other officers, opened a panel between the steward's room and the purser's cabin, and saw that Sir John was dead; but yet they hesitated about taking the extreme step of arresting a Captain for murder on his own ship. At length an invitation came from the fratricide to the Lieutenant and the surgeon to join him at breakfast, which they did; and a dismal meal we may imagine it to have been. But the night before, the news of the kidnapping of his client had been carried by many of the onlookers to lawyer Smith, and soon after breakfast shore-boats brought friends and inquirers alongside. The door of the murder-chamber was opened; and then the whole ship's company trooped aft to arrest the Captain.

"Hey, hey!" he cried, as they laid hands upon him. "What have I done?" They told him his brother had been murdered in the night, but he protested that if the villains had done murder he could not help it, and knew nought of the deed.

The three accomplices were put upon their trial at Bristol in March. Mahony and White made a clean breast of it and pleaded drunkenness and the influence of their superior officer over them; but Captain Samuel Goodeve, R.N., tried his best to wriggle out of the position he was in by technical objections to the indictment. Fortunately he was unsuccessful, and on April 15, 1741, was hanged at Bristol, by the side of his wretched tools, a callous criminal to the last; Mahony being hung in chains from a gibbet erected on the shore opposite to the place where the *Ruby* lay when the dreadful deed was done.