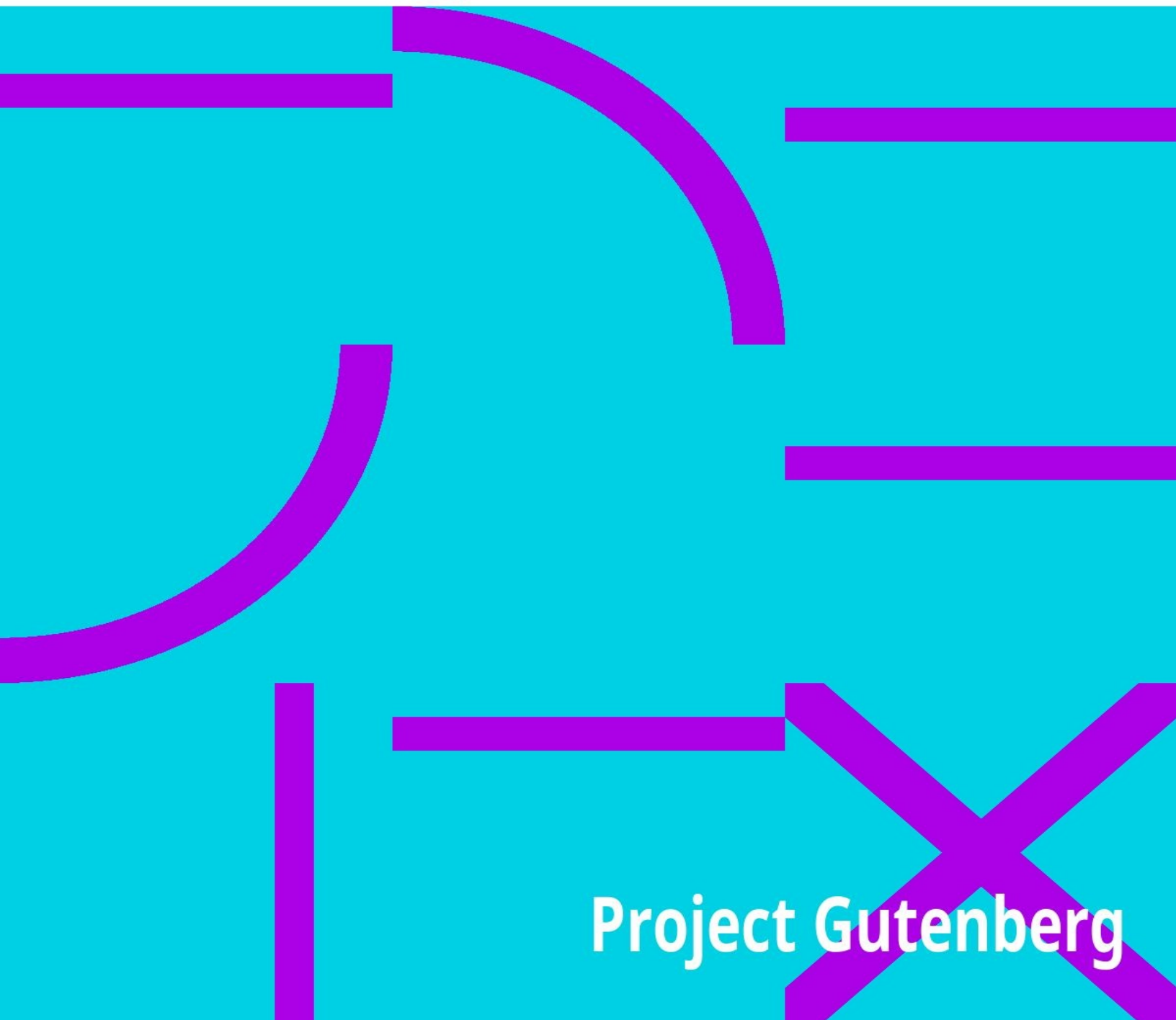


Dick Cheveley

His Adventures and Misadventures

William Henry Giles Kingston



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W H G Kingston

"Dick Cheveley"

Preface.

So extraordinary are the adventures of my hero, Master Richard Cheveley, son of the Reverend John Cheveley, vicar of the parish of S—, in the county of D—, that it is possible some of my readers may be inclined to consider them incredible, but that they are thoroughly probable the following paragraph which appeared in the evening edition of the *Standard* early in the month of November, 1879, will, I think, amply prove. I have no fear that any sensible boys will be inclined to follow Dick's example; but if they will write to him at Liverpool, where he resides, and ask his advice, as a young gentleman did mine lately, on the subject of running away to sea, I am very sure that he will earnestly advise them to stay at home; or, at all events, first to consult their fathers or mothers, or guardians, or other relatives or friends before they start, unless they desire to risk sharing the fate of the hapless stowaway here mentioned:—

“A shocking discovery was made on board the National steamer *England*, which arrived in New York from Liverpool on the 29th October. In discharging the cargo in the forehold a stowaway was found in a dying state. He had made the entire passage of thirteen days without food or drink. He was carried to the vessel's deck, where he died.”

My young correspondent, in perfect honesty, asked me to tell him how he could best manage to run away to sea. I advised him, as Mr Richard Cheveley would have done, and I am happy to say that he wisely followed my advice, for I have since frequently heard from him. When he first wrote he was an entire stranger to me. He has had more to do with this work than he supposes. I have the pleasure of dedicating it to him.

William H G Kingston.

Chapter One.

Some account of my family, including Aunt Deb—My father receives an offer—A family discussion, in which Aunt Deb distinguishes herself—Her opinions and mine differ considerably—My desire to go to sea haunts my dreams—My brother Ned's counsel—I go a-fishing in Leighton Park—I meet with an accident—My career nearly cut short—A battle with a swan, in which I get the worst of it—A courageous mother—Mark Riddle to the rescue—An awkward fix—Mark finds a way out of it—Old Roger's cottage—The Riddle family—Roger Riddle's yarns and their effect on me—Mark takes a different view—It's not all gold that glitters—The model—My reception at home.

We were all seated round the tea-table, that is to say, my father and mother, my five sisters, and three of my elder brothers, who were at home—two were away—and the same number of young ones, who wore pinafores, and last, but not least, Aunt Deb, who was my mother's aunt, and lived with us to manage everything and keep everybody in order, for this neither my father nor mother were very well able to do; the latter nearly worn out with nursing numerous babies, while my father was constantly engaged in the duties of the parish of Sandgate, of which he was incumbent.

Aunt Deb was never happy unless she was actively engaged in doing something or other. At present she was employed in cutting, buttering, or covering with jam, huge slices of bread, which she served out as soon as they were ready to the juvenile members of the family, while my eldest sister, Mary, was presiding at the tea-tray, and passing round the cups as she filled them.

When all were served, my father stood up and said grace, and then all fell to with an eagerness which proved that we had good appetites.

"I say, Aunt Deb, Tom Martin has lent me such a jolly book. Please give me another slice before you sit down. It's all about Anson's voyage round the world. I don't know whether I shall like it as well as 'Robinson Crusoe' or 'Captain Cook's Voyages,' or 'Gulliver's Travels,' or the 'Life of Nelson,' or 'Paul Jones,' but I think I shall from the look I got of it," I exclaimed, as Aunt Deb was doing what I requested.

"I wish, Dick, that you would not read those pestiferous works," she answered, as, having given me the slice of bread, she sat down to sip her tea. "They are all written with an evil intent, to make young people go gadding about the world, instead of staying contentedly at home doing their duty in that state of life to which they are called."

"But I don't understand why I should not be called to go to sea," I replied; "I have for a long time made up my mind to go, and I intend to try and become as great a man as Howe, or Nelson, or Collingwood, or Lord Cochrane, or Sir Sidney Smith. I've just to ask you, Aunt Deb, what England would be without her navy, and what the navy would be unless boys were allowed to go into it?"

"Stuff and nonsense, you know nothing about the matter, Dick. It's very well for boys who have plenty of interest, for sons of peers or members of parliament, or judges or bishops, or of others who possess ample means and influence, but the son of a poor incumbent of an out of the way parish, who knows no one, and whom nobody knows, would remain at the bottom of the tree."

"But you forget, Aunt Deb, that there are ways of getting on besides through interest. I intend to do all sorts of dashing things, and win my promotion, through my bravery. If I can once become a midshipman I shall have no fear about getting on."

"Stuff and nonsense!" again ejaculated Aunt Deb, "you know nothing about the matter, boy."

"Don't I though," I said to myself, for I knew that my father, who felt the importance of finding professions for his sons according to their tastes, had some time before written to Sir Reginald Knowsley, of Leighton Park,—"the Squire," as he used to be called till he was made a baronet, and still was so very frequently, asking him to exert his influence in obtaining an appointment for me on board a man-of-war. This Sir Reginald had promised to do. Aunt Deb, however, had made many objections, but for once in a way my father had acted contrary to her sage counsel, and as he considered for the best. Still Aunt Deb had not given in.

"You'll do as you think fit, John," she observed to him, "but you will repent

it. Dick is not able to take care of himself at home, much less will he be so on board a big ship among a number of rough sailors. Let him remain at school until he is old enough to go into a counting-house in London or Bristol, where he'll make his fortune and become a respectable member of society, as his elder brother means to be, or let him become a master at a school, or follow any course of life rather than that of a soldier or a sailor."

I did not venture to interrupt Aunt Deb, indeed it would have been somewhat dangerous to have done so, while she was arguing a point, but I had secretly begged my father to write to Sir Reginald as he had promised, assuring him that I had set my heart on following a naval career, and that it would break if I was not allowed to go to sea. This took place, it will be understood, some time before the evening of which I am now speaking.

Aunt Deb suspected that my father was inclined to favour my wishes, and this made her speak still more disparagingly than ever of the navy.

Tea was nearly over when the post arrived. It only reached us of an evening, and Sarah, the maid, brought in a large franked letter. I at once guessed that it was from Sir Reginald Knowsley, who was in London.

I gazed anxiously at my father's face as he read it. His countenance did not, however, exhibit any especial satisfaction.

"Who is it from?" asked my mother, in a languid voice. "From Sir Reginald," he replied. "It is very kind and complimentary. He says that he has had great pleasure in doing as I requested him. He fortunately, when going down to the Admiralty, met his friend Captain Grummit, who has lately been appointed to the 'Blaze-away,' man-of-war, and who expressed his willingness to receive on board his ship the son of any friend of his, but—and here comes the rub—Captain Grummit, he says, has made it a rule to take no midshipmen unless their parents consent to allow them fifty pounds a year, in addition to their pay. This sum, the Captain states, is absolutely necessary to enable them to make the appearance he desires all his midshipmen to maintain. Fifty pounds a year is a larger sum, I fear, than my purse can supply," observed my father when he had read thus far.

“I should think it was, indeed!” exclaimed Aunt Deb. “Fifty pounds a year! Why, that’s nearly half of my annual income. It would be madness, John, to make any promise of the sort. Suppose you were to let him go, and to stint the rest of his brothers and sisters by making him so large an allowance—what will be the result, granting that he is not killed in the first battle he is engaged in, or does not fall overboard and get drowned, or the ship is not wrecked, and he escapes the other hundred and one casualties to which a sailor is liable? Why, when he becomes a lieutenant he’ll marry to a certainty, and then he’ll be killed, and leave you and his mother and me, or his brothers and sisters, to look after his widow and children, supposing they are able to do so.”

“But I shall have a hundred and twenty pounds full pay, and ninety pounds a year half-pay,” I answered; “I know all about it, I can tell you.”

“Ninety pounds a year and a wife and half-a-dozen small brats to support on it,” exclaimed Aunt Deb in an indignant tone. “The wife is sure to be delicate, and know nothing about housekeeping, and she and the children will constantly be requiring the doctor in the house.”

“But you are going very far ahead, Aunt Deb, I haven’t gone to sea yet, or been made a lieutenant, and if I had, there’s no reason why I should marry.”

“There are a great many reasons why you should not,” exclaimed Aunt Deb.

“I was going to say that there are many lieutenants in the navy who have not got wives, and I do not suppose that I shall marry when I become one,” I answered.

“It seems pretty certain that you will never be a lieutenant or a midshipman either, if it depends upon your having an allowance of fifty pounds a year, for where that fifty pounds is to come from I’m sure I don’t know,” cried my aunt. “As it is, your poor father finds it a difficult matter to find food and clothing for you all, and to give you a proper education, and unless the Bishop should suddenly bestow a rich living on him, he, at all events, could not pay fifty pounds a year, or fifty shillings either, so I would advise you forthwith to give up this mad idea of yours, and stay

quietly at school until a profitable employment is found for you.”

I looked up at my father, feeling that there was a good deal of truth in what Aunt Deb said, although I did not like the way she said it.

“Your aunt only states what is the case, Dick,” said my father. “I should be glad to forward your views, but I could not venture, with my very limited income, to bind myself to supply you with the sum which Sir Reginald says is necessary.”

“Couldn’t you get Sir Reginald to advance the money?” I inquired, as the bright idea occurred to me; “I will return it to him out of my pay and prize-money.”

Aunt Deb fairly burst out laughing.

“Out of your pay, Dick?” she exclaimed. “Why fifty pounds is required over and above that pay you talk of, every penny of which you will have to spend, and supposing that you should not be employed for a time, and have to live on shore. Do you happen to know what a midshipman’s half-pay is? Why just nothing at all and find yourself. You talk a good deal of knowing all about the matter, but it’s just clear that you know nothing.”

“I wish, my dear Dick, that we could save enough to help you,” said my mother, who was always ready to assist us in any of our plans; “but you know how difficult I find it to get even a few shillings to spend.”

My mother’s remark soothed my irritated feelings and disappointment, or I should have said something which might not have been pleasant to Aunt Deb’s ears.

We continued talking on the subject, I devising all sorts of plans, and arguing tooth and nail with Aunt Deb, for I had made up my mind to go to sea, and to go I was determined by hook or by crook; but that fifty pounds a year was, I confess, a damper to my hopes of becoming a midshipman.

If I could have set to work and made the fifty pounds, I would have done my best to do so, but I was as little likely to make fifty pounds as I was to make fifty thousand. Aunt Deb also reminded my father that it was not fifty pounds a year for one year, but fifty pounds for several years, which

he might set down as three hundred pounds, at least, of which, through my foolish fancy, I should be depriving him, and my mother, and brothers, and sisters.

There was no denying that, so I felt that I was defeated. I had at length to go to bed, feeling as disappointed and miserable as I had ever been in my life. To Ned, the brother just above me in age, who slept in the same room, I opened my heart.

"I am the most miserable being in the world!" I exclaimed. "I wish that I had never been born. If it had not been for Aunt Deb father would have given in, but she hates me, I know, and always has hated me, and takes a pleasure in thwarting my wishes. I've a great mind to run off to sea, and enter before the mast just to spite her."

Ned, who was a quiet, amiable fellow, taking much after our kind mother, endeavoured to tranquillise my irritated feelings.

"Don't talk in that way, Dick," he said in a gentle tone. "You might get tired of the life, even if you were to go into the navy; but, perhaps, means may be found, after all, to enable you to follow the bent of your wishes. All naval captains may not insist on their midshipmen having an allowance of fifty pounds a year; or, perhaps, if they do, some friend may find the necessary funds."

"I haven't a friend in the world," I answered. "If my father cannot give me the money I don't know who can. I know that Aunt Deb would not, even if she could."

"Cheer up, Dick," said Ned; "or rather I would advise you to go to sleep. Perhaps to-morrow morning some bright idea may occur which we can't think of at present. I've got my lessons to do before breakfast, so I must not stop awake talking, or I shall not be able to arouse myself."

I had begun taking off my clothes, and Ned waited until he saw me lie down, when he put out the candle, and jumped into bed. I continued talking till a loud snore from his corner of the room showed me that he was fast asleep. I soon followed his example, but my mind was not idle, for I dreamed that I had gone to sea, become a midshipman, and was sailing over the blue ocean with a fair breeze, that the captain was talking

to me and telling me what a fine young sailor I had become, and that he had invited me to breakfast with him, and had handed me a plate of buttered toast and a fresh-laid egg; when, looking up, I saw his countenance suddenly change into that of Aunt Deb.

“Don’t you wish you may get it?” he said. “Before you eat that, go on deck and see what weather it is.”

Of course I had to go, when to my astonishment I found the ship rolling and pitching; the foam-covered seas tossing and roaring; the officers shouting and bawling, ordering the men to take in sail. Presently there came a crash, the masts went by the board, the seas dashed over the ship, and I found myself tumbling about among the breakers, until it seemed almost in an instant I was thrown on the beach, where I lay unable to crawl out of the way of the angry waters, which threatened every moment to carry me off again. In vain I tried to work my way up the sands with my arms and legs. Presently down I came, to find myself sprawling on the floor.

“What can have made all that row?” exclaimed Ned, starting up, awakened by the noise of my falling out of bed.

“I thought I was shipwrecked,” I answered.

“I’m glad you are not,” said Ned. “So get into bed again, and if you can go to sleep, dream of something else.”

Feeling somewhat foolish, I did as he advised, but I had first to put my bed-clothes to rights, for I had dragged them off with me to the floor. It was no easy matter, although I was assisted by the pale light of early morning, which came through the chinks of the shutters.

In a short time afterwards Ned again got up to go to his books, for he, being somewhat delicate, was studying under our father, while I, who had been sent to school, had just come home for the holidays. I had a holiday task, but had no intention of troubling myself about it at present. I was, therefore, somewhat puzzled to know what to do. While I was dressing, it occurred to me that I would go over to Leighton Park with my rod, to try the ponds, hoping to return with a basket of fish. I might go there and get an hour’s fishing, and be back again before breakfast. I tried to persuade

Ned to accompany me, but he preferred to stick to his books.

"Much good may they do you," I answered, rather annoyed. "Why can't you shut them up for once in a way. It's a beautiful morning, and by going early we are sure to have plenty of sport, and you can learn your lessons just as well after breakfast."

"Not if I had been out three or four hours fishing, and came home wet and dirty; and I want to get my studies over while the day is young, and the air fresh and pure. I can read twice as well now as I shall be able after breakfast."

"Well, if you are so unsociable, I must go by myself," I said, getting down my rod from the wall on which it hung with my fishing-tackle and basket. Swinging the latter over my shoulder I crept noiselessly out of the room and down stairs. No one was stirring, so I let myself out by a back door which led into the garden. Even our old dog "Growler" did not bark, for he was, I suppose, taking his morning snooze after having been on the watch all night.

Before setting off I had to get some bait. I found a spade in the tool-house and proceeded with it to a certain well-known heap in the corner of the kitchen garden, full of vivacious worms of a ruddy hue, for which fish of all descriptions had a decided predilection. Even now, whenever I smell a similar odour to that which emanated from the heap, the garden and its surroundings are vividly recalled to my mind. I quickly filled a box, which I kept for the purpose, with wriggling worms. It had a perforated lid, and contained damp moss.

"I ought to have thought of getting these fellows yesterday and have given them time to clean themselves," I said to myself. "They'll do, notwithstanding, although they will not prove as tough as they ought." Shouldering my rod I made my way out of the garden by a wicket gate, and proceeded across the fields on which it opened towards Leighton Park. The grass was wet with dew, the air was pure and fresh, almost cold; the birds were singing blithely in the trees. A lark sprang up before me, and rose into the blue air, warbling sweetly to welcome the rising sun, which he could see long before its rays glanced over the ground on which I was walking. I could not help also singing and whistling, the bright

air alone being sufficient to raise my spirits. I hurried away, as I was eager to begin fishing, for I wanted the fish in the first place, and I knew in the second that Ned would laugh at me if I came back empty handed. The pond to which I was going, although supplied by the same stream which fed the ornamental piece of water in the neighbourhood of the Hall, was at a distance from it, and was accessible without having to pass through the grounds. It was surrounded by trees, and one side of the bank was thickly fringed by sedges which extended a considerable way into the water. It served as a preserve for ducks and wild fowl of various descriptions, and was inhabited also by a number of swans, who floated gracefully over its calm surface. As they were accustomed to depend upon their own exertions for a subsistence, they generally kept at a distance from strangers, and I had never been interrupted by them when fishing. I made my way to a spot where I knew that the water was deep, and where I had frequently been successful in fishing. It was a green bank, which jutted out into a point, with bushes on one side, but perfectly free on the other. I quickly got my rod together, and my hook baited with a red wriggling worm. I did not consider that the worm wriggled because it did not like to be put on the hook, but if I had been asked I should have said that it was rather pleased than otherwise at having so important a duty to perform as catching fish for my pleasure. I had a new float, white above and green below, which I thought looked very pretty as I threw my line out on the water. Up it popped at once, there being plenty of lead. Before long it began to move, gliding slowly over the surface, then faster and faster. I eagerly held my rod ready to strike as soon as it went down; now it moved on one side, now on the other. I knew that there was a fish coquetting with the bait, trying perhaps to suck off the worm without letting the hook run into its jaws. Before long down went the float, and I gave my rod a scientific jerk against the direction in which the float was last moving, when to my intense satisfaction I felt that I had hooked a fish, but whether a large or a small one I could not at first tell. I wound up my line until I had got it of a manageable length, then drew it in gradually towards the bank. I soon discovered that I had hooked a fine tench. It was so astonished at finding itself dragged through the water, without any exertion of its fins, that it scarcely struggled at all, and I quickly hauled it up on the bank. It was three-quarters of a pound at least, one of the largest I had ever caught. It was soon unhooked and placed safely in my basket. As I wanted several more I put on a fresh worm, and again threw my line into the water.

Some people say there is no pleasure in float-fishing, but for me it always had a strange fascination, that would not have been the case, if I could have seen through the water, for I believe the interest depends upon not knowing what size or sort of fish has got hold of the hook, when the float first begins to move, and then glides about as I have described, until it suddenly disappears beneath the surface. I caught four or five fine tench in little more than twice as many minutes. I don't know why they took a fancy to bite so freely that fine bright morning. Generally they take the hook best of a dull, muggy day, with a light drizzling rain, provided the weather is warm. After I had caught those four fish, I waited for fully ten minutes more without getting another bite; at last, I came to the conclusion that only those four fish had come to that part of the pond. There was another place a little further on, free of trees and bushes, where I could throw my line without the risk of its being caught in the bushes above my head; I had not, however, generally gone there. Tall sedges lined the shore, and water-lilies floated on the greater part of the surface and its immediate neighbourhood. It was also somewhat difficult to get at, owing to the dense brushwood which covered the ground close to it. I waited five minutes more, and then slinging my basket behind my back, I made my way to the spot I have described. After catching my line two or three times in the bushes, and spending some time in clearing it, I reached the bank and unslinging my basket quickly, once more had my float in the water. The ground, which was covered with moss rather than grass, sloped quietly down to the water, and was excessively slippery. As I held my rod, expecting every moment to get a bite, I heard a low whistling sound coming from the bushes close to me. At first I thought it was produced by young frogs, but where they were I could not make out. I observed that several of the swans I have before mentioned were floating on the surface not far off. Now one, now another would put down its long neck in search of fish or water insects. Presently one of them caught sight of me, and came swimming rapidly towards the extreme point of the bank. In an instant it landed, and half-flying, half-running over the ground, came full at me through the bushes. To retreat was impossible, should it intend to attack me, but I hoped it would not venture to do so. Before, however, I had any time for considering the matter, it suddenly spread its powerful wings, with one of which it dealt me such a blow, that before I could recover I was sent down the slippery bank, and plunged head over heels into the water. In my fright I let go my rod, but instinctively held out my hands to grasp whatever I could get hold of.

The swan, not content with its first success, came after me, when, by some means or other. I caught hold of it by one of its legs. To this day I don't know how it happened. The water was deep, and I had very little notion of swimming, and having once got hold of something to support myself I was not inclined to let go, while the swan was as much astonished at being seized hold of as I was. I shouted and bawled for help, although, as no one was likely to be at the pond at that early hour, or passing in the neighbourhood, there was little chance of obtaining assistance.

Away flew the swan, spreading out her broad wings to enable her to rise above the surface. Instead of seeking the land, to my horror, she dragged me right out towards the middle of the pond; while the other swans, alarmed at seeing the extraordinary performance of their companion, flew off in all directions. Fortunately I was able to keep my head above the surface, but was afraid of getting a kick from the other leg of the swan as she struck the water with it to assist herself in making her onward way, but as I held her captive foot at arm's length, fortunately she did not touch me. I dared not let go with one of my hands, or I should have tried to seize it. Whether it was instinct or not which induced her to carry me away from her nest I cannot tell, but that seemed to be her object. I felt as if I was in a horrid dream, compelled to hold on, and yet finding myself dragged forward against my will. The pond was a long and narrow one, but it seemed wider than it had ever done before. The swan, instead of going across to the opposite bank, took a course right down the centre. My shouts and shrieks must have filled her with alarm. On and on she went flapping her huge wings. I knew that my life depended upon being able to hold fast to her foot, but my arms were beginning to ache, and it seemed to me that we were still a long way from the end. When we got there, I could not tell what she might do. Perhaps, I thought, she might turn round and attack me with beak and wings, when, exhausted by my struggles, I should be unable to defend myself. Still I dared not venture to let go. I heartily wished that I had been a good swimmer, because then, when we got near the end, I might have released her and struck out, either for one side or the other. As it was, my safety depended on being dragged by her to the shore. She frequently struck the water with her wings. Showers of spray came flying over my head, which prevented me from seeing how near I was to it. At last I began to fear that I should be unable to hold on long enough. My arms ached, and my hands felt

cramped, still the love of life induced me not to give in.

I shouted again and again. Presently I heard a shout in return.

“Hold on, young fellow. Hold on, you’ll be all right.” This encouraged me, for I knew that help was at hand. Suddenly, as I looked up, I saw the tops of the trees, and presently afterwards I found the swan was trying to make her way up the bank, while my feet touched the muddy bottom.

I had no wish to be dragged through the bushes by the swan, so, as I was close to the shore, I let go, but as I did so, I fell utterly exhausted on the bank, and was very nearly slipping again into the water. The swan, finding herself free after going a short distance, closed her wings, and recollecting, I fancy, that I had been the cause of her alarm, came rushing back with out-stretched neck, uttering a strange hissing sound, preparing, as I supposed, to attack me. I was too much exhausted to try and get up and endeavour to escape from her. Just as she was within a few feet of me, I saw a boy armed with a thick stick spring out from among the bushes, and run directly towards her. A blow from his stick turned her aside, and instead of making for me, she again plunged into the water, and made her way over the surface in the direction from which we had come.

“I am very much obliged to you, my fine fellow, for driving off the swan, or I suppose the savage creature would have mauled me terribly, had she got up to me.”

“Very happy to have done you a service, master; but it didn’t give me much trouble to do it. However, I would advise you not to stop here in your wet clothes, for the mornings are pretty fresh, and you’ll be catching a bad cold.”

“Thank you,” I said, “but I do not feel very well able to walk far just yet.”

“Have you got far to go home?” he asked.

I told him.

“Well, then, you had better come home with me to my father’s cottage. It is away down near the sea, and he’ll give you some hot spirits, and you

can turn into my bed while your clothes are drying.”

I was very glad to accept his proposal, for I did not at all fancy having to go home all dripping, to be laughed at by my brothers, and to get a scolding from Aunt Deb into the bargain, for I knew she would say it was all my own fault, and that if I had not been prying into the swan’s nest, the bird would not have attacked me. I did not, however, wish to lose my rod and basket of fish, and I thought it very probable that if I left them, somebody else would carry them off. I asked my new friend his name.

“Mark Riddle,” he answered.

“Before I go I must get back my rod and basket of fish; it won’t take us long. Would you mind coming with me?”

“No, master, I don’t mind; but I would advise you to be quick about it.”

Mark helped me up, and as I soon got the use of my legs, we ran round outside the trees as fast as we could go. The basket of fish was safe enough on the bank, but the rod was floating away at some distance.

“Oh dear, oh dear. I shall never be able to get it,” I exclaimed.

“What! Can’t you swim, master?” asked Mark.

I confessed that I was afraid I could not swim far enough to bring it in.

“Well, never you mind. I’ll have it in a jiffy,” and stripping off his clothes he plunged into the water and soon brought in the rod.

“There’s a fish on the hook I’ve a notion,” he said, as he handed me the butt end of the rod.

He was right, and as he was dressing, not taking long to rub himself dry with his handkerchief, I landed a fine fat tench.

“That belongs to you,” I said. “And, indeed, I ought to give you all the fish I have in my basket.”

“Much obliged, master; but I’ve got a fine lot myself, which I pulled out of

the pond this morning, only don't you say a word about it, for the Squire, I've a notion, doesn't allow us poor people to come fishing here."

I assured Mark that I would not inform against him, and having taken my rod to pieces and wound up my line, I said that I was ready to set out. Mark by that time was completely dressed. Just as we were about to start I saw the swan—I suppose the same one which had dragged me across the pond—come swimming back at a rapid rate towards where we were standing, in the neighbourhood, as I well knew, of her nest. Whether or not she fancied we were about to interfere with her young, we could not tell, but we agreed that it was well to beat a retreat. We accordingly set off and ran on until we reached the further end of the pond, when Mark, asking me to stop a minute, disappeared among the bushes, and in a few minutes returned with a rough basket full of fine tench, carp, and eels. I had a notion that some night-lines had assisted him to take so many. I did not, however, ask questions just then, and once more we set off running. Wet as I was, I was very glad to move quickly, not that I felt particularly cold, for the sun had now risen some way above the trees, and as there was not a breath of air, his rays warmed me and began to dry my outer garments. I must have had a very draggled look, and I had no wish to be seen by any one at home in that condition. In little more than a quarter of an hour we came in sight of a cottage situated below a cliff on the side of a ravine, opening out towards the sea. A stream which flowed from the Squire's ponds running through it.

"That is my home, and father will be right glad to see you," said Mark, pointing to it.

A fine old sailor-like man with a straw hat and round jacket came out of the door as we approached, and began to look about him in the fashion seafaring men have the habit of doing when they first turn out in the morning, to ascertain what sort of weather it is likely to be. His eyes soon fell on Mark and me as we ran down the ravine.

"Who have you got with you, my son?" he asked.

"The young gentleman from the vicarage. He has had a ducking, and he wants to dry his clothes before he goes home; or maybe he'd call it a swanning, seeing it was one of those big white birds which pulled him in,

and towed him along from one end of the pond to the other, eh, master? What's your name?"

"Richard," I replied, "though I'm generally called Dick," not at all offended at my companion's familiarity.

"You are welcome, Master Dick, and if you like to turn into Mark's bed, or put on a shirt and pair of trousers of his, we'll get your duds dried before the kitchen fire in a jiffy," said the old sailor. "Come in, come in; it doesn't do to stand out in the air when you are wet through with fresh water."

I gladly entered the old sailor's cottage, where I found his wife and a young daughter, a year or two older than Mark, busy in getting breakfast ready. I thought Nancy Riddle a nice-looking pleasant-faced girl, and her mother a good-natured buxom dame. As I had no fancy for going to bed I gladly accepted a pair of duck trousers and a blue check shirt belonging to Mark, and a pair of low shoes, which were certainly not his. I suspected that they were Nancy's best.

I quickly took off my wet things in Mark's room, and getting into dry ones, made my appearance in the room which served them for parlour, kitchen, and hall, where I found the table spread, with a pot of hot tea, cups and saucers, a bowl of porridge, a loaf of home-made bread, and a pile of buttered toast, to which several of Mark's freshly caught fish were quickly added. I offered mine to Mrs Riddle, but she answered—

"Thank you kindly, but you had better take them home to your friends, they'll be glad of them, and we've got a plenty, as you see."

I was very thankful to get a cup of scalding tea, for I was beginning to feel somewhat chilly, though Mrs Riddle made me sit near the fire. A saucer of porridge and milk, followed by some buttered toast and the best part of a tench, with a slice or two of bread soon set me up.

Nancy, however, now and then got up and gave my clothes a turn to dry them faster—a delicate attention which I duly appreciated. Mr Riddle, who was evidently fond of spinning yarns, as most old sailors are, narrated a number of his adventures, which greatly interested me, and made me more than ever wish to go to sea. Mark had already made a trip in a coaster to the north of England, and I was much surprised to hear

him say that he had had enough of it.

"It is not all gold that glitters," he remarked. "I fancied that I was to become a sailor all at once, instead of that I was made to clean out the cabin, attend on the skipper, and wash up the pots and the pans for the cook, and be at everybody's beck and call, with a rope's-end for my reward whenever I was not quick enough to please my many masters."

"That's what most youngsters have to put up with when they first go to sea," remarked his father. "You should not have minded it, my lad."

I found that Mark's great ambition was to become the owner of a fishing-boat, when he could live at home and be his own master. He was fonder of fishing than anything else, and when he could not get out to sea he passed much of his time with his rod and lines on the banks of the Squire's ponds, or on those of others in the neighbourhood. He did not consider it poaching, as he asserted he had a perfect right to catch fish wherever he could find them, and I suspect that his father was of the same opinion, for he did not in any way find fault with him. When breakfast was over Mark exhibited with considerable pride a small model of a vessel which he and his father had cut out of a piece of pine, and rigged in a very perfect manner. I was delighted with her appearance, and said I should like to have a similar craft.

"Well, Master Cheveley, I'll cut one out for you as soon as I can get a piece of wood fit for the purpose," said the old sailor; "and when Mark and I have rigged her I'll warrant she'll sail faster than any other craft of her size which you can find far or near."

"Thank you," I answered, "I shall be very pleased to have her; and perhaps we can get up a regatta, and Mark must bring his vessel. I feel sure he or I will carry off the prize."

As I wanted to get home, dreading the jobation I should get from Aunt Deb for not making my appearance at prayer-time, I begged my friends to let me put on my own clothes. They were tolerably dry by this time, though the shoes were still wet, but that was of no consequence.

"Well, Master Dick, we shall always be glad to see you. Whenever you come this way give us a call," said the old sailor, as I was preparing to

wish him, his wife and daughter good-bye.

I shook hands all round, and Mark accompanied me part of the way home. I parted from him as if he had been an old friend, indeed I was really grateful to him for the way in which he had saved my life, as I believed he had done, when he drove off the enraged swan.

Chapter Two.

Aunt Deb's lecture, and what came of it—My desire to go to sea still further increases—My father, to satisfy me, visits Leighton Hall—Our interview with Sir Reginald Knowsley—Some description of Leighton Hall and what we saw there—The magistrate's room—A smuggler in trouble—The evidence against him, and its worth—An ingenious plea—An awkward witness—The prisoner receives the benefit of the doubt—Sir Reginald consults my father, and my father consults Sir Reginald—My expectations stand a fair chance of being realised—The proposed crusade against the smugglers—My father decides on taking an active part in it—I resolve to second him.

On reaching home, the first person I encountered was Aunt Deb.

"Where have you been, Master Dick?" she exclaimed, in a stern tone, "you've frightened your poor father and mother out of their wits. They have been fancying that you must have met with some accident, or run off to sea."

"I have been fishing, aunt," I answered, exhibiting the contents of my basket, "this shows that I am speaking the truth, though you look as if you doubted my word."

"Ned said you had gone out fishing, but that you promised to be back for breakfast," she replied, "it has been over half an hour or more, and the things have been cleared away, so you must be content with a mug of milk and a piece of bread. The teapot was emptied, and we can't be brewing any more for you."

"Thank you, aunt. I must, as you say, be content with the mug of milk and

piece of bread you offer me," I said, with a demure countenance, glad to escape any questioning. "I shall have a better appetite for dinner, when I hope you will allow these fish to be cooked, and I fancy that you will find them very good, I have seldom caught finer."

"Well, well, go in and get off your dirty shoes, you look as if you had been wading into the pond, and remember to be home in good time another day. While I manage the household, I must have regularity; the want of it throws everybody out, though your father and mother do not seem to care about the matter."

Glad to escape so easily, I hurried away. My father had gone out to visit a sick person who had sent for him. My brothers and sisters were engaged in their various studies and occupations, and my mother was still in her room. Jane, the maid, by Aunt Deb's directions, brought me the promised mug of milk and piece of bread, and I, without complaint, ate a small piece of the one, and drank up the contents of the other, and then said I had had enough, and could manage to go on until dinner-time. It did not strike me at the time that I was guilty of any deception, though I really was; but I was afraid if I mentioned my visit to Roger Riddle's cottage, the rest of my adventures in the morning would come out, and so said nothing about the matter.

When my father came home, I told him that I was sorry for being so late, but considering the fine basket of fish I had brought home, it would add considerably to the supply of provisions for the family, and hoped he would not be angry with me.

"No, Dick, I am not angry," he said, "but Aunt Deb likes regularity, and we are in duty bound to yield to her wishes."

"I wish that Aunt Deb were at Jericho," I muttered to myself, "and I should not have minded saying the same thing aloud to my brothers and some of my sisters, for we most of us were heartily tired of her interference with all family arrangements, and were frequently on the verge of rebellion, but my father paid her so much deference, that we were afraid of openly breaking out."

Finding that my father was disengaged, I followed him into the study, and

again broached the subject of going to sea.

“Couldn’t you take me to Squire Knowsley, and talk the matter over with him,” I said. “You can tell him that 50 pounds a year is a large sum for you to allow me, and perhaps he may induce Captain Grummit to take me, although I may not have the usual allowance. I promise to be very economical, and I would be ready to make any sacrifice rather than not go afloat.”

“Sir Reginald came back yesterday, I find,” said my father. “You know, Dick, I am always anxious to gratify your wishes, and as I do not see any objection to your proposal, we will set off at once to call on him; perhaps he will do as you desire. If he does not, it will show him how anxious you are to go to sea, and he may assist you in some other way.”

I was very grateful to my father, and thanked him for agreeing to my proposal.

“It won’t do, however, for you to go in your present untidy condition,” he remarked; “go and put on your best clothes, and by that time I shall be ready to set off.”

I hurried to my room, and throwing my clothes down on my bed, rigged myself out in the best I possessed. I also, as may be supposed, put on dry socks and shoes. It did not occur to me at the time, that the condition of the clothing I threw off was likely to betray my adventure of the morning. I went down stairs and set off with my father. We had a pleasant walk, although the weather was rather hot, and in the course of about an hour arrived at Leighton Park.

Sir Reginald, who was at home, desired that we should at once be admitted to his study, or rather justice-room, in which he performed his magisterial duties. It was a large oak room, the walls adorned with stags’ horns, foxes’ brushes, and other trophies of the chase, with a couple of figures in armour in the corner, holding candelabra in their hands. On the walls were hung also bows and arrows, halberds, swords, and pikes, as well as modern weapons, and they were likewise adorned with several hunting pictures, and some grim portraits of the Squire’s ancestors. On one side was a bookcase, on the shelves of which were a few standard

legal works, with others on sporting subjects, veterinary, falconry, horses and dogs, and other branches of natural history.

Sir Reginald himself, a worthy gentleman, with slightly grizzled hair and a ruddy countenance, was seated at a writing-table covered with a green cloth, on which was a Bible and two or three other books, and writing materials. He rose as we entered, and received us very courteously, begging my father and me to take seats near him on the inner side of the table.

"You will excuse me, if any cases are brought in, I must attend to them at once. I never allow anything to interfere with my magisterial duties. But do not go away. I'll dispose of them off-hand, and shall be happy to continue the conversation. I want to have a few words with you, Mr Cheveley, upon a matter of importance, to obtain your advice and assistance. By-the-bye, you wrote to me a short time ago about a son of yours who wishes to enter the naval service. This is, I presume, the young gentleman," he continued, looking at me, "Eh! My lad? And so you wish to become a second Nelson?"

"I wish to enter the navy, Sir Reginald, but don't know whether I shall ever become an admiral; my ambition is at present to be made a midshipman," I answered boldly.

"I am very ready to forward your wishes, although it is not so easy a matter as it was a few years ago during the war time. I spoke to my friend Grummit, who has just commissioned the 'Blaze-away,' and he expressed his willingness to take you. I think I wrote to you, Mr Cheveley, on the subject."

"That is the very matter on which I am anxious to consult you, Sir Reginald," said my father. "You mentioned that Captain Grummit insists on all his midshipmen having an allowance from their friends of 50 pounds a year, and although that does not appear to him probably, or to you, Sir Reginald, a large sum, it is beyond the means of a poor incumbent to furnish, and I am anxious to know whether Captain Grummit will condescend to take him with a smaller allowance."

"I am sorry to say he told me that he made it a rule to receive no

midshipman who had not at least that amount of private property to keep up the respectability of his position,” answered Sir Reginald, “and from what I know of him, I should think he is not a man likely to depart from any rule he may think fit to make. However, my dear Mr Cheveley, I will communicate with him, and let you know what he replies. If he still insists on your son having 50 pounds a year, we must see what else can be done. Excuse me for a few minutes, here come some people on business.”

Several persons who had entered the hall, approached the table. One of them, a dapper little gentleman in black, with a bundle of papers in his hand, took a seat at one end, and began busily spreading them out before him. At the same time two men, whom I saw were constables, brought up a prisoner, who was dressed as a seafaring man, handcuffed.

“Whom have you got here?” asked Sir Reginald, scrutinising the prisoner.

“Please, your honour, Sir Reginald, we took this man last night assisting in running contraband goods, landed, as we have reason to believe, from Dick Hargreave’s boat the ‘Saucy Bess,’ which had been seen off the coast during the day between Milton Cove and Rock Head.”

“Ah, I’m glad you’ve got one of them at last. We must put a stop to this smuggling which is carried on under our noses to the great detriment of the revenue. What became of the rest of the crew, and the men engaged in landing the cargo?”

“Please, your worship, the cargo was sprighted away before we could get hold of a single keg or bale, and all the fellows except this one made their escape. The ‘Preventive’ men had been put on a wrong scent, and gone off in a different direction, so that we were left to do as best we could, and we only captured this one prisoner with a keg on his shoulders, making off across the downs, and we brought him along with the keg as evidence against him.”

“Half a loaf is better than no bread, and I hope by the punishment he will receive to induce others now engaged in smuggling to abandon so low a pursuit. What is your name, prisoner?”

“Jack Cope, your worship,” answered the smuggler, who looked

wonderfully unconcerned, and spoke without the slightest hesitation or fear.

“Well, Mr Jack Cope, what have you to say for yourself to induce me to refrain from making out a warrant to commit you to gaol?” asked the magistrate.

“Please, your worship, I don’t deny that I was captured as the constables describe with a cask on my shoulders, for I had been down to the sea to fill it with salt water to bathe one of my children whose limbs require strengthening, and I was walking quietly along when these men pounced down upon me, declaring that I had been engaged in running the cargo of the ‘Saucy Bess,’ with which I had no more to do than the babe unborn.”

“A very likely story, Master Cope. You were caught with a keg on your shoulders; it’s very evident that you were unlawfully employed in assisting to run the cargo of the vessel you spoke of, and I shall forthwith make out the order for your committal to prison.”

“Please, your worship, before you do that, I must beg you to examine the keg I was carrying, for if it contains spirits I am ready to go; but if not, I claim in justice the right to be set at liberty.”

“Have you examined the keg, men,” said the squire, “to ascertain if it contains spirits?”

“No, your worship, we would not venture to do that, seeing that t’other day when one of the coastguard broached a keg to see whether it had brandy or not he got into trouble for drinking the spirits.”

“For drinking the spirits! He deserved to be,” exclaimed Sir Reginald. “However, that is not the point. Bring the keg here, and if you broach it in my presence you need have no fear of the consequences. There can be little doubt that we shall be able to convict this fellow, and send him to gaol for twelve months. I wish it to be understood that I intend by every means in my power to put a stop to the proceedings of these lawless smugglers, who have so long been carrying on this illegal traffic with impunity in this part of the country.”

Jack Cope, who had kept a perfectly calm demeanour from the time he

had been brought up to the table, smiled scornfully as Sir Reginald spoke. He said nothing, however, as he turned his glance towards the door. In a short time a revenue man appeared carrying a keg on his shoulders.

“Place it on the table,” said Sir Reginald. “Can you swear this is the keg you took from the prisoner?” he asked of the constable.

“Yes, your worship. It has never been out of our custody since we captured it,” replied the man.

“And I, too, can swear that it is the same keg that was taken from me!” exclaimed the bold smuggler in a confident tone.

“Silence there, prisoner,” said Sir Reginald, “You are not to speak until you are desired. Let the cask be broached.”

A couple of glasses and a gimlet had been sent for. The servant now brought them on a tray. One of the officers immediately set to work and bored a couple of holes in the head and side of the cask. The liquid which flowed out was bright and sparkling. The officer passed it under his nose, but made no remark, though I thought his countenance exhibited an odd expression.

“Hand it here,” said Sir Reginald. “Bah!” he exclaimed, intensely disgusted, “why, it’s salt water.”

“I told you so, your worship,” said Jack Cope, apparently much inclined to burst into a fit of laughter. “You’ll believe me another time, I hope, when I said that I had gone down to the seaside to get some salt water for one of my children; and I think you’ll allow, your worship, that it is salt water.”

“You are an impudent rascal!” exclaimed Sir Reginald, irritated beyond measure at the smuggler’s coolness. “I shall not believe you a bit the more. I suspect that you have played the officers a trick to draw them away from your companions, and though you escape conviction this time, you will be caught another, you may depend upon that; and you may expect no leniency from me. Set the prisoner at liberty, there is no further evidence against him.”

"I hope, Sir Reginald, that I may be allowed to carry my keg of salt water home," said the smuggler demurely. "It is my property, of which I have been illegally deprived by the officers, and I demand to have it given to me back."

"Let the man have the keg," said Sir Reginald in a gruff voice. "Is there any other case before me?"

"No, your worship," replied his clerk.

And Jack Cope carried off his cask of salt water in triumph, followed by the officers and the other persons who had entered the hall.

I had observed that Jack Cope had eyed my father and me as we were seated with the baronet, and it struck me that he had done so with no very pleasant expression of countenance.

"These proceedings are abominable in the extreme, Mr Cheveley," observed the justice to my father. "We must, as I before remarked, put an effectual stop to them. You have a good deal of influence in your parish, and I must trust to you to find honest men who will try and obtain information, and give us due notice when a cargo is to be run."

"I fear the people do not look upon smuggling as you and I do, Sir Reginald," observed my father. "The better class of my parishioners may not probably engage in it, but the very best of them would think it dishonourable to act the part of informers. I do not believe any bribe would induce them to do so."

"Perhaps not, but you can place the matter before them in its true light. Show them that they are acting a patriotic part by aiding the officers of the law in putting a stop to proceedings which are so detrimental to the revenue of the country. If they can be made to understand the injury which smuggling inflicts on the fair trader, they may see it in a different light from that in which they at present regard it. The Government requires funds to carry on the affairs of the nation, and duties and taxes must be levied to supply those funds. We should show them that smuggling is a practice which it is the duty of all loyal men to put a stop to."

"I understand your wishes, Sir Reginald, and agree with you that energetic measures are necessary; and you may depend upon my exerting myself to the utmost."

"My great object, at present, is to capture the 'Saucy Bess.' The revenue officers afloat will, of course, do their duty; but she has so often eluded them that my only hope is to catch her while she is engaged in running her cargo. I will give a handsome reward to any one who brings reliable information which leads to that desirable result."

"I am afraid that, although one or two smugglers may be captured, others will soon take their places; as while the present high duties on spirits, silks, and other produce of France exist, the profit to be made by smuggling will always prove a temptation too strong to be resisted," observed my father. "If the smugglers find that a vigilant watch is kept on this part of the coast they will merely carry on their transactions in another part."

"At all events, my dear Mr Cheveley, we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our duty in removing what I consider a disgrace to our community," observed Sir Reginald. "As to lowering the duties, that is what I will never consent to. I shall always oppose any scheme of the sort while I hold my place in Parliament. I feel that I am bound to preserve things as they are, and am not to be moved by the brawling cries of demagogues."

"Of course, Sir Reginald, you understand these things better than I do. I have never given my mind to politics, and have always been ready to record my vote in your favour, and to induce as many as possible of my parishioners to follow my example."

All this time I had been sitting on the tenter-hooks of expectation, wondering if my father would again refer to the subject which had induced him to pay a visit to the baronet.

"I must wish you good morning, Sir Reginald," he said, rising. "You will, I feel sure, not forget your promise regarding my son Dick, and if Captain Grummit cannot take him, I trust that you will find some other captain who does not insist on his midshipmen having so large an allowance."

“Of course, my dear Mr Cheveley, of course,” said the baronet, rising; “although it did not strike me as anything unreasonable. Yet I am aware how you are situated with a numerous family and a comparatively small income; and, believe me, I will not lose an opportunity of forwarding the views of the young gentleman. Good morning, my dear Mr Cheveley, good morning,” and nodding to me, he bowed us out of the hall.

“I hope Sir Reginald will get me a berth on board some other ship,” I said to my father, as we walked homeward. “He seems wonderfully good-natured and condescending.”

“I don’t feel altogether satisfied as to that point,” answered my father, who knew the baronet better than I did.



Chapter Three.

The crusade against the smugglers—Sir Reginald's measures—The "Saucy Bess"—My father's sermon, and its effects in different quarters—Ned and I visit old Roger Riddle—Mr Reynell's picnic and how we enjoyed it—Roger Riddle tells the story of his life—Born at sea—The pet of the ship—Stormy times—Parted from his mother—His first visit to land—Loses his parents.

Day after day went by and nothing was heard from Sir Reginald Knowsley about my appointment as a midshipman. Aunt Deb took care to remark that she had no doubt he had forgotten all about me. This I shrewdly suspected was the case. If he had forgotten me, however, he had not forgotten the smugglers, for he was taking energetic steps to put a stop to their proceedings, though it was whispered he was not always as successful as he supposed.

Whenever I went to the village I heard of what he was doing, yet from time to time it was known that cargoes had been run while only occasionally an insignificant capture was made, it being generally, as the saying is, a tub thrown to a whale.

The "Saucy Bess" appeared off the coast, but it was when she had a clean hold and no revenue officer could touch her. She would then come into Leighton bay, which was a little distance to the westward of the bar, and drop her anchor, looking as innocent as possible; and her hardy crew would sit with their arms folded, on her deck, smoking their pipes and spinning yarns to each other of their daring deeds, or would pace up and down performing the fisherman's walk, three steps and overboard. On two or three occasions I caught sight of them from the top of a rocky cliff which formed one side of the little bay, and I acknowledge that I had a wonderful longing to go on board and become better acquainted with the sturdy looking outlaws, or rather, breakers of the law. As, however, I could find no boat in the bay to take me alongside, and as I did not like to hail and ask them to allow me to pay them a visit, I had to abandon my design.

My father was busy in his way in carrying out the wishes of the baronet.

He spoke to a number of his parishioners, urging them to assist in putting a stop to the proceedings of the smugglers, and endeavouring to impress upon them the nefarious character of their occupation. More than once he got into the wrong box when addressing some old sea dog, who would curtly advise him to mind his own business, the man he was speaking to probably being in league with the smugglers. He said and did enough indeed to create a considerable amount of odium against himself. He went so far as one Sunday to preach a sermon in which he unmistakably alluded to smuggling as one of the sins certain to bring down condign punishment on those engaged in it.

Sir Reginald Knowsley, who had driven over, as he occasionally did, to attend the service, waited for my father in the porch, and complimented him on his sermon. "Excellent, Mr Cheveley, excellent," he exclaimed, "I like to hear clergymen speak out bravely from the pulpit, and condemn the sins of the people. If the smugglers persist in carrying on their nefarious proceedings, they will now do it with their eyes open, and know that they are breaking the laws of God and man. I was delighted to hear you broach the subject. I expect some friends in a few days, and I hope that you will give me the pleasure of your company at dinner. I have some capital old port just suited to your taste, and I will take care to draw your attention to it. Good-bye, my dear Mr Cheveley, good-bye; with your aid I have no doubt smuggling will, in a short time, be a thing of the past;" and the squire walked with a dignified pace to his carriage and drove off, not regarding the frowning looks cast at him by some of his fellow-worshippers.

As I afterwards went through the churchyard I passed several knots of persons talking together, who were making remarks of a very different character to those I have spoken of on the sermon they had just heard. They were at no pains to lower their voices even as they saw me.

"I never seed smuggling in the Ten Commandments, an' don't see it now," remarked a sturdy old fisherman, who was looked upon as a very respectable man in the village. "What has come over our parson to talk about it is more than I can tell."

"The parson follows where the squire leads, I've a notion," remarked another seafaring man, who was considered an oracle among his mates.

“He never said a word about it before the squire took the matter up. Many’s the time we’ve had a score of kegs stowed away in his tool-house, and if one was left behind, if he didn’t get it I don’t know who did.”

On hearing this I felt very much inclined to stop and declare that my father had never received a keg of spirits, or a bribe of any sort, for I was very sure that he would not condescend to that, though I could not answer for the integrity of John Dixon, our old gardener, who had been, on more than one occasion, unable to work for a week together; and although his wife said that he was suffering from rheumatics, the doctor remarked, with a wink, that he had no doubt he would recover without having much physic to take.

Some of the men were even more severe in their remarks, and swore that if the parson was going to preach in that style, they would not show their noses inside the church. Others threatened to go off to the methodists’ house in the next village, where the minister never troubled the people with disagreeable remarks.

I did not tell my father all I had heard, as I knew it would annoy him. It did not occur to me at the moment that he had introduced the subject for the sake of currying favour with Sir Reginald, indeed I did not think such an idea had crossed his mind.

He was greatly surprised in the afternoon, when the service was generally better attended than in the morning, to find that only half his usual congregation was present. When he returned home, after making some visits in the parish, on the following Tuesday, he told us he suspected from the way he had been received that something was wrong, but it did not occur to him that his sermon was the cause of offence.

I, in the meantime, was spending my holidays in far from a satisfactory manner. My elder brothers amused themselves without taking pains to find me anything to do, while Ned was always at his books, and was only inclined to come out and take a constitutional walk with me now and then. My younger brothers were scarcely out of the nursery, and I was thus left very much to my own resources. I bethought me one day of paying the old sailor Roger Riddle a visit, and perhaps getting his son Mark to come

and fish with me.

I told Ned where I was going, and was just setting off when he called out —

“Stop a minute, Dick, and I will go with you; I should like to make the acquaintance of the old sailor, who, from your account, must be something above the common.”

I did not like to refuse, at the same time I confess that I would rather have gone alone, as I knew that Ned did not care about fishing, and would probably want to stop and talk to Roger Riddle.

I was waiting for him outside in front of the house, when a carriage drove up full of boys, with a gentleman who asked me if my father was at home. I recognised him as a Mr Reynell, who lived at Springfield Grange, some five or six miles inland. Two of the boys were his sons, whom I knew; the others, he told me, were their cousins and two friends staying with them.

“We are going to have a picnic along the shore, and we want you and your brother to come and join us,” said Harry Reynell, the eldest of the two.

Ned came out directly afterwards, and said he should be very happy to go.

“Can’t you get any of your friends to go also? The more the merrier.”

There were two or three other boys whom I knew staying with an aunt in the village, and I offered to run down and ask them.

“By all means,” said Harry, “we have provisions enough, so that they need not stop to get anything; but I’m afraid we cannot stow them all away; if it’s not very far off we may go on foot.”

“It is no distance to the prettiest part of the coast,” I replied; “and I know a capital spot where we can pick up shells and collect curiosities of all sorts, if any of you have a fancy for that sort of thing.”

“That will do,” said Harry Reynell; “go and fetch your friends, and we will

walk together.”

I accordingly ran down the village to Mrs Parker’s, whose nephews were at home. We formed a tolerably numerous party. As my father was unable to go, Mr Reynell was the only grown-up person among us. The spot I had fixed upon was not far from Roger Riddle’s cottage. As I had been thinking of him, I proposed asking the old sailor and Mark to join our party.

From the account I gave to Mr Reynell of Roger Riddle, he did not object to this. As Harry Reynell, his brother, and friends were good-natured merry fellows, we had a pleasant time as we walked or ran along, laughing and singing, and playing each other tricks. We soon left Mr Reynell behind, but he told us not to mind him, as he should soon catch us up. The carriage followed with the prog, but as the road was in many places heavy, it did not move as fast as we did. We at length reached the spot I had proposed, a small sandy bay, with cliffs on either side, out of which bubbled a stream of sparkling cold water, with rocks running out into the sea.

“This will do capitally,” said Harry. “See, the whole beach is covered with beautiful shells, and there may be sea anemones and echini, and starfish, and all sorts of marine creatures.”

Having surveyed the place, we heard Mr Reynell shouting out to us to carry down the baskets of pies, tarts, cold ham, and chicken, plates, knives and forks. While the rest of the party were so engaged, I ran on to invite old Roger. I found him and Mark within.

“Much obliged to the young gentlemen, but I’ve had my dinner,” he answered; “however, I’ll come and have a talk with them, if you think they’ll like it. May be, I’ll spin them a yarn or two, which will do to pass the time while they are sniffing in the breezes, which they don’t get much of while they are away up the country.”

“You’ll come as soon as you can,” I answered, “for they will be disappointed if you don’t take a tart or two and a glass of wine.”

“Never fear, I’ll come before long,” said old Roger.

Mark, however, looked as if he would have no objection to taste some of the good things in our hampers, so he very readily agreed to accompany me. We found the cloth spread out on the smooth dry sand, and covered with pies and other dainties, and the plates and the knives and forks. Mr Reynell was engaged in making a huge salad in a wooden bowl. I introduced Mark in due form.

“Come and sit down,” said Harry to him in a kind way which soon made him feel quite at home. I don’t know whether he had much of a dinner before, but he did ample justice to the good things which our friends had brought. We had nearly finished before old Roger made his appearance.

“Your servant, gentlemen all,” he said, making a bow with his tarpaulin; “Master Dick here has asked me to come, saying it was what you wished, or I would not have intruded on you.”

“Very pleased to see you, Mr Riddle,” said Harry, who did the honours of the feast, “sit down, and have some of this cherry pie, you will find it very nice, and, for a wonder, the juice hasn’t run out.”

Harry chose the largest plate, and filled it with fully a third of the pie.

“Thank you, young gentleman; I may take a snack of that sort of thing;” and the old sailor set to work, his share of the pie rapidly disappearing, as he ladled up the cherries with his spoon.

“Take a glass of cider now, Mr Riddle,” said Harry, handing him a large tumbler, which the old sailor tossed off, and had no objection to two or three more.

Meantime the tide had been rising, and no sooner was dinner over, than we had to pack up and beat a rapid retreat. We soon washed the plates and dishes in the water as it rose, and Ned packed them up. The expectations of those of our party who hoped to pick up shells, and collect sea curiosities were thus disappointed.

“Never mind, lads,” said old Roger; “Master Dick here tells me that you would like to hear a yarn or two; the grass here, as much as there is of it, is dry enough,” and Mr Riddle seated himself on the bank, while we all gathered round him. Mr Reynell placed himself at a little distance,

although within earshot, when he took out his sketchbook to make a drawing of the scene.

“None of you young gentlemen have ever been to sea, I suppose?” continued the old sailor. “I dare say you fancy it all sunshine and smooth sailing, and think you’d like to go and be sailors, and walk the deck in snowy-white trousers and kid gloves. I have known some who have taken that notion into their heads, and have been not a little disappointed when they got afloat, to find that they had to dip their fists into the tar-bucket, to black down the rigging, and swab up the decks, though some of them made not bad sailors after all. If any of you young gentlemen think of leading a seafaring life, you must be prepared for ups and downs of all sorts, heavy gales, and rough seas, shipwrecks and disasters. You’ll be asking how I came to go to sea, perhaps you may think I ran off, as some silly lads have done, but I didn’t do that. If I had run, it would have been ashore, seeing as how I was born at sea. It happened in this wise:—My father, Bob Riddle, was bo’sun’s mate of the old ‘Goliath,’ of eighty guns, and as in those days two or three women were allowed on board line-of-battle ships to attend to the sick, and to wash and mend clothes, provided the captains did not object; so my mother, Nancy Riddle, who loved her husband in a way which made her ready to go through fire and water for his sake, got leave to accompany him to sea. She made herself wonderfully useful on board, and won the hearts of all the men and officers too, who held her in great respect, while the midshipmen just simply adored her; indeed, I’ve heard say that she saved the lives of several who were sick of fever by the careful way in which she nursed them. She had had no children, and I’ve a notion that if she had known what was going to happen, like a wise woman she would have remained on shore, but as the ship was in the East India station, and she wanted her boy to be British born, for she guessed she was going to have a boy, she had no help for it but to remain on board and take her chance. The ‘Goliath’ had just been in action, and beaten off two of the enemy’s ships which wanted to take her but couldn’t, when she was caught in a regular hurricane, and had to run before it under bare poles. During that time I came into this world of troubles. I can’t say that I remember anything about it, but I’ve been in many a typhoon and hurricane since then, with the big foaming seas roaring, the wind whistling and howling in the rigging, the blocks rattling, the bulkheads creaking and groaning, and the ship rolling and pitching and tumbling about in a way which made it seem

wonderful that wood and iron could hold together. It wasn't exactly under such circumstances that the wife even of a boatswain's mate would have chosen to bring a puling infant into the world. The doctor thought that mother would have died, and, as there was no cow on board, that I should have shared her fate, but she got through it and nursed me, and I throve amazingly, so that in six months I was as big as most children of a year or more old. Before the ship was ordered home, I could chew bacon and beef, and toddle about the decks. Of course I was made much of by officers and crew. Mother rigged me out in a regular cut seaman's dress. The midshipmen taught me the cutlass exercise, and to ride a goat the captain bought as much for my use as his own. For'ard my education was equally well attended to, and I don't remember when I couldn't dance a hornpipe—double shuffle and all—or sing a dozen sea songs, some of them sounding rather strange, I've a notion, coming from juvenile lips. All went on smoothly till the ship was paid off, and my early friends were scattered to the four winds of heaven. My father, who felt like a fish out of water when ashore, soon obtained another berth, with the same rating on board the 'Victorious,' seventy-four, but he had great difficulty in getting leave for my mother to accompany him, and if another woman who was to have gone hadn't fallen ill just in the nick of time, he would have had to sail without her. I was smuggled on board instead of a monkey shipped by the crew, which fell overboard and was drowned. It was some weeks before the captain found out that I wasn't the monkey he had given the men leave to take. When the first lieutenant at length reported to him that I was a human being without a tail, he was very angry, and father was likely to have got into trouble. Still as he had done nothing against the articles of war, which don't make mention of taking babies to sea, he couldn't be flogged with his own cat. The captain then swore that he would put mother and me ashore at the first port we touched at; but the men, among whom I had many friends, begged hard that we might be allowed to remain, and when he saw me scuttling about the rigging in a hairy coat and a long tail, laughing heartily, he relented, and as he got a hint that the men would become very discontented if he carried his threat into execution, father was told that he would say nothing more about the matter. Soon afterwards the captain fell ill, and mother nursed him in a way no man could have done, so that he had reason to be thankful that he had allowed mother and me to remain on board. The 'Victorious' became one of the best disciplined and happiest ships in the service, all because she had a real live plaything on board. She fought several

bloody actions. During one of them, when we were tackling a French eighty-gun ship, I got away from mother, who was with the other women in the cockpit attending to the wounded, and slipped up on deck, where before long I found father. 'Here I am,' I said, 'come to see the fun. When are you going to finish off the mounseers?' The round shot were flying quickly across the decks, and bullets were rattling on board like hail, for though the French were getting the worst of it, they were, as they always do, dying game. 'Get below, boy, get below!' shouted father, 'what business have you here?' As I didn't go, he seized me by the arm, and dragged me to the hatchway, in spite of my struggles and cries. 'I want to see the fight. I want to see the mounseers licked,' I cried out. 'Let me go, father; let me go!' Just then there was a shout from the upper deck, 'The enemy has struck—the enemy has struck!' Father let me go, and up I ran and cheered, and waved my hat among the men with as hearty good will as any of them. When I saw the men shaking hands with each other, I ran about, and, putting out my tiny fist, shook their hands also, exclaiming, 'We've licked the mounseers, haven't we? I knew we would. Hoorah! Hoorah!' This amused the men greatly, and they called me a plucky little chap, though I certainly could not boast of having contributed to gain the victory, as I was considerably too young to act the part even of a powder-monkey. We had lost a good many officers and men, some of whom I saw stretched on the deck, and wondered what had come over them, as they did not move or speak. As long as the 'Victorious' remained in commission, I continued with my father and mother aboard her; but when she was paid off, an order came out, prohibiting women from going to sea on board men-of-war, and mother, greatly to her grief, had to live on shore. It was now a question whether I should accompany my father or stay with my mother and get some book-learning, of which I was as yet utterly ignorant, as I did not even know my letters. I was scarcely old enough to be rated as a ship's boy, though father would have liked to take me with him, but mother said she could not lose us both, and, fortunately for me, father consented to leave me with her. As the 'Victorious' was paid off at Plymouth, mother remained there, and father soon afterwards got his warrant as boatswain to the 'Emerald' sloop-of-war, ordered out on the West India station. This was the first time I had been on shore, except for a few days when the 'Goliath' was paid off, during the whole of my life, and I did not find it very easy to get accustomed to the ways of shore-going people. At first I did not at all like them. There was no order or regularity, and I missed more than anything

the sound of the bell striking the hours and half-hours day and night. However, I got accustomed to things by degrees. I was sent to school, where I gained a good character for regularity and obedience, just because I had been trained to it, do ye see. I couldn't bear not to be there at the exact time, and I never thought of disobeying the orders of these under whose authority I was placed. I also was diligent, and thus made good progress in my studies. I might have become a scholar had I remained at school, but after I had been there about two years, when I got home one day I found mother leaning back in her chair, in a fit, it seemed to me, and the parson of the parish, who had a letter in his hand, trying to rouse her up. As soon as I came in, he bade me run for the doctor, who lived not far off. He came at once with a woman, a neighbour of ours, and while they were attending to mother, the parson, sitting down, placed me between his knees, and looking kindly in my face, said that he had some bad news to tell me, which he had got in a letter from the West Indies. It was that my brave father was dead, carried off by the yellow fever which has killed so many fine fellows on that station. My mother was a strong and hearty woman, and any one would have supposed that it would have taken a great deal to kill her; but, notwithstanding her robust appearance, she had gentle and tender feelings, and though for my sake she wished to live, within a year she died of a broken heart for the loss of my father and I was left an orphan."

Chapter Four.

Roger Riddle continues his story—Goes to sea as a man-o'-war's-man—His voyages—The Mediterranean—Toulon—Chasing the enemy—Caught in a trap—A hard fight for it—Escape of the frigate—Corsica—Martello Bay—The tower and its gallant defenders—Its capture—Origin of its name—San Fiorenzo—Convention redoubt—What British tars can do—Capture of the "Minerve"—The taking of Bastia—Nelson loses an eye—"Jackass" frigates—Toulon again—More fighting—The advantage of being small—Prepare to repel boarders—The colours nailed to the mast—The chase—Never despise your enemy—Teneriffe—Attack on Santa Cruz—Nelson loses his arm—Abandonment of the enterprise—What people call glory—The Hellespont—The captain steers his own ship—The island

of Cerigotto—Breakers ahead—The ship strikes—The value of discipline—Their condition on the rock—The ship goes to pieces—Their chances of escape—The gale—A brave captain—A false hope—The effects of drinking sea-water—Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink—Reduced to extremities—They lose their brave captain and first lieutenant—They construct a raft—Cowardice of the Greek fishermen—The rescue of the survivors—Fresh adventures—The Dardanelles—Fire!—An awful spectacle—Destruction of the ship—Reason to be thankful—A father's love—How they took a Spanish sloop-o'-war—The ruse and how it succeeded—Between two fires—Good and bad captains—Roger quits the navy—Becomes mate of a merchantman and retires on his laurels—His marriage and settlement—Our picnic breaks up.

“Mother had a good many friends, old shipmates of hers and father's, but most of them having families of their own were not able to do much for me. I was now, however, big enough to go to sea, and of course there was no question but that I should be a sailor. England had been at peace for some time, but she and France were once more at loggerheads, and ships were fitting out with all despatch at every port in the kingdom. There was no difficulty therefore in finding a ship for me, and an old messmate of father's, Andrew Barton, having volunteered on board the ‘Juno’ frigate, of thirty-two guns, took me with him. He was rated as captain of the maintop and I as ship's boy, having to do duty as powder-monkey. I quickly found myself at home, and those who didn't know that I had been to sea before, wondered how well I knew my way everywhere about the decks and aloft. I soon took the lead among the other boys, many of them much bigger and older than myself. ‘Why, one would suppose that you had been born at sea,’ said Tom Noakes, a big hulking fellow, who never could tell which was the stem, and which the stern. ‘And so I was,’ I answered. I then told him how many storms and battles I had been in, and all that I remembered about my early life. This made my messmates treat me with wonderful respect, and they never thought of playing me the tricks they did each other.

“Our frigate was bound out to the Mediterranean to join the fleet under Lord Hood. She was, I should have said, commanded by Captain Samuel Hood, a relation of the Admiral's. We knew that we should have plenty of work to do. When we sailed, it was understood that an English force had

possession of Toulon, which was besieged by the republicans, who had collected a large army round the city, but it was supposed that they would be kept at bay by the English and royalists. We had been cruising off Toulon, when we were despatched to Malta to bring up supernumeraries for the fleet. We were detained, however, at the island for a considerable time, by foul winds. At length we sailed, and steered direct for Toulon. We arrived abreast of the harbour one evening, some time after dark. The captain, anxious to get in, as we had no pilot on board, nor any one acquainted with the dangers of the place, stood on, hoping by some means or other, to find his way. The officers with their night-glasses were on the look-out for our ships, but they were nowhere to be seen. Our captain, however, concluded that as a strong easterly wind had been blowing, they had run for shelter into the inner harbour. We accordingly shortened sail, and stood on, under our topsails. As at last several ships could be distinguished, it was supposed that we were close up to the British fleet. We soon afterwards made out a brig, and in order to weather her, the driver and topsail were set. As we were tacking under the brig's stern, some one on board her hailed, but not being able to make out what was said, Captain Hood shouted, 'This is His Britannic Majesty's frigate "Juno."' 'Viva,' cried the voice from the brig, and after this we heard the people on board her jabbering away among themselves. At last one of them shouted out, 'Luff, luff.' The captain on this, ordered the helm to be put down, but before the frigate came head to wind, she grounded. The breeze, however, was light, and the water perfectly smooth, and the sails were clewed up and handed. While this was being done, we saw a boat pull away from the brig, towards the town. Before the men aloft had left the yards, a sudden flaw of wind drove the ship's head off the bank, when her anchor was let go, and she swung head to wind. Her heel, however, was still on the shoal, and the rudder immovable. To get her off, the launch was hoisted out, and the kedge anchor with a hawser, was put into her. While we were engaged in hauling the frigate off the shoal, a boat appeared coming down the harbour, and being hailed some one in her answered 'Ay, ay.' She quickly came alongside, and the crew, among whom were two persons apparently officers, hurried on deck; one of the latter addressed our captain, and said he came to inform him that according to the regulations of the port, the frigate must go to the other part of the harbour, and perform ten days' quarantine. The Frenchmen, who were supposed to be royalists, were jabbering away together, when one of our midshipmen, a sharp young fellow, cried out, 'The chaps have

national cockades in their hats.' The moon which shone out brightly just then, threw a gleam of light on the Frenchmen's hats, and the three colours were distinctly seen. They finding that they were discovered, coolly said in French, so I afterwards heard, 'Make yourselves easy, the English are good people, we will treat you kindly. The English fleet sailed away some time ago.'

"We are prisoners, caught like rats in a trap!' cried the men from all parts of the ship. The entrance to the harbour is guarded by heavy forts on either side, between which we had run some distance, and their guns pointed down on our decks might sink us before we could get outside again. The officers, on hearing the report, hurried aft, scarcely able to believe that it was true. They found, however, on seeing the Frenchmen, that there was no doubt about the matter. Just then a flaw of wind came down the harbour, when our third lieutenant, Mr Webbley, hurrying up to the captain, said, 'I believe, sir, if we can get her under sail, we shall be able to fetch out.' 'We will try it at all events!' cried the captain; 'send the men to their stations, and hand those French gentlemen below.' The mounseers, on finding that they were not yet masters of the ship, began to bluster and draw their sabres, but the marines quickly made them sound another note, and in spite of their '*Sacrés!*' they were hurried off the deck under a guard. The men flew aloft, and in three minutes every sail was set, and the yards braced up for casting. The frigate was by this time completely afloat, the cable was cut; her head paid off, the sails filled, and away she stood from the shore. The wind freshening, she quickly gathered way. The launch and the French boat were cut adrift, and we had every hope of escape. Directly we began to loose sails, we saw lights appear in the batteries, and observed a stir aboard the brig. She soon afterwards opened fire on us, as did the fort on the starboard bow, and in a short time every fort which could bring a gun to bear on us, began to blaze away. We were now, however, going rapidly through the water, but there was a chance of our losing a topmast, as the shot came whistling through our sails, between our rigging. The wind shifting, made it seem impossible that we could get out without making a tack, but our captain was not a man to despair, and I am pretty sure that there was no one on board who would have given in, as long as the frigate was afloat. Fortunately the wind again shifted and blew in our favour. Blocks and ropes came falling from aloft, we could see the holes made in the canvas, by the shot passing through them. Several of the masts and spars were

badly wounded, and two thirty-six pound shot came plump aboard, but no one was hurt. As soon as the hands came from aloft, they were ordered to their quarters, and we began firing away in return at the forts, as well as at the impudent little brig, which we at length silenced. As may be supposed, we gave a right hearty cheer when we saw the shot the Frenchmen were firing at us fall far astern, and we found that we were well clear of the harbour. We made sail for Corsica, where we found a squadron under Commodore Linzee, engaged in attempting to drive the French from that island. The first expedition in which we took part was to Martello Bay. It was guarded by a strong round tower, to which the same name had been given. The troops to the number of fourteen hundred, were landed the same evening, and while they took possession of a height, which overlooked the tower, we, and the 'Fortitude' frigate were ordered to attack it from the sea. The 'Fortitude' got the worst of it, for the French turned their fire chiefly on her, while for three hours we kept blazing away, without producing any visible effect. Some guns had been got up by the troops to the height, and by the use of hot shot they managed to set on fire some bass junk which lined the parapet. At last the gallant little garrison had to give in, when it was found, that they numbered only thirty-three men, and had but one six and two sixteen pounders; yet so well did they work their guns, and so strong was the tower, that they had held it for nearly two days against a large body of troops and our two frigates. During the time the 'Fortitude' had lost six killed, and fifty-six wounded. Three of her lower-deck guns had been dismounted, and she had been set on fire by the red-hot shot discharged at her, besides other damages. The tower, I believe, took its name from the myrtles growing on the shores of the bay. In consequence of the way this little tower had held out, the government had a number of similar towers built on the English coast, which were called after the original, 'Martello' towers. We next attacked a fortification called the Convention redoubt, which was considered the key to the town of San Fiorenzo. The redoubt was commanded by a rocky hill, rising to the height of seven hundred feet above the level of the sea. As it was nearly perpendicular at its summit, it was considered inaccessible, but British sailors had to show the Frenchmen that where goats could find a foothold they could climb.

"Looking up at the hill, it certainly did appear as if no human being could reach the summit. Not only, however, did our men get up there, but they carried several eighteen-pounders with them. On the right there was a

descent of many hundred feet, down which a false step would have sent them headlong, and on the left were beetling rocks, while along the path they had to creep, only one man could pass at a time. The pointed rocks, however, served to make fast the tackle by which the guns were hoisted. To the astonishment of the Frenchmen, the eighteen-pounders at length began firing down upon their redoubt, which was then stormed by the troops, and quickly carried. Part of the garrison were made prisoners, but a good number managed to scamper off on the opposite side. We, however, took possession of a fine thirty-eight-gun frigate, called the 'Minerve,' which the Frenchmen had sunk, but which we soon raised and carried off with us. She was then added to the British navy, and called the 'San Fiorenzo,' and was the ship on board which King George the Third used often to sail when he was living down at Weymouth. She also fought one or more actions when commanded by Sir Harry Neale, one of the best officers in the service. However, young gentlemen, these things took place so long ago that I don't suppose you will care much to hear about them."

"Oh, yes, we do. Please go on!" cried out several voices from among us. "It is very interesting, we could sit here all day and listen to you."

"If that is the case, I'll go ahead to please you," said old Riddle.

"In those days we didn't let grass grow on our ship's bottoms. Soon after we left San Fiorenzo we took Bastia, the seamen employed on shore being commanded by Captain Nelson, of the 'Agamemnon.' After we had besieged it for thirty-seven days the garrison capitulated, we having lost a good many officers and seamen killed and wounded.

"We next attacked Calvi, which we took with the loss of the gallant Captain Serocold and several seamen killed, and Captain Nelson and six seamen wounded. It was here Captain Nelson had his right eye put out. I saw a good deal of service while on board the 'Juno.' Whilst still on the station I was transferred with Andrew Barton and others, to the 'Dido,' twenty-eight-gun frigate, commanded by Captain Towry. These small craft used to be called 'Jackass' frigates, but the 'Dido' showed that she was not a 'Jackass' at all events. Soon after I joined her she and the 'Lowestoff,' thirty-two-gun frigate, were despatched by Admiral Hotham to reconnoitre the harbour of Toulon. We were on our way, when, one

evening, we discovered standing towards us two large French frigates. We made the private signal, when, supposing that we were the leading frigates of the fleet, they both wore and stood away. We chased them all night, but in the morning, when they discovered that there were only two frigates, and both much smaller than themselves, they tacked and stood towards us. One of the Frenchmen was the 'Minerve,' of forty guns, and the other the 'Artemise,' of thirty-six guns. When the 'Minerve' was about a mile away from us, on the weather bow, and ahead of her consort, she wore, and then hauling up on the larboard tack, to windward, commenced firing at us. I was still, you will understand, only a powder-monkey. My business was to bring the powder up from the magazine in a tub, upon which I had to sit till it was wanted to load the guns. Still, I could see a good deal that was going forward through the ports; besides which I heard from the men what was taking place. My old messmate, Tom Noakes, had joined the 'Dido.' He was now seated on his tub next to me—the biggest powder-monkey I ever knew. Poor Tom was not at all happy. He said that we smaller fellows had only half the chance of being killed that he had, as a shot might pass over our heads which would take his off. I tried to console him by reminding him that there were a good many parts of the ship where no shots were likely to pass, and that he had less chance of being hit than the men who had to stand up to their guns all the time. We stood on till the 'Minerve' was on our weather beam, when we could see her squaring away her yards, and presently the breeze freshening, she bore down upon our little frigate with the evident intention of sinking us. So she might have done with the greatest ease, but having fired our broadside just as her flying jibboom was touching our mainyard, we bore up, and her bow struck our larboard quarter. So great was the shock, that for the moment many thought we were going down, but instead of that our frigate was thrown athwart the 'Minerve's' hawse, her bowsprit becoming entangled in our mizen rigging. The Frenchmen immediately swarmed along their bowsprit, intending to board us. Our first lieutenant then shouted for 'boarders to repel boarders,' but as the French crew doubled ours, we should have found it a hard matter to do that. Fortunately the Frenchman's bowsprit broke right off, carrying away our mizen-mast, and with it the greater number of our assailants, who failed to regain their own ship. With our mizen-mast of course went our colours, but that the Frenchmen might not suppose that we had given in, Harry Barling, one of our quarter-masters, getting hold of a Union Jack, nailed it to the stump of the mizen-mast. All this

time, you must understand, we had been blazing away at each other as fast as we could bring our guns to bear. The 'Minerve' at last ranged ahead clear of us, but we continued firing, till the 'Lowestoff,' seeing how hard pressed we were, came up to our assistance, and tackled the Frenchman. In a few minutes, so actively did she work her guns, that she had knocked away the enemy's foremast and remaining topmast. As the 'Minerve' could not now possibly escape, we threw out a signal to the 'Lowestoff' to chase the 'Artemise,' which instead of coming to the assistance of her consort was making off. She however had the heels of us, and we therefore, returning again, attacked the 'Minerve,' which, on her mizen-mast being shot away, hauled down her colours. We had our boatswain and five seamen killed, two officers and thirteen men wounded. The 'Lowestoff' had no one hurt, and so, although she certainly contributed to the capture of the prize, we gained the chief credit for the action, which, considering the difference in size between our frigate and the Frenchman, we certainly deserved. But in those days we didn't count odds. We thought that we had only to see the enemy to thrash him. Even our best captains, however, sometimes made a mistake.

"I afterwards belonged to the 'Terpsichore' frigate, Captain Richard Bowen, which formed one of a squadron under Lord Nelson, who was then Sir Horatio, to attack Santa Cruz, in the Island of Teneriffe. The squadron consisted of three seventy-fours and one fifty-gun ship—which afterwards joined us—three frigates, and the 'Fox' cutter. It was some time before we could get up to the place. At last we managed to embark nearly seven hundred seamen and Marines in the boats of the squadron, nearly two hundred on board the 'Fox' and others, including a detachment of Royal Artillery, in some captured boats. Sir Horatio himself took the command. Shoving off from the ship some time after midnight, we pulled in for the town. The plan was to make a dash for the mole, and then to fight our way forward along it, we fully believing that the enemy would run as soon as we appeared. When the leading boats, under the command of Captains Freemantle and Bowen, had got within half gunshot of the mole head, the enemy took the alarm, and immediately opened fire on us from forty heavy guns. A hot fire it was, I assure you. The 'Fox' cutter, crowded with men, was sunk by the heavy shot which struck her, and nearly a hundred of those on board perished. I was in the 'Terpsichore's' barge with my brave captain, when, just before she reached the mole, a shot struck her, and down she went, drowning seven

of my shipmates; but the captain, with the rest of us, managed to get on shore. In spite of the hot fire with which we were met from the mole head, we succeeded in effecting a landing, and drove the enemy before us. Having spiked the guns which had done us so much mischief, we advanced along the mole, led by Captain Bowen, and our first lieutenant, Mr Thorpe. Here we encountered a tremendous fire of musketry from the Citadel and houses, so that the greater number of our party were either killed or wounded. Our brave leader, Captain Bowen, was among the first who fell, and soon afterwards Lieutenant Thorpe was killed. Nearly all the rest of the officers were killed or wounded. It being found at last that there was no chance of success, we were ordered to fall back.

“We had neither seen nor heard anything of Sir Horatio who would have been certain, had not something happened to him, to have been ahead. We now learned that just as he was landing and about to draw his sword, he had been struck by a shot on the elbow, and that he had been carried on board his ship by the few men who remained in the boat, the rest having landed. One of them, John Lovell, who I knew well, as soon as he saw the Admiral wounded, took the shirt from his own back, and tore it into strips, to bandage up his shattered arm. In the meanwhile we were waiting for the arrival of Captains Trowbridge and Waller with another squadron of boats. They however missed the mole head, but though some landed to the southward of it, in consequence of the heavy surf breaking on the shore, others put back. Captain Trowbridge, not finding the Admiral and the other officers he expected to meet there, sent a sergeant to summon the Citadel to surrender. The poor fellow did not return, having probably been shot. The scaling-ladders had also been lost in the surf. When morning broke we altogether mustered only 340 men. Every street in the place was defended by artillery, and we heard that a large force of 8000 men was advancing. The enterprise had therefore to be abandoned. Captain Trowbridge proposed to the Governor that we should re-embark with our arms, and he engaged that the squadron should not further molest any of the places in the Canary Islands. These terms were agreed to. We obtained also permission to purchase such provisions as we required. The affair was a disastrous one. We gained nothing, for besides 150 men killed or drowned, among whom were several brave officers, we had upwards of 100 wounded, and the Admiral lost his right arm.

“People call this sort of thing ‘Glory,’ but for my part I could not make out what advantage we expected to gain, or what business we had to go there at all.”

“I say, Mr Riddle, were you ever shipwrecked?” sang out one of the old sailor’s auditors, who was getting rather tired of the long yarn about his battles with which he had been indulging us.

“Bless you, young gentlemen, that I have, well-nigh a score of times I might say. Some time after this I belonged to the ‘Nautilus’ sloop of war, commanded by Captain Farmer. We belonged to the squadron of Admiral Lewis, then cruising in the Hellespont, when we were ordered to England with despatches of the utmost importance. We had a fresh breeze from the north-east as we threaded our way through the numerous islands of that sea. When at length we got off the island of Anti Milo, the Greek pilot we had with us declared he knew nothing of the coast to the westward. As, however, our captain was anxious to make a quick passage for the sake of the despatches, he determined to try and pilot her himself. Though the weather looked threatening, we sailed at sunset from Anti Milo, and shaped a course for Cerigotto. As the night grew on the wind increased to a heavy gale, torrents of rain fell, the thunder roared and rattled, the flashes of lightning were as vivid as I ever saw in my life. Sometimes it was almost brighter than day, then pitchy dark. The captain had just given orders to close reef the topsails, intending to bring the ship to till daylight, when a bright flash of lightning showed us the Island of Cerigotto right ahead, about the distance of a mile or so. Now, knowing his position, the captain resolved to run on, believing all danger past. The watch below was ordered to turn in. Those who remained on deck stowed themselves away under shelter of the hammock nettings.

“We of course kept a bright look-out, though it was not supposed that we had anything to fear. Except the officer of the watch, the rest had gone below—the captain and master probably to examine the chart—when the look-out on the forecastle shouted out ‘Breakers ahead!’ ‘Put the helm a lee!’ cried the officer of the watch. Almost before the order could be obeyed we felt a shock which lifted us off our feet, and sent those below out of their hammocks. We knew too well that the ship was ashore. In one instant the sea struck the ship, now lifting her up and then dashing her down upon the rocks with tremendous force. It seemed like a fearful

dream. Almost in a moment the main-deck was burst in, and soon afterwards the lee bulwarks were carried away. The captain and officers did their best to maintain discipline. The first thing to be done was to lower the boats, but before they could be got into the water they were all either stove or washed away, and knocked to pieces on the rocks. Only a whale-boat of no great use was launched by the boatswain and nine other hands. As soon as they got clear of the rocks they lay on their oars, but it would have been madness in them to come back, as the boat already contained as many people as she could carry with safety. The captain accordingly ordered her to pull towards the Island of Pauri, in the hope that assistance might there be obtained for us. The ship continued to strike heavily. Every instant I expected that she would go to pieces, when one and all of us would have been lost. About twenty minutes after she struck the mainmast fell over the side towards a rock, which we could distinguish rising above the water, followed by the foremast and mizenmast. Hoping that the rock would afford us more security than the ship herself, I, with others, made my way towards it, though at no little risk of being carried off by the seas. On reaching it we shouted to the rest to come on, as at any moment the ship might go to pieces. The whole crew followed our example. Many parts of the rock itself were scarcely above water. It seemed, as far as we could judge, to be about 400 yards long, and half as many wide. Here all hands collected, for as yet none had been washed away or lost, but many of the people had no clothing on, or only just their shirts, in which they had turned out of their hammocks. We had not a scrap of food, and we knew that it might be some hours before the whale-boat could bring us assistance. Scarcely had we reached the rock when we knew by the crashing, rending sounds, and the loud thundering noise, as the planks and timbers were dashed against it, that our stout little ship had gone to pieces. When day dawned we saw the foaming sea covered on all sides with fragments of the wreck, while several of our shipmates were discovered clinging to spars and planks, they having returned to the ship in the hopes of obtaining either food or clothing. It was known to the captain and officers that we were about twelve miles from the nearest island. There was but little chance of the boat getting back to us during the day. We secured a flag which had been washed up. This we hoisted to the end of a spar, and fixed it in the highest part of the rock. The day was bitterly cold, many of the men were almost perished for want of clothing. The officers made inquiries if any man had a flint. At last one was found. At the same time a small keg of

powder which had been floating about was thrown up. The powder, though damp, served instead of tinder. We were able to get a fire alight. It gave us some occupation to collect fuel, though at the risk of being carried away by the seas, as they rolled up on the rock. We got also a quantity of canvas, and with this, and the help of some planks, we put up a tent, which afforded us some shelter. Though we had no food to cook, the fire warmed us, and enabled us to dry our clothes. We kept it burning all night in the hope that it would serve as a beacon. Another night passed away. In the morning we saw to our joy a boat pulling towards us. She was our own whale-boat, with the boatswain and four hands; but they brought no food nor water, as they found neither one nor the other on the Island of Pauri. The boatswain tried to persuade our captain to leave the rock, but he refused to desert us; so he ordered the boatswain to take ten men and make the best of his way to Cerigotto, and to return as soon as possible with assistance.

“We had been badly enough off before. Matters now grew worse, the wind again increasing to a heavy gale, which sent the seas washing nearly over the rock. We should have all of us been carried away, if we had not secured ropes round a point which rose higher than the rest. I don’t like, even now, to think of that night. The cries and groans of my poor shipmates still ring in my ears. Now one man sank down, now another. The cold was terrible, even to those who, having been on watch, were well clothed. In the morning, several of our number were missing, and others lay dead on the rock. We were looking out for the whale-boat, when a sail was seen standing directly down for us. In our eagerness to get off, we began to form rafts of the spars and planks we had collected. As the ship approached, she hove-to and lowered a boat, which came towards us till almost within pistol-shot, when her crew rested on their oars, and looked at us earnestly. Who they were we could not tell. The man at the helm waved his hat, and then, seeming suspicious of our character, steered back to the ship. In vain we waved and shouted, the fellows paid no attention to us. To our bitter disappointment, we saw the boat hoisted up, when the ship again made sail. We were now in despair. I’d before felt somewhat hungry and thirsty, but till now never knew what real thirst was. Some of the men drank salt water, but that only made them worse.

“Another day came to an end. Fortunately the weather had moderated,

and we tried to keep ourselves warm by huddling close together. Death was now making rapid progress amongst us. Those who had drunk salt water went raving mad, and threw themselves into the sea; others died of exhaustion, among them our captain, and first lieutenant. I never expected to see another day, when, the voice of the boatswain hailed us. The cry was at once raised for 'water! Water!' but to our bitter disappointment, he told us he had brought none, as he could only get some earthen jars, in which it was impossible to bring it through the surf. He said, however, that a large vessel would arrive the next morning, with provisions and water. The thought of this kept up our spirits. When daylight returned, we eagerly looked out for the expected vessel, but she didn't appear, and all that day we had to wait in vain. More of our people died. It seemed a wonder that any of us should have survived, suffering so terribly from hunger and thirst as we were. Some attempted to satisfy their hunger in a way too horrible to describe. All day long we were on the look-out, expecting the boats to appear which the boatswain said would come, but hour after hour passed. I can tell you they were the most dreadful hours I ever remember. To remain longer on the rock seemed impossible. It was agreed therefore next day to build a raft on which we might reach some shore or other. It would be better, we thought, to die afloat than on that horrible spot. As soon as daylight broke we set to work, lashing together all the larger spars we could find, but our strength was not equal to the task. Still we contrived to make a raft. At length we launched it, but scarcely was it in the water, when the sea knocked it to pieces. Many of our poor fellows rushed in to try and secure the spars, and several of them were swept away by the current. Unable to render help, we saw them perish before our eyes. In the afternoon the whale-boat again came to us, but the boatswain told us that he had been unable to get the Greek fishermen to put to sea while the gale continued. He brought us neither food nor water, though many of us thought he might have managed to bring off some of the goats and sheep from the island. Even if we had eaten them raw, they would have assisted to keep body and soul together. I had hitherto kept up, but at last I lay down, unable to move hands or feet, or to raise my head from the rock. During the night many more of my unhappy shipmates died. I was lying on the rock, just conscious enough to know that the day had returned, when, I heard some one sing out, 'The boats are coming! The boats are coming!' I raised my head and tried to get up on my knees. Looking out, I saw four fishing vessels with the whale-boat pulling towards us. I can't tell you the

joy we felt. Many of us who had before been unable to move, sat up, some few even were able to stand on their feet, while we made an attempt to cheer, as the boats drew near. They brought us water and food. Our second lieutenant, now commanding officer, would allow only a small portion to be given to each man at a time, and thus saved us from much suffering. When our strength was a little restored, we were carried on board the boats, which at once made sail for Cerigotto, where we were landed in the evening. Of our complement of one hundred and twenty-two people, only sixty-four remained. When I think of all we went through, it seems surprising that any of us should have lived to reach the shore. We were treated in the kindest way by the people of the island. After staying with them for eleven days, at the end of which time most of us had somewhat recovered our strength, we proceeded to Cerigo, and thence sailed for Malta. There have, I'll allow, been more terrible shipwrecks. Few people, however, have suffered as much as we did during the six days we were on the rock, without food or water. As soon as I was recovered, I was drafted on board the 'Ajax,' seventy-four, commanded by Captain Sir Henry Blackwood. We lay off the mouth of the Dardanelles, forming one of the squadron of Vice-Admiral Sir John Duckworth. I'm fond of old England, as I hope all of you young gentlemen are, but I must own that the spot where we lay is a very beautiful one.

"It had just gone four bells in the first watch, and all hands except those on duty were asleep, when we were roused up by the cry of fire! Directly afterwards the drum beat to quarters, and the guns were fired, as signals of distress. A boat was also sent off with one of the lieutenants and a midshipman, to summon assistance from the other ships. We all stood ready to obey the orders we might receive. The captain and one of the officers at once went down to the cockpit, from which clouds of smoke were bursting out. They quickly had to beat a retreat. We then, forming a line, passed the buckets along full of water, to pour down upon the seat of the fire, as far as it could be discovered. So dense was the smoke, that several of the men who were closest and whose duty it was to heave the water, were nearly suffocated. It was soon evident that the flames had the mastery of the ship. The carpenter endeavoured to scuttle the after part, but had to abandon the attempt. In less than fifteen minutes after the alarm had been given, the flames raged with such fury, that it was impossible to hoist out the boats.

“The jolly-boat alone had been lowered by the captain’s orders, directly he came on deck. The fire was now bursting up through the main hatchway, dividing the fore from the after part of the ship. The captain accordingly ordered all hands forward. There we were nearly six hundred human beings huddled together on the forecastle, bowsprit, and sprit-sail yard, while the after part, from the mainmast to the taffrail, was one mass of fire. Smoke in thick columns was now rising from all parts of the ship, while the flames crackled and hissed, then they caught some of the poor fellows who had taken refuge in the tops. Some kept silent, but others shrieked aloud for mercy. Above the roar of the flames, and the cries of the men, the sound of the guns could be heard when they went off as the fire reached them. Captain Blackwood retained his composure and cheered us up by reminding us, that the boats of the squadron would soon arrive. They came at last. It was no easy matter to get on board. Many of the men jumped into the sea, in their eagerness to reach them. Others stood, shouting and shrieking to them to come nearer. I, at last seeing a boat which had not as yet taken many men aboard her, and thinking it was time to save myself, leapt overboard, and was soon picked up. Many who had imitated my example were of necessity left swimming or floating, and would have perished had not other boats arrived and saved them. The ship’s cable had some time before this been burnt through. All this while she was drifting towards the island of Tenedos—now her stern, now her broadside alternately presented to the wind. One of the men in the boat had been hurt. I took his oar. I found that the boat I was aboard of belonged to the ‘Saint George,’ and was under the command of Lieutenant Willoughby. As soon as we fell in with another boat, we put the rest of the people on board her, and rowed back again, to try and save some more. This we succeeded in doing. The third time we returned to our burning ship. Just then she rounded-to, and we saw several men hanging by ropes under her head. The brave Lieutenant resolved to rescue these poor fellows before she again fell off. Straining at our oars, we dashed up to her, and succeeded in taking all of them on board, but before we could get clear of the ship she again fell off, carrying us with her, and as she surged through the water nearly swamping us. At the same time flames reached the shank and stopper, when her remaining bower anchor fell over her sides, very nearly right down upon us. Just then, the cable caught our outer gunwale, over which it ran, apparently one sheet of fire. The flames were at the same time raging above our heads, and rushing out from her bow-ports. Our destruction

seemed certain; we might have left the boat to try and save ourselves by swimming, but we were too much exhausted to try and reach any of the other boats; all we could do was to try and keep the flames from off our own. Just as we had given up all expectation of escape, the anchor took the ground, and though the cable was nearly burnt through, it had strength sufficient to check the ship's head, which enabled us to clear ourselves; though we were somewhat scorched, no one was otherwise much hurt. In a short time the wreck drifted on shore on the north side of the island of Tenedos, where she blew up with a tremendous explosion, which must have been heard miles away. We who were saved had reason to be thankful, but of the ship's company two hundred and fifty perished that night by fire or water, including several of the officers, together with the greater number of the midshipmen, who, being unable to swim, were drowned before they could reach the boats. There were three women on board, one of whom was saved by following her husband down a rope from the jibboom. The boatswain had two sons on board. When the alarm of fire was given, he had rushed down, and bringing up one of them, had thrown him into the sea, where he was picked up by the jolly-boat. He then descended for the other, but never returned, being, as several of the midshipmen probably were, suffocated by the dense smoke rising from that part of the ship. I could go on into the middle of next year, as the saying is, telling you of my shipwrecks and adventures, but I have a notion that you would get tired of listening before I had brought my yarn to an end."

"Oh, no! No! Go on, Mr Riddle, go on, go on!" we shouted out.

"Well, then, young gentlemen, I'll just tell you the way we once took a Spanish sloop-of-war.

"I belonged at the time to the 'Niobe' frigate out in the West Indies. We had been cruising for some weeks without taking a prize, when we captured a Spanish merchant schooner, after a long chase. From some of her crew our captain learnt that a Spanish corvette, of twenty guns, lay up a harbour in Cuba. He determined to cut her out. He had intended sending the boats away for that service, when our second lieutenant, as gallant an officer as ever stepped, proposed to take in our prize under Spanish colours, and running alongside the corvette, to capture her by boarding. Having shifted the prisoners to the frigate, the second

lieutenant, with three midshipmen and thirty volunteers, I being one of them, went on board the schooner. There were batteries on either side, with heavy guns which would have opened fire upon us had it for a moment been suspected what we really were. The lieutenant and one of the midshipmen blackened their faces, and rigged themselves out in check shirts and handkerchiefs bound round their heads. The rest of the crew wanted to do the same, but the lieutenant would only allow me and another man to rig up as he had done, and regular blackamoors we made of ourselves. We laughed, I can tell you, as we looked at each other and talked the nigger lingo, so that even if a boat had come alongside they would not have discovered who we were. We had besides a real black and mulatto on board belonging to our crew. The rest of the people were sent below, with their cutlasses and pistols ready for the moment they were wanted. Everything was prepared by the time we got near the mouth of the harbour. The midshipman, a fine young fellow, taking the helm, the lieutenant sat on the companion-hatch smoking a cigarette, and Sutton, the other man, and I, with the mulatto and negro, lolled about the deck with our arms folded. On we stood close under the batteries, which, if we had been discovered, would have sunk us in pretty quick time, but as the schooner was very well-known in the harbour, her real character was not suspected. As soon as we got inside the harbour, we saw the corvette anchored right in the centre. The breeze headed us. That would be all in our favour, we knew, when we had to come out again. We made four or five tacks, taking care not to do things too smartly. The lieutenant turned his eye every now and again on the batteries. I think he expected, as I can tell you I did, that the Spaniards would before long smell a rat, and begin blazing away at us. They seemed, however, to have no suspicion, and we were allowed to beat up the harbour without being interfered with. We had got nearly up to the corvette, when we saw two or three boats coming off from the shore towards us. We well knew that if they got alongside they would soon find out that the schooner had changed hands. We could see only a few people on the deck of the corvette, and the rest of her crew we guessed were either below or gone ashore. In the latter case we hoped soon to master her. As the boats drew near us the breeze freshened, and the lieutenant ordering the helm to be put down, we luffed up alongside the corvette, before those on board suspected what we were about to do. No sooner did they discover what we were up to, than they began shouting and shrieking, some running to the guns, others to get hold of muskets

and cutlasses, while numbers of the crew came swarming up from below. Several officers made their appearance. We didn't give them much time, you may be sure, to defend themselves, before, led by our brave lieutenant, we threw ourselves upon their deck, and were soon slashing away with our cutlasses. But few of them stopped to meet us, so completely did we surprise them, but leaped below faster than they had come up. The officers for a few seconds held out, but they were quickly disarmed and placed under a couple of sentries in the after part of the poop. Three or four hands only had been left on board the schooner, and the lieutenant at once ordered her to lead the way down the harbour, while the corvette's cable was cut and the topsails loosed. We had made such quick work of it, that the soldiers in the fort didn't discover what had happened until the corvette was under way, with her topsails and courses set, following the schooner. They then began to open a hot fire on us and the schooner, but the breeze freshening, we made such good way, that they could not get a proper range; their shot, however, came pretty thickly on board, passing through the sails, cutting away a rope now and then, and several times hulling us, but not a man was hurt. As soon as we could get some powder and shot from below, we fired in return, though there was but little use in doing that, you may be sure. We gave three hearty cheers when we at last got clear of the harbour, and sailed away with our prize for Jamaica, accompanied by our frigate. Our lieutenant and all engaged gained great credit for the way the enterprise had been accomplished.

"Had I been a wise man, I should have stuck to the navy; but soon after this, I had the misfortune to belong to a ship commanded by a very different sort of officer to any I had before served under. If ever there was a hell afloat she was one. Well-nigh a quarter of the crew at a time were on the black list. Not a day passed that one or more were not flogged. At last, two other men and I, when off the coast of America, leaped into a boat alongside and made for the shore. If we had been caught, we should have been well-nigh flayed alive. So we took good care to keep in hiding till the ship had sailed. I afterwards shipped on board an American merchantman, but I would not join Uncle Sam's navy on any account. I can't say that I found myself in a perfect paradise, and I was not sorry, after two or three years, to get on board an English merchant vessel. I became mate of her, and in one way or another saved money enough to buy my cottage here, with a boat and nets, and to settle down with my

wife and family. I mustn't keep you any longer, young gentlemen, listening to what befell me in the meantime; but if you'll pleasure me by coming here another day, I'll go on with my yarn."

"Thank you, my friend," said Mr Reynell, getting up, "it's time for all of us to be returning home, but I am very sure these young gentlemen will be very much obliged to you, if we can manage to make another excursion here, to listen to some more of your adventures."

While some of us gathered round the old sailor, asking him questions, the rest were employed carrying the baskets of provisions to the carriage, which set off on its return, we soon afterwards following on foot. Although many of the party declared that they had no wish to go to sea, the accounts I had heard only strengthened my desire to become a sailor, and I determined more resolutely than ever to use every means to accomplish my object.

Chapter Five.

I form plans against the smugglers—Ned's brotherly advice—I continue to visit old Riddle—He presents me with a cutter—My first lessons in sailing—Reception of my present at home—Aunt Deb again gives her opinion—A present in return—Sudden disappearance of Mark, which leads to a further expression of sentiments on the part of Aunt Deb—I visit Leighton Hall—My interview with the Squire—I obtain permission to visit Mark in prison—"Better than doing nothing"—I console Old Roger—"A prison's a bad place for a boy"—Returning homewards, I unexpectedly gain some important information—The barn—The smuggler's conference—Rather too near to be pleasant—I contrive to escape—Am pursued and captured by the smugglers, but finally released—Aunt Deb's disapproval of my friendship for Mark Riddle.

I have taken up so much space in describing the adventures of old Riddle, that I must be as brief as I can with my own. Although I had been inclined to think smugglers very fine fellows, I had lately heard so much against them that I began to consider it would be a very meritorious act if I could gain information which might lead to the capture of some of them; besides which, I flattered myself Sir Reginald would be so highly pleased at my conduct that he would exert himself more than he at present seemed inclined to do, to obtain me an appointment as midshipman on board a man-of-war. I kept my ideas to myself; I didn't venture to mention them even to the old sailor, as I suspected that if not actually in league with the smugglers, he was friendly to them. I thought it better also to say nothing about it to my father, for although I knew that he would be pleased should I succeed, he might very naturally dread the danger I should have to run in my undertaking. How to set about the matter was the difficulty. I had no intention of acting a treacherous part, or to try to become friendly with the smugglers, for the purpose of betraying them. My plan was to hunt about to try and find out their hiding-places, and where any cargoes were to be run; then to give information to the baronet. The only person to whom I confided my plan was Ned, under a promise of secrecy. He tried to dissuade me, pointing out that it was a very doubtful proceeding at the best, and that, should I succeed, the smugglers would be sure to take vengeance on me.

“They will either shoot you or carry you off to sea, and drown you, or put you on board some outward-bound ship going to the coast of Africa, or round Cape Horn; and it may be years before you get back, if you ever return at all,” said Ned.

Still his arguments didn’t prevail with me, and I only undertook to be cautious. Had he not given his promise to keep my intentions secret, he would, I suspect, have told our father or Aunt Deb, and effectual means would have been taken to prevent me from carrying out my plan. A considerable time passed by, and although I was on the watch, I could gain no information regarding the proceedings of the smugglers. During this period I paid several visits to old Riddle, who always seemed glad to see me. I was highly delighted one day when he presented me with a cutter, which he had carved out and rigged expressly for me. It was about two feet long and of a proportionable width, fitted with blocks, so that I could lower or hoist up the sails, and set such canvas as the wind would allow. The inside was of a dark salmon colour, the bottom was painted and burnished to look like copper, while the rest was of a jet black. Altogether I was highly delighted with the craft—the first I had ever possessed—and I only wished she was large enough to enable me to go aboard her, so that I might sail in her.

Near old Rogers’ house was a lagoon of considerable length and breadth, filled by the sea at high tide. It was open to all winds, and was thus a capital place for sailing a model. He and Mark at once accompanied me to it, and they having trimmed the sails, and placed the rudder in the proper position, the model vessel went as steadily as if the ship had had a crew on board. When she had finished her voyage across the lagoon, the old sailor, taking her out, showed me how to trim the sails. I then, carrying her back to the place whence she started, set her off myself. I had fancied that I could make her sail directly before the wind; but he explained the impossibility of doing this without a person on board to steer, as she would have a tendency to luff up to the wind. He evidently took a pleasure in teaching me, and I didn’t grow weary of learning, so that at the end of the first day I fancied I could manage my little craft to perfection. I called her “The Hope.” He promised to have the name painted on her stern by the next day I came. I went almost day after day for a week or more. At last old Roger declared I could sail “The Hope” as well as he could. Sometimes Mark came with me, but he didn’t

take as much interest in the amusement as I did, he being more accustomed to practical sailing; besides which he had other employments into which he didn't think fit to initiate me. As I before said, he frequently went fishing on the Squire's ponds, and from a light fowling-piece which I saw in his room, together with several nets and other contrivances for catching game, I suspected that he also spent some of his time in the Squire's preserves. I didn't like to hint to him that I had any suspicion on the subject. When he saw my eyes directed towards a gun, he observed—

"I sometimes go out wild-duck shooting in the winter. My gun is not large enough for the purpose, so when I can contrive to get up close enough I now and then kill a bird or two."

"I should think your gun was more suitable for killing partridges or hares or pheasants," I remarked.

"Ah, yes, so it may be; but then pheasants and partridges and hares are game, and I should run the risk of being hauled up before the Squire if I were to bag any."

He laughed in a peculiar way as he spoke. I tried to get information from him about the smugglers; but if he knew anything he held his tongue, evidently considering it wiser not to trust me. At last, as I wanted to show my cutter to Ned, my sister, and the rest, I told old Roger that I should like to carry it home. To this he raised no objection.

"You'll find her rather a heavy load, Master Dick," he said. "However, you can rest on your way. I advise you to stow the sails first, so that if you meet a breeze they will not press against you."

I did as he advised me, lowered the mainsail and stowed it as he had shown me how to do, and lowered the foresail and jib. Mark had gone out that morning and had not returned, or he would have helped me, I had no doubt. Wishing old Roger, Mrs Roger, and Nancy good-bye, I set out.

Sometimes I carried the cutter on one shoulder, sometimes on the other, and then under my arm; but before I got half way I began to wish that there was a canal between old Roger's cottage and the vicarage. My arms and shoulders ached with the load. After resting some time, I once

again started and managed at last to get home. "The Hope" just as I had expected, met with general admiration from my brothers and sisters. They were much astonished to see me unfurl the sails, and all wished to come and see her sail. I promised to give them that pleasure, provided they would undertake to carry the cutter between them. Aunt Deb was the only person who turned up her nose at seeing my model.

"Mr Riddle might have thought of some other present to give the boy," she observed; "there was no necessity indeed for his giving a present at all. Dick's head is already too much turned towards sea matters, and this will only make him think of them more than ever. I shall advise your father to return the vessel to the old sailor, with the request that he will dispose of it to some one else. In my opinion, it was very wrong of him to make such a present without first asking leave."

I thought it better to say nothing, and Aunt Deb didn't carry out her intentions. My mother, who was always generously inclined, gave me leave to take a few pots of jam in return. A few days afterwards Ned and I, and two of my sisters, set out to carry our present. They had been interested in what I had told them about the old sailor and his pretty daughter, and wanted to see them. On our arrival they received us in a friendly way, and Mrs Riddle and Mary hurried to place chairs for my sisters. They thanked us much for the present we had brought. I observed that they all looked graver than usual. I inquired for Mark.

"He hasn't come home since yesterday evening," answered his father. "I don't fancy that any harm has befallen him; but still I can't help thinking all sorts of things. If he doesn't come back soon, I must set out to look for him."

I found that Mark had taken his gun, and said that he was going along the shore to get a shot at a gull, but it was not as yet the season for wild fowl to visit the coast. Still I could not help fancying that old Roger knew more about Mark's intended proceedings than he thought fit to tell me. It struck me that perhaps the smugglers had something to do with the matter. Had I been alone I should have offered to have accompanied him; but he didn't ask me, and indeed seemed to wish that we should take our departure. Telling my sisters, therefore, that it was time to go home, we wished the family good-bye, and set out on our return. At tea that evening

my sisters mentioned the disappearance of Mark.

“Depend upon it that boy has got into mischief of some sort,” observed Aunt Deb; “though I never saw him that I know of, I am very sure from the remarks Dick has made that he is a wild monkey, and a very unfit companion for a young gentleman.”

I defended Mark, and asserted that it was just as likely that he had met with some accident.

“At all events, I intend to go over to-morrow morning, and inquire what has happened to him,” I said. “I don’t remember making any remarks which would lead you Aunt Deb, to suppose that he was otherwise than a well-conducted fellow. He seems much attached to his family, and they’re evidently very fond of him.”

“Perhaps his father spoils him as other parents are apt to do,” remarked Aunt Deb, glancing at the Vicar. “The sooner you break off your intimacy with him the better in my opinion—and now you are aware of my sentiments.”

The latter was a remark Aunt Deb usually made at the conclusion of an argument, by which she intended it to be understood that her opinion was not to be disputed.

Next morning, without waiting for breakfast, taking only a crust of bread and a cup of milk, I set off, anxious to learn what had happened to my friend Mark. On nearing the cottage I saw Mary at the door.

“Oh! Master Dick, I’m so glad you’re come,” she exclaimed. “Father and mother are in a great taking. Mark has got into trouble. When he went out yesterday evening he met Jack Quilter and Tom Bass, and they persuaded him to go shooting where he ought not to have gone, and all three were caught by Sir Reginald’s keepers. They had a fight for it, and Quilter and Bass knocked one of the keepers down, and would have treated him worse if Mark had not interfered. Three other keepers coming up, they were all carried off to the Hall, where they have been locked up ever since. Father only heard of it yesterday evening after you went. He at once set off to try and see Sir Reginald, and he only got back late last night, or rather this morning, so he has only just now got up. He said that

the Squire was very savage with him, and threatened to send Mark off to sea. It was with great difficulty that father got leave to see Mark, who told him how he had saved the keeper's life, but the Squire would not believe it, and said that he had been caught poaching, and must take the consequences."

"I'm very sorry to hear this," I said to Mary; "but don't despair of your brother getting off. I'll ask my father to plead for him; and if he won't do that, I'll go myself and tell the Squire what a capital fellow Mark is. It would be a shame to send him to sea against his will, although he might be ready enough to go of his own accord."

After I had talked the matter over with Mary for some time, I went into the cottage, where I found Mrs Riddle looking very downcast, and soon afterwards old Roger made his appearance. He repeated what Mary had said, and added that he intended to engage the services of Lawyer Roe to defend Mark, though the expenses would be greater than he could well bear. I was afraid, however, that Lawyer Roe could do nothing for Mark, taken as he had been with a gun in his hands, in Sir Reginald's preserves, should the baronet resolve to prosecute. I again offered to go off at once to see Sir Reginald. I however much doubted that my father would undertake the mission, especially as Aunt Deb would endeavour to persuade him to have nothing to do with the matter. Mrs Riddle and Mary pressed me to take some breakfast, which they had just prepared, and as by this time I was very hungry, I gladly accepted their invitation. As it was important to get early to the Hall, directly breakfast was over I started, resolved to employ every means I could to get Mark liberated. It didn't occur to me that probably Sir Reginald would pay no attention to my request, or that he would consider my interference as a piece of impertinence. I made up my mind to speak boldly and forcibly, and felt very confident that I should gain my object. Old Roger accompanied me part of the way, but he thought it was better not to be seen near the Hall, lest it should be supposed I had been influenced by him. I was but a little fellow, it must be remembered, and without any experience of the world, or my hopes would not have risen so high.

"Never fear, Mr Riddle," said I, as I parted from the old sailor. "I'll manage, by hook or by crook, to get Mark set free, so tell Mrs Riddle and Mary to keep up their spirits."

When I reached the Hall, I walked boldly up to the front porch, and gave a sturdy pull at the bell. A powdered footman opened the door. In a firm voice I asked to see Sir Reginald.

“He is at breakfast.”

“Then say Mr Richard Cheveley has called, and begs to see him on an important matter.”

The footman gave an equivocal smile down at me, and went into the breakfast-room at one side of the Hall.

I heard a lady’s voice say—

“Oh! Do let him come in.”

The servant reappearing, showed me into the breakfast-room, in which several ladies were at one end of a well-covered table. Lady Knowsley was seated, presiding at the tea-urn, with several young ladies on either side, and Sir Reginald at the foot.

I made my bow as I entered. Lady Knowsley held out her hand without rising, and Sir Reginald turned partly round in his chair and gave me a nod, then went on eating his breakfast, while the young ladies smiled. The footman placed a chair for me in a vacant place at the table.

“You have had a long walk, and must be ready for breakfast,” said Lady Knowles, in a kind tone.

“Thank you, I took some on my way,” I answered, not wishing to lose time by having to repeat an operation I felt that I could not perform in the presence of so many young ladies with my accustomed appetite.

“You must have got up another appetite by this time,” observed Sir Reginald. “Come youngster! Here is an egg and some ham. Julia, cut him a slice of bread, and Lady Knowles will supply you with tea. Fall to, now, and let me see what sort of a man you are.”

Thus pressed, I was compelled to eat what was set before me, which I did without any great difficulty. Sir Reginald was too polite to ask me the

object of my visit till I had finished. He pressed me to take more, but I declined, and I then told him that I had heard that Mark Riddle had been taken poaching with some other lads who had led him astray.

“That is your opinion, Master Cheveley,” observed Sir Reginald, with a laugh; “why the fellow is the most arrant young poacher in the neighbourhood. My people have been aware of it for a long time, but have hitherto been unable to capture him.”

“I hope that they are mistaken, Sir Reginald,” I observed; “I have seen a good deal of Mark Riddle, and his father is a very fine old sailor.”

“He may be that, although I have reason to believe that he is, besides, as determined a smuggler as any on the coast, though he is too cunning to be caught,” answered the baronet. “No, no, Master Cheveley; young Mark must be sent to prison unless he is allowed as a favour to go to sea instead.”

I was determined not to be defeated, notwithstanding what the baronet had said. I still pleaded for Mark, and the ladies, who are generally ready to take the weaker side joined with me.

“Suppose he is guilty. He is very young. If he would promise not to poach again, will it not be kind to let him off?” said Lady Knowles.

“It would be kinder to give him a lesson which he will not forget,” said Sir Reginald; “notwithstanding all his promises, he would be certain to poach again. He might end by killing a keeper, and have to be sent to the gallows, as has been the fate of many. Poachers and smugglers must be put down at all costs.”

In spite of my intention to persevere, I found that I hadn’t the slightest chance of moving the feelings of the baronet. I, however, supported by the ladies, got leave to pay Mark a visit, and I learned from them that he and the other men were not to be sent off to prison until the following day, when the constables would come to carry them away. I stayed for some time, the young ladies chatting pleasantly with me, till at length thinking that I ought to take my departure, I asked to be allowed to go to Sir Reginald’s study, to obtain an order for me to visit Mark.

"I'll get it for you," said Miss Julia; "we all feel compassion for the poor lad, who has evidently been led astray by bad companions." In a short time she returned, with an order to the constable in charge of the prisoners.

Thanking her very much, and wishing her and her sisters and Lady Knowles good-bye, I hastened round to the back of the house, where the lock-up room was situated.

The constable, on seeing the order, admitted me without hesitation.

"Well, Master Dick, this is kind of you to come and see me when I'm in trouble," said Mark, immediately stretching out his hand. "From what I hear, it will go hard with me."

I asked him if he could not prove that he had been misled by others, and would promise not to go poaching again.

"No; that I can't, either one or the other," he answered promptly. "I went of my own free will, and if I was let out, as long as I had a gun and powder and shot, I should go and make use of it. But I don't want to go to prison; and if I'm sent to sea, I should like to choose how and when I am to go."

"You must find it very dull work sitting here all day, having nothing to do," I remarked. "Would you like to make some blocks? I have got some wood and a sharp knife, with a saw and file, in my pocket. It will be better than doing nothing."

Mark gave a sharp look in my face, and said—

"Yes, that I should. I never like to have my hands idle. You shall have the blocks for your cutter when I have finished them."

Thinking only of the amusement it would afford Mark, I handed him out the necessary tools, and promised to obtain some more wood for him to work on should he be sent to prison. The other two men were lying down, apparently asleep, while I paid my visit to Mark. They took no notice of me. After I left, instead of going directly home, I returned to old Roger, that I might report the ill-success of my visit to Sir Reginald.

"I feared it would be so from the first," said Roger. "A prison is a bad place for a boy, and I'd rather he had been sent off to sea."

"I'll ask my father to try what he can do, though I'm afraid he'll not be more successful than I have been."

"Do, Master Dick," said Mrs Riddle. "We should not let any stone remain unturned. I would not have our Mark sent to prison for anything. It would be the ruin of the boy."

I of course promised to do my best. It was getting late in the day, for I had spent a considerable time at the Hall, and a further period had been occupied in getting to old Roger's cottage. Mrs Riddle insisted on my stopping to take tea, and as I had had no dinner I was very glad to accept her invitation. I remained on afterwards for some time, talking to the old sailor, so that it was pretty late when I at length set out to return home. As I had told Ned where I was going I knew that they would not be anxious about me, and therefore did not hurry my steps. I had got about half way, when feeling tired I sat myself down to rest, with my back against the side of an old barn, at a spot whence I could obtain a good view of the sea. I sat for some time watching the vessels passing up and down channel, and observing a few boats putting out for their night's fishing from Leighton Cove. The weather was warm, and I was sheltered from the light breeze which blew off the land. I had been on foot all day since early dawn, and very naturally became drowsy. Instead of at once jumping up I sat on, and in consequence fell fast asleep. When I awoke I found that the sun had set, and that the daylight was fast departing. I was just going to get up, when I heard voices proceeding from the inside of the barn. Though not intending to play the part of an eavesdropper, I could not help listening to what they said. The men spoke in low voices, so that I didn't catch everything, but I heard enough to convince me that the speakers were smugglers arranging a spot where a cargo was to be run the first night when there would be no moon, and the wind blowing off shore. As far as I could make out, it was to be close to where I then was. Below me was a little sandy bay, where the boats could come ashore even should there be a heavy sea running outside.

One of the speakers, whom I knew to be Ned Burden, lived in a cottage hard by, and he was to show a light in his window should the coast be

clear. At present the weather was far too favourable for their purpose, but they counted on a change in four or five days. At last I heard them fix on the following Wednesday. I was afraid of moving lest the smugglers should hear me, and I knew that if they discovered my whereabouts they would look upon me as a spy, especially as everybody was aware of the way my father, had been speaking against smuggling. Still they went on talking, and I heard some more of their designs.

In order to draw off the Revenue-men from the spot, it was proposed to set one or two hayricks on fire at a large farm near Sandgate, when it was supposed that they would collect to try and extinguish the flames, so as to prevent the fire communicating with the other surrounding ricks. As this was sure to be no easy work, it was calculated that the smugglers would have time to run the cargo, and carry the goods away into the interior. It was an opportunity I had long been looking for. I could now, by giving the information I possessed, secure the favour of Sir Reginald, and thus induce him to further my object. I sat on, scarcely daring to breathe, lest I should be heard, and heartily wishing that the men would go away. They had evidently, however, met there for the purpose of discussing various subjects. Ned Burden probably didn't wish to go far from home, and apparently was unwilling to receive his visitors in his own cottage. He had therefore fixed upon this spot. At last I began to think that they intended to spend the night there. I heard footsteps approaching, and I now feared that I should be discovered; but the new comers followed the path which led to the opposite side of the barn to that where I was sitting. I judged by the voices that there were three of them. They once more went over the matters that the others had before discussed, having apparently no fear of being overheard. They all spoke in their ordinary voices, only occasionally dropping them. "Now is the time," I thought, "of making my escape; while they are talking they will not hear me, and I may creep away to a distance without being discovered." I put my plan into execution. The men continued talking on; their voices sounded fainter and fainter as I got farther away from the barn. Fancying that I was safe, I at last rose to my feet, intending to run as fast as my legs could carry me. Scarcely, however, had I begun to move forward, when I heard a shout, followed by the sound of footsteps. I fully expected, should the smugglers fancy that I had overheard them to get a knock on the head if I was overtaken. I had always been tolerably fleet of foot, and as I had no desire to be so treated, I set off running as hard as I could. I hadn't got

far, however, before I fancied I heard some one coming. In a short time I was nearly certain of it, but I didn't stop to listen. In daylight I should have had no difficulty in keeping ahead of my pursuers, but the ground was rough, and I had to turn aside to avoid bushes and rocks. Still the impediments in my way would also assist to stop them, and I didn't despair of escaping. I had to cross over a ridge, at the top of which I was exposed to view. I had just reached it, when I heard some one shout. "You may shout as loud as you like," thought I, "but I'm not going to stop in consequence." Down the hill I rushed, hoping soon to find shelter, so as to be able to turn off to one side or the other, and thus to evade my pursuers. I knew that a little way on was a lane which led directly to the village, and that if I could once get into it I might run on without much chance of being overtaken. I could see before me a thick hedge, through which I should have to get into the lane. I was making my way towards it, when down I came into a deep ditch or watercourse, the existence of which I had forgotten. It was perfectly dry, but I was severely hurt by the fall, and for some seconds I lay unable to move. I soon, however, recovered, and attempted to scramble out on the opposite side. But the bank was steep, and the top was above my reach. I fancied that it would be lower farther down, and ran or rather scrambled on in that direction. It didn't occur to me at the time that it would be wiser to remain perfectly still, when my pursuers, if they were continuing the chase, would have passed me unobserved in the darkness. I at last reached a part where the bank was broken away, and began climbing up, when I heard footsteps close to me; and, as I gained the top, I saw a man coming along at full speed on the opposite side. I determined, however, not to be caught if I could help it; but to my dismay, when I began to run, I found that I had sprained my ankle. This, though it didn't stop me altogether, prevented me from running as fast as before; but if I could get through the hedge I thought that I might keep ahead, or that the smugglers would not venture to follow me. To ascertain how far off they were I gave a glance over my shoulder. This was fatal to my success, for my foot caught in a low bush and down I came. In vain I endeavoured to regain my feet. Next instant I found myself in the grasp of two men.

"Hulloa! Youngster; what made you try to get away from us?" asked one of them, in an angry tone.

"I am on my way home, and wish to get there as soon as possible," I

answered.

“Who are you?” asked the man.

I told him without hesitation.

“And your father has joined Sir Reginald and the other squires about here in persecuting the smugglers.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with my being in a hurry to get home,” I replied.

“Maybe not; but we want to know where you were lying hid just before you took to running,” said the other man.

“I was not lying hid anywhere,” I answered. “I was going along from paying a visit to Roger Riddle, after seeing his son Mark, who was caught by the Squire’s keepers, and accused of poaching, when being tired I sat down to rest and fell asleep.”

“Whereabouts were you sleeping?” asked the smuggler.

“On the ground,” I answered.

“So I suppose,” said the man, with a laugh. “But whereabouts on the ground?”

“Not far from the old barn, to the best of my recollection; but it was too dark when I started to make out where I had been.”

This answer seemed to satisfy my interrogator. I was afraid that he would inquire every moment whether I had heard the conversation going on within the building.

“Well, my lad,” he said, “take care you don’t shove your nose into places where you’re not wanted. If you’re a friend of old Riddle’s, I don’t suppose you’ll have any ill-feeling against the smugglers. So now, good-night. You would have saved us a long run if you hadn’t been in such a hurry to get home.”

Thankful to escape so easily, I told the men I was sorry to have given them so much trouble. They accompanied me to a gate not far off, over which I climbed into the lane. I then, as fast as my sprained ankle would let me, made the best of my way home. I found that my family had been somewhat alarmed at my non-appearance. My father, who always took matters coolly, accepted my excuses, but Aunt Deb scolded me roundly for having played truant.

“What business had you to go to trouble Sir Reginald about that young scapegrace Riddle?” she asked, in her usual stern manner. “He’ll consider that you and your friend are alike. He’ll not be far wrong either. You have lost all chance, if you ever had one, of interesting Sir Reginald in your favour. You may as well give up all hope at once of being a midshipman. Now I suppose you want some supper, though you don’t deserve it. You’re always giving trouble to Betsy in coming home at irregular hours.”

“Thank you,” I said, “I’m not so very hungry. I’ll go into the kitchen and get some bread and cheese; that is all I want before I go to bed.”

So thus I made my escape. I had no opportunity that night of informing my father of what I had heard, but when we went to our room I gave Ned an account of my adventures.

“I would advise you, Dick, not to interfere in the matter,” said Ned. “It’s all very well for our father to preach against smuggling; the smugglers themselves don’t mind it a bit; but were he to take any active measures they would very likely burn the house down, or play us some other trick which would not be pleasant.”

Notwithstanding what Ned said, I determined to inform Sir Reginald of what I had heard, still hoping that by so doing I should gain his favour.

Chapter Six.

I revisit the baronet—My information and its worth—Am somewhat taken aback at my reception—Well out of it—Mark’s escape—Old Riddle’s gratitude—A night of adventure—The run—Night attack on

Kidbrooke Farm—The fire—My curiosity overcomes my prudence—
The struggle on the beach—The luck of the “Saucy Bess,” and ill-
luck of Mark—I am again captured by the smugglers—Buried in a
chest—My struggle for freedom, and its result—A vault in the old mill
—My explorations in the vault.

The next morning I found my father in his study before breakfast. I told him of my having overheard the smugglers arranging the plans for running a cargo shortly, and asked him whether he wished me to let Sir Reginald know.

“You are in duty bound to do so,” he answered. “At the same time you must take care it is not known that you gave the information. He’ll certainly be pleased, and will be more inclined than before to assist you. You had better set off directly breakfast is over, and I will write a note for you to deliver, which will be an excuse for your appearance at the Hall. Do not say anything about the matter to any one else, as things that we fancy are known only to ourselves are apt to get abroad.”

I followed my father’s advice, and said nothing during breakfast. As soon as it was over I set out. Aunt Deb saw me, and shouted out, asking me where I was going; but pretending not to hear her, I ran on. I suspect I made her very irate. I noted the people I met on my way, and among others I encountered Ned Burden. He looked hard at me, but said nothing beyond returning my “Good morning, Mr Burden,” with “Good morning, Master Dick,” and I passed on. I looked back shortly afterwards for a moment, and saw that he had stopped, and was apparently watching me. As soon as I reached the Hall I gave my father’s note to a servant, saying that I was waiting to see Sir Reginald. In a short time the man came back and asked me to follow him into the study.

“Well, Master Richard Cheveley,” remarked the baronet, without inviting me to sit down, “I wonder you have the face to show yourself here after what has occurred.”

“What have I done, sir?” I asked with astonishment.

“Connived or assisted at the escape of the poachers I had shut up in my strong room yesterday evening, waiting the arrival of the constables to

convey them to prison.”

“I beg your pardon, Sir Reginald. You must be under a mistake,” I exclaimed. “I have in no way assisted any poachers to escape. I merely yesterday, with your permission, visited the boy Mark Riddle. He had been captured with two persons much older than himself, and he was, I believe, led astray by them.”

“You, or somebody else, left them some tools—a file and a small saw—with which they managed to cut away a bar in the strong room and effect their escape. Here are the instruments, which they must have dropped as they were getting off. Do you recognise them?”

As Sir Reginald was speaking I recollected giving the knife and file and saw to Mark, that he might amuse himself by cutting out some blocks. When I saw them I at once acknowledged them as mine, telling the baronet my object in giving them to Mark.

“It was thoughtless, to say the least of it, and a very suspicious circumstance, young gentleman,” remarked Sir Reginald.

“Have they not been retaken?” I inquired, anxious to know what had become of my friend Mark.

“No, there is but little chance of that,” he answered, in a tone of vexation. “Now, let me know what you have come about. Your father gives no reason for your visit.”

Without claiming any merit, I at once gave a clear account of all I had heard on the previous evening. Sir Reginald appeared much interested, and his manner became more friendly than at first.

“I am ready to believe that you had no intention to assist young Riddle to escape,” he said at last, after taking notes of all I told him. “Now return home, and keep your own counsel.”

I confess that I was secretly very glad Mark had made his escape. I hoped that he would return to his father, and keep in hiding till the affair had blown over, and also give up poaching for the future. I wanted as soon as possible to go and see the old sailor, and learn what had

become of Mark, but I knew that my father would be expecting me; and accordingly, after leaving the Hall, went directly home. My father complimented me more than I deserved on the way I had conducted the matter. I didn't tell him just then of my having unintentionally assisted Mark and the other poachers to make their escape.

"If the smugglers and their cargo are taken, you will deservedly have the credit of the affair, and Sir Reginald will, I hope, feel bound to assist you as you desire," he observed.

I had to wait till the next day to go over and see old Roger. I almost expected to find that Mark had returned home, and was concealed in the house; but none of his family knew anything about him, except that he had escaped from Sir Reginald's strong room. They all thanked me warmly for the assistance I had given him, and of which they had heard by some means or other. They would not believe that I had had no intention, when I lent him my knife and other things, of helping him to get out. I took care to return home at an early hour, as I had no wish to encounter Ned Burden or the other men on the way. I waited somewhat impatiently for the result of the information I had given. I was very sure the baronet would take the necessary steps for capturing the smugglers. The weather, which had for a long time been fine, now completely changed. A strong westerly gale sprung up, the sky was clouded over, and as there was no moon the nights were very dark. The evening on which I had heard the smugglers propose to run the cargo arrived. I should have been wise to have gone to bed at the regular hour, as if I had had nothing to do in the matter. Instead of that, as soon as Ned was asleep I slipped on my clothes and went out by the back door, which I carefully closed behind me. As soon as I got clear of the village, and could see to a distance, I turned my eyes towards Kidbrooke Farm, which the smugglers had planned to attack in order to draw off the coastguardmen from the spot where the cargo was to be run. In a few minutes I observed a bright light burst forth from the surrounding darkness, and rapidly increase until it assumed the appearance of a huge bonfire. I then knew that the outlaws had carried out the first part of their plan, as I concluded they would the second. It seemed to me that the whole farm and all the stacks would speedily be in a blaze. Eager to see the fire, I ran towards the farm. On getting nearer, the hum of human voices showed me that a number of people had assembled, some of whom were

engaged in throwing water over the stacks, others in pulling down the burning one. As I got up to them, I found that they were mostly labourers from Leighton, together with those belonging to the farm, with a few of the villagers from Sandgate. There were, I remarked, none of the revenue-men present, by which I concluded that they had not been drawn away from the coast, as the smugglers expected they would be. Precautions having been taken in time, and there being plenty of hands to extinguish the flames, the fire didn't communicate to the other ricks; and, as far as I could see, even a portion of the first was saved.

It would have been better for me had I returned home and gone to bed again; but I was curious to know if the "Saucy Bess" had succeeded in running her cargo, or whether Sir Reginald had acted on the information I had given him, and had sent the coastguard-men to watch for the smugglers and capture them. Without stopping, therefore, in the neighbourhood of the burning rick, I hurried away towards the spot at which I had heard Ned Burden and his companions propose to run the cargo. I must have been running on for twenty minutes or so when I heard a pistol-shot fired; it was succeeded by two or three others. This made me more than ever eager to ascertain what was going forward. I doubled my speed. The path was tolerably good, and I knew the way. All the time I had not met a single person. After some time I heard more shouts, sounding much nearer, and cries mingled with the clashing of cutlasses, so it seemed to me. I had no doubt that the coastguard-men and the smugglers were having a desperate fight, the latter endeavouring to defend their property, and the former to capture it. Which would succeed in their object seemed doubtful. I pictured the whole scene, though as yet I could see nothing. This I was eager to do, forgetting that bullets flying about were no respecters of persons. At last I reached the top of a cliff overlooking the bay, whence I could see a lugger, which I guessed to be the "Saucy Bess," with her sails loose, a short distance from the shore, and two or three boats near her; while on the sands were a number of men, who from their movements, and the babel of tongues arising from the spot, were evidently struggling. That the revenue-men had the best of it, I had no doubt. It appeared to me that they had captured part of the cargo, and some of the smugglers, and that others were endeavouring to rescue their comrades. That this was the case I had little doubt, when I saw the lugger's head turned seawards, and presently she disappeared in the gloom of night I was now satisfied that

Sir Reginald had acted on the information I had given him, and that he would find it had been correct. I was at last about to return home, when, just as I reached a lane leading from the cliffs, I heard footsteps close to me, and, turning round, saw three men approaching. Whoever they were I thought it better to keep out of their way, and began to run. But they must have seen me, and at once made chase. I could easily have kept ahead, but unfortunately stepping into a deep rut, I stumbled, and before I got under weigh again the men were upon me.

"Where are you bound for, youngster?" cried one of them, whom I recognised by the voice to be Ned Burden.

"I came to see what was going forward," I answered.

"Not the first time you have done that, young gentleman," said one, in an angry voice. "We know who you are. Somebody gave information about the run which was to be made to-night, and putting two or three things together no one will doubt that it was you. Shall we heave him over the cliffs, or what shall we do with him, mates?"

"Let us take him along with us, at all events," said one of the other men. "If he has spoiled our plans to-night, he deserves to be knocked on the head."

"Spoilt our plans indeed he has," said Burden; and he presently detailed to his companions how he had caught me listening at the old barn, and how, not supposing that I had heard anything of importance, he had let me go.

I could not deny this, and I saw that it would be useless to attempt to defend myself. My captors, without more ado, proceeded to tie my arms behind my back, and to bind a handkerchief over my eyes.

"Remember, youngster," said Burden, "if you shout out or utter a word we'll send a bullet through your head."

From the fierce way in which he spoke I thought he was very likely to do this. I did not tell him that I knew who he was, as I was sure that this would only make matters worse for me. I did not, however, believe that they really meant to kill me; but what they would do was more than I

could guess. Two of them taking me one by each arm led me along the road, without wasting another word on me. They walked very fast indeed. Had they not supported me I should have fallen several times. Every moment I thought they would stop. I tried to ascertain in what direction they were leading me, but very soon lost all means of doing so. At length they made me sit down on what I supposed was a bank. I tried to judge from what quarter the wind was blowing, but the spot was sheltered, and sometimes it blew on one cheek and sometimes on the other. I could hear the roar of the waves, by which I knew that I could be at no great distance from the shore. While one of them held me tightly by the arm, the others withdrew to a distance to consult as to how they should proceed. After a time they came back, and we continued our march at the same rate as before. On and on we went. I was getting very tired, and would gladly have again sat down. When I complained, the men laughed at me.

“You’ll soon have time enough to rest yourself, youngster,” said one of them. “You may consider yourself fortunate that things are no worse with you.”

Finding that it would be useless to say anything more, I held my tongue. I must own that I now bitterly regretted having interfered against the smugglers. They were fully convinced that I had done so, and I could not defend myself. I had heard of the fearful punishment that they had at times inflicted on informers; and even should they spare my life, I thought it too probable that they would ship me off to some distant part of the world, or shut me up in a cavern or some other place from which I could not make my escape. It seemed to me that several hours had passed since I was captured, and that it must now be broad daylight; but the bandage was so tightly secured over my eyes that I could not move it with my eyebrows, nor could I, from my arms being fastened behind my back, get my hands free to do so. Again and again I begged my captors to listen to me and loosen my arms, as the ropes hurt me. When I declared that I could go no farther, one of the men answered fiercely:—

“We’ll soon see that, youngster.”

He gave me a prod with the point of a knife or cutlass, I could not tell which. It showed me that they were not likely to treat me very

ceremoniously. "I must make the best of a bad matter, I suppose," I thought, and did not attempt to stop. Suddenly the men brought up, and then turning sharp round told me to lift my feet, and I found that we were walking up some wooden steps. This I could judge of by the sound made by our feet. Then we went along a level floor. Presently, after passing through two or three doorways, as I supposed, we descended also by wooden steps, till I felt convinced, by the closeness of the atmosphere, that we had reached a vault.

"You may make yourself comfortable here, young gentleman, for the rest of your life," said one of the men, with a hoarse laugh. "I've a notion that you'll not again be inclined to go and inform against poor fellows who are carrying on their business without wishing to do you or any one else harm."

"Stay; that jacket of his, and his waistcoat, are a great deal too good for him," observed another man.

And forthwith, having released my arms, they took off the garments they spoke of.

My first impulse, on getting my hands free, was to try and get the bandage from my eyes, but one of the men caught hold of my hands and prevented me from accomplishing my object. I, however, clutched hold of my clothes with the other, unwilling to give them up; but they quickly mastered me, leaving me only my shirt and trousers. I now began to fear that they intended some serious violence. In vain I struggled; I felt myself lifted up by the shoulders and feet, and placed on a rough board. As I now had my hands free, I immediately tore off the bandage. A gleam of light, which came from one side, showed me that I was in what appeared to be a large chest, placed on its side; but before I could turn myself round the lid was shut down, and I heard the men securing it. I was thus imprisoned in, so far as I could tell, a living tomb. I shouted and shrieked, and tried to force open the lid. My captors were holding it on the outside, and it seemed to me were driving in screws. I could hear them talking outside, but what they said I could not make out. Could it be possible that they intended to leave me here to perish by hunger? The act would be too diabolical for the worst of wretches to think of, and yet what other reason could they have for shutting me up in such a place? Finding that I

could not release myself, I thought I would try to move their feelings.

"I am very sorry if I have brought you or any others into trouble," I said. "If you'll ask Roger Riddle, he'll tell you that I have no ill-feeling towards smugglers. I was the means of getting his son Mark out of prison. If you keep me here you'll make my father and mother very miserable, for they won't know what has become of me. You can't be so cruel, surely."

The men went talking on. I was sure they heard me, though they made no answer. It then occurred to me that perhaps they had shut me up in the chest for the purpose of carrying me on board a vessel, and that I should then be set free and enjoy the light of heaven and the warmth of the sun. Then I recollected having read how cruelly boys are treated on board ship, and that if I were sent under such circumstances I should have to lead a dog's life at the best. Well, it was some consolation to have reason to hope that I was not to be murdered as I at first feared, or to be kept shut up in this horrible vault for an indefinite period, when I might be forgotten, and possibly be allowed to die of starvation.

These thoughts passed rapidly through my mind. As soon as I grew calm, I listened to ascertain what the men were about. As far as I could judge, in a short time they quitted the vault, and I was left alone. I listened and listened. No sound could I hear. A sufficient amount of air came through the chinks in the chest, and enabled me to breathe without difficulty. I had no notion of staying where I was without some endeavour to extricate myself. I knew that after a time I should grow weak from want of food. I was in total darkness, and the chest, for so I supposed it, was large enough to enable me to move about. It struck me, as I was feeling round the sides, that it was perhaps a bunk, such as is fitted on board ship for the men to sleep in. If my captors had not taken away my jacket I should have had my knife, and I might then, I thought, have cut my way out; but they left me without any means of effecting my purpose. The only way of freeing myself was to knock out by main strength either the top or one side of the bunk or chest. I feared that if I at once commenced doing this the noise I should have to make would attract the attention of my jailers. I therefore lay still for some time, listening attentively. Not a sound of any description reached my ears. I thought that it must now be day, though no light penetrated into the vault. If it had I should have seen it, I thought, through the chinks of the chest. It was very roughly put together, and this

circumstance gave me better hope of being able to force it open. At length I determined to commence operations, and placing myself on my back, with one hand to defend my head, and one foot against the end, I struck out with the other on the part above me. A cracking sound encouraged me to go on. Each time I struck out the planks appeared to move slightly. I used so much force that every nerve in my body was jarred, and I was afraid of laming myself. Notwithstanding that, I persevered, stopping every now and then to listen, lest my captors should return; but as no one came I was satisfied that they had gone away, and now redoubled my efforts. Several loud cracks were the result; and at length, to my intense satisfaction, the planks above me fell off, shattered by my foot.

I was thankful for my success. At all events I should not have to die shut up in a chest. But I was very far from being free. Getting up on my feet I thrust my head through the hole I had made, and tore back the broken pieces of plank. Had I possessed a light I should have seen how next to proceed, but I was still in total darkness. I could not tell what I might find outside the chest. Moving carefully I climbed out, moving about with my feet to find the ground, which was lower I thus ascertained than the bottom of the chest, but how much lower I could not tell. I therefore held tight on with my hands while I let myself down, and I then discovered that it had been placed on another chest of about the same size; but I had to move very cautiously, as there might be still some lower depth beneath my feet, though I didn't think that very likely. The ground was dry and hard, without either bricks or flagstones. This I found out by stopping down and touching it with my hand. I now began to move on very carefully, feeling my way from chest to chest. I discovered in my progress not only chests, but casks and bales. I had little doubt, therefore, that I had been conveyed to the smugglers' store, but where it was situated I was totally unable to surmise. That it was some way inland I thought probable, as I could not hear the sound of the surf breaking on the sea shore, which I thought I should have done had I been near the coast. I tried to think if I recollected any building which it was at all probable would be thus used by the smugglers. There were, I at last remembered, two mills not far from the coast, but one was in the possession of too respectable a farmer to allow any lawless proceedings to be carried on in his premises. The other was an old windmill that had been abandoned the last two or three years; two of the arms had fallen down, and the

whole building was in a very ruinous and tottering condition. The property I had heard was in Chancery, the exact meaning of which I didn't understand, but knew no one was ever seen about the place, and that the villagers from the neighbouring hamlet were unwilling to approach it after dark, there being a report that it was haunted by a headless miller, who had been killed while in a fit of drunkenness by his own machinery. Could this be the place, I thought. The idea didn't make me feel more comfortable, not that I had any strong belief in ghosts or other spirits walking the earth in bodily shape; but yet I didn't feel perfectly certain that such beings did not exist, and I confess to having had an indefinite dread of seeing the headless miller appear out of the darkness surrounded by a blue light. I tried to banish the idea, and felt much more at my ease. I suddenly recollected that although I was in darkness it was daylight outside, and that the headless miller was possibly resting quietly in his grave in the churchyard a mile away.

One thing I had to do, and that was to get out of my prison as soon as possible. I felt round and round the vault. My great object was to discover the steps by which my captors and I had descended, but to my dismay I could not find them. Either they had been drawn up through a trap-door above, or we had come through a door in the side of the vault which had been closed by them when they went out. I searched and searched in vain for such a door, one side consisting of a blank wall partly of stone and partly of perpendicular timbers, which I concluded supported the superstructure. This made me more certain than before that I was in a vault beneath the old mill. I was in hopes by this time that the smugglers had gone away, and that I should thus be able to make my escape without interruption. How to do so was the question. I remembered that we had descended the building by steps to the bottom of the vault. I concluded, therefore, that the roof must be a considerable height above my head. There were numerous boxes, chests, and bales, as far as I could judge, in the vault, and if I had had light I should have found, I thought, little difficulty in piling one upon another, and thus reaching the top; but in the dark this was a difficult and hazardous undertaking. I could scarcely expect to place them with sufficient evenness to make a firm structure, and they might, after I had got up some distance, topple down again with me under them, and perhaps an arm or a leg broken. Still I could think of no other way of getting out. I again felt about, and tried to lift some chests and bales, but they were mostly too heavy for my

strength; I might, however, discover some which I could tackle.

It must be remembered that all this time I was perfectly ignorant of my surroundings. I was, indeed, in the position of a blind man suddenly placed in a position which he had never before visited without any one to give him a description of the scenery. The only knowledge that I had obtained of the vault was from the sense of touch. I now determined to take a further survey, if so I could call it, of my prison, to start from a certain point to feel my way round, and reach as high as I could, to extend my arms, and to grope along the floor from one side to the other. One point I considered was to my advantage. My captors would suppose that I was shut up in the chest, and would therefore not have taken much trouble to secure the outlet to the vault. Probably, indeed, they had gone away, as they would certainly avoid being seen in the neighbourhood of the old mill during daylight. I didn't suppose that they intended to murder me, and I therefore expected that they would come back again at night to bring me some food, or perhaps to carry me off and ship me on board some vessel, for such I was convinced was their intention. I must therefore effect my escape before nightfall. The necessity of obtaining food would alone induce me to do this, though as yet I did not feel very hungry.

Serious as the situation was, I did not give way to despair. I could not believe that I was doomed to die, but how my deliverance was to be effected was more than I could tell. Again starting from the chest in which I had been shut up, and which I could distinguish by the short fragments of the top, I continued groping my way round and round the vault. My first object was to try and find the door, which I was persuaded existed, as I thought I had previously missed it. Any one who has played at blind man's buff may have a faint idea of my situation. Only the objects round me remained stationary, whereas in the game people run away from the blinded person, and he has to try and catch them as they run round him. I had the advantage over the blinded man in the game. I was sure that in time I should gain a knowledge of my locality. Time, however, was precious, and it would not do for me to delay my search.

I would have given anything for a tinder-box and flint and steel, so that I might light up the vault even for a few seconds; but as that was not to be had, I tried to make use of my other senses. Stretching out my arms and

feet as I went along, touching one place with my left hand, while I felt about my head as far as I could reach straight out with my right; I then brought my left up to the spot my right had last touched, and so I went on. Occasionally my right foot struck against a bale or chest which extended beyond the others above it. Had there been an opening in the pile of goods I was sure that I could not have missed it. For the supposed door I searched in vain, and at length came to the conclusion that the only entrance to the vault was from the roof above. It did not occur to me that there might be one above my reach by which my captors might have made their exit with the assistance of a short ladder. Though I had moved slowly, what with the exercise I had taken during the night, and the efforts I had made to get out of the chest, I felt very tired; and, discovering a bale of convenient height, I sat down to rest myself, and to consider with such calmness as I could command, what I should next do.



Chapter Seven.

A prisoner in the vault—The headless miller—I continue my explorations—My perilous position—My further attempts at escape—The recess—An unexpected shower-bath—A glimpse of light—I escape from the vault, but not from prison—A lower chamber in Old Grime's mill—The result of my further endeavours to escape—My signal of distress—The Revenue-men—My rescue—The search for the smugglers' goods—My hunger relieved—On guard—Meeting with my father—The last of old Grime's mill.

Strange as it may seem, I fell asleep. How long my eyes had been closed I could not tell. I fancied I heard the voices of people coming down through the roof. A door directly opposite to me opened, through which a pale light streamed, when what was my amazement to see "Old Grimes" the miller dressed in his short frock, his iron-grey hair streaming over his shoulders, and holding on his head with both hands, proving that it could not retain its position without such assistance. He glared at me with his saucer-eyes; his lips moved, but what he said I could not make out. Had he approached I thought I would have spoken to him and asked what he wanted, but he did not advance beyond the doorway. Presently he faded from my sight. The light grew dimmer and dimmer. I thought that I got up and tried to make a straight course for the door; but when I reached the wall opposite I could not find it, and so groped my way back to my seat.

It was not until fully a minute after I was awake that I became aware that I had been dreaming. I was soon convinced that the vision of Old Grimes was a mere dream, but I was not quite so well satisfied about the voices I had heard. I listened, expecting to hear them again, but all was silent as before. I now got up, resolving to try and make my way out. Though I had not previously experienced any inconvenience from the want of breakfast, I began to feel excessively hungry; and if I had come across a package of hams or tongues, or a cask of salted herrings, I should have eaten them raw with considerable satisfaction. The more hungry I felt the more desperate I became. I at last fixed on a place for commencing operations. There appeared to be more woodwork there than anywhere else, or else the chests were piled upon each other. At all events they would afford me a foothold. That I might have less chance of slipping I

had kicked off my boots, supposing that I could easily find them again. I climbed up and up. Of course I had to move very cautiously, not leaving go with one hand until I had a firm grasp of some fixed object with the other. I got up a considerable distance, and pressing against a board, it gave way, and a tremendous crash followed, as if a number of boxes filled with bottles had fallen to the ground. Putting up my hand, I felt a beam above my head; could it be one of the rafters, or the roof? I was for some time afraid to move, lest I should fall headlong down. I passed my hand along the beam, but could not reach the floor it supported. I now tried to crawl cautiously along on the top of the woodwork or the pile of chests, for I could not determine which they were. Every now and then I stopped and stretched out my hand, but could feel nothing above me.

I must again beg my readers to try and picture to themselves my unpleasant position. The only wonder to myself is that I kept up my spirits. I did not forget that any moment something might give way below me, and that I might pitch down to the floor of the vault on my head. I had gone on some way, when, stretching out my hand, I discovered nothing beyond me. I was on the very edge of the erection. The only thing I could do was to go back the way I had come, or to descend to the floor. Fearing that I should be unable to pass the spot where I had thrown over the cases, I resolved to adopt the latter alternative.

I bethought me that if I had had a pole it would have assisted me greatly to discover the trap-door leading to the vault. It was easier to climb up than to climb down, as I could not feel with my feet as I could with my hands. The attempt, however, must be made. Having got to the edge of the plank and ascertained that it was secure, I gradually let myself down, when I found myself resting on another plank or the edge of a chest, I could not tell which. Let any one try in the dark to do what I was attempting to do, and it will be found no easy matter. Could I have stood securely, I might have crouched down till I could have got hold of the plank on which my foot rested, but there was scarcely room for that, and if I let go the plank above me I might tumble over on my back; yet there was no other way of descent, so holding on with my left hand I tried to find something which I might grasp with my right lower down.

My satisfaction was considerable when my hand came in contact with the rope-handle of a large chest. It appeared to be secure, and holding it I

was able to stoop down and fix my other hand on the ledge on which my feet rested. One stage of my descent was thus accomplished. I now held the ledge tight with both hands, let my legs slip off, and felt about with my feet for another resting-place. For some seconds I was swinging about, holding on by my hands. There might be another ledge not half an inch below my feet. I stretched down my toes to the utmost. I could not discover it. Should I let go I might have a serious fall. I worked my way on, hoping to be more fortunate. At last my feet struck against the end of a chest, and after making a little further exertion I found that it was secure, and that I could venture to stand upon it.

I was still uncertain how far I was off the ground; all the difficulty I experienced arose from being in darkness. I could probably, I knew, have scrambled over the whole of the building with perfect ease had there been light. I might already be close to the ground, but at the same time I might be many feet above it, and I therefore could not venture to step down without going through the same process as before. Leaning on my elbows, I stretched my arms along the top of the chest. I slipped off, and unexpectedly found my feet touch the ground. I was too eager to escape to allow myself time to rest after my exertions. I once more began to search round the vault, hoping to find an oar, a boat's mast or spar, or somewhat that might serve my purpose. I felt about in vain; indeed it was not likely that the smugglers should have placed such things in the vault.

I at last reached the part where the boxes or chests, as I supposed they were, rested, and I began to stumble among them. The region in which I had spent the last two or three hours was considerably disarranged. I fancied that I knew every part, and now I was completely thrown out in my calculations. One chest stood up on end on another. I feared, should I move it, that I might bring others down on my head. I should have liked to have put them all back in their places, but that was impossible. By great care I made my way among them; when I at last reached the walls, it was the part I had not before examined. How I could have passed it I could not account for, unless I had been prevented reaching it by the chests piled up in front, and which I had displaced. As I was extending my arms my hands touched what felt like a wooden latch. There was no doubt about it; it was the latch of a door. I lifted it up and pulled it towards me. The door opened, but all was dark within the recess. I felt sure that it must be the entrance to the vault. I was going to step forward when it

occurred to me that it might lead to a lower vault and that I should be precipitated into an unknown depth should I move without feeling my way. I knelt down, extending my hands, when they touched the ground as far as I could reach. This satisfied me that my first conjecture was correct.

Cautiously feeling my way, I stepped forward and explored the recess as I had the larger vault. Contrary to my expectation, I could discover no ladder. I was thus no nearer to my deliverance than before. I felt round and round this smaller vault, without being able to decide as to its object. That it was the entrance to the vault I thought very likely. I wished that I could find out the height of the roof, and of what it was composed. It seemed probable that it was lower than that of the larger vault. I thought that I might drag in some of the smaller chests and place one on another against the wall and climb up. I made my way accordingly back to the large vault, in search of some which I could move.

In going along my foot struck an object on the ground. It was a long spar—the very thing I was in search of. I supposed it had fallen down with the boxes, having either been placed upon them or assisting to support them. It appeared, as far as I could judge, to be twelve or fourteen feet long, and was thick enough to enable me to swarm up it, and thus to serve the purpose of a ladder. I first tried to reach the roof of the large vault with it, but it was not long enough, though I lifted it as high as I could; and then carrying it in my hands went back to the recess, and, eager to ascertain the height, I struck upwards. It at once met with resistance, not as I supposed, from a beam or vaulted roof, but from some soft object. That soft object must be removed.

I poked and poked again and again, now in one part, now in another, when suddenly down came a shower of powder, which, before I could make my escape, covered me from head to foot. I was certain that it was, from the smell and feel, flour, though old and musty. The flour filled my nose, eyes, and mouth, nearly suffocating me. I, however, willingly endured this dry shower-bath, for as it fell a glimpse of light came through a hole which I had burst in the upper part of the sack, which had evidently been drawn across the trap leading to the vault for the purpose of concealing it. I worked away with my pole until I had pretty nearly emptied the sack of flour, and then, with a little more exertion, I brought

the whole down, and had a clear view upwards. For a minute or so my eyes, long accustomed to darkness, were so dazzled with the light that I could not make out anything distinctly. They were, besides, so full of flour that it took me some time to clear them.

After this I did not delay in endeavouring to get out of the vault. Having placed the upper end of the pole against the corner of the trap, I tried to swarm up it. At first my exertions made the pole slip, and I ran the risk of having a disagreeable fall; but descending, I placed the half rotten sack with some of the flour round the foot, and then drew in several pieces of wood, with which I further secured it.

I now made another determined effort to climb up it by twining my arms and legs round it. With considerable effort I succeeded in catching hold of the edge or sill of the trap, and then getting up my knees I was out of the vault, but not out of prison. I was, however, far better off than before. Instead of darkness, I had light—instead of a close vault, an airy chamber, on the lower floor of which sacks of flour had evidently been kept. There were no regular windows, but only a few slits high up above my head to admit light and air. The door was securely closed. The room was in much better order than I should have supposed from the generally ruinous appearance of the building from the outside.

Of course, having thus far freed myself, I did not despair of getting out by some means or other. I was in a hurry to do so lest the smugglers should come back, and thrust me back into my prison, or treat me even worse. Looking round the room I observed an opening on one side opposite the windows. It struck me that if I could get to it I might make my way into the main part of the building. Once there, there could be no difficulty in escaping. In the last few minutes I had forgotten my hunger, but it again came upon me; and as I had no other food, I thought I would try some of the flour, which would stay my appetite, even though eaten raw. I believe that a person eating nothing else for several days would make himself ill, if he did not die. I made a hole in one of several sacks leaning against the wall, and which had been there probably since the occupant's death. It was excessively musty, but hunger prevented me from being particular, and rolling it up into little balls I swallowed several in rapid succession. Having eaten on till I had sated my appetite, I hauled up the pole with which I had made my escape from the vault below.

I then placed it against the foot of the small door high up in the wall. It was sufficiently long. But then the thought occurred to me, will the door be closed so that I shall be unable to open it? That point must be settled by experiment; so having assured myself that the upper end would not slip, I began to ascend. It was not at all an easy task, and I did not feel satisfied that it would not give way. Up and up I went, remembering what my father often used to say, that "fortune favours the brave." I gained the top, and holding on to the sill beneath the door, pressed against it. It moved, and, contrary to my expectation, opened. It was a difficult matter notwithstanding to get in; but I managed at last to get my knee on the sill, and then creeping forward I found myself in a gallery in the main part of the mill, in the centre of which was the shaft and the machinery for working the grindstones beneath. I ran round the gallery till I came to a ladder leading to the floor below, expecting that I should find the main door open. It was firmly closed and locked, so that I could not get out. This was a disappointment.

Having in vain tried to find any other outlet, I ran up the steps again to the gallery, looked out of one of several windows to ascertain if I could reach the ground by any of the woodwork; but the height was too great to allow me to drop out without danger of breaking my legs. I observed several people in the distance passing along by a path which led by the foot of a hill on which the mill was situated. My first thought was that they were smugglers; but then I recollected that such characters were not likely to be abroad in a body during daylight, and the glitter of the gold lace round the cap of one of them convinced me that they were the revenue-men. I shouted at the top of my voice. Hungry and faint as I was, it did not sound as loud as usual. They did not hear me. I was afraid they would go on. Again and again I shouted. One of the men turned his head. Having no handkerchief, in a moment I stripped off my shirt, and waved it wildly out of the window. The men saw it, and came hurrying up the hill.

"Who are you, youngster?" shouted one of the men as they came near.

"Master Cheveley, son of the Vicar of Sandgate," I answered.

"Why, he looks more like the ghost of a miller," said one of the men.

"How did you get up there?" inquired the first speaker a head boatman in

charge of the party.

“I got up out of a vault where the smugglers put me,” I answered. “Make haste and come in, for I’m almost starved.”

“Here’s a door,” cried the head boatman; “but I say, mates, it’s locked. Is there no other way in?” he shouted.

“None that I know of,” I answered. “I have been trying to open the door, but could not.”

“We’ll see what we can do,” said the man.

And he with two others placing their shoulders to it quickly sent it flying inward shattered into fragments, the rotten wood giving way before their sturdy shoves.

I ran down to meet them. The head boatman, a strong seamanlike-looking man, at once began to question me as to what had happened. I told him as briefly as I could adding—

“But, I say, I’m desperately hungry, as I’ve only had some lumps of musty flour to eat for several hours, and thirsty too. I shall faint if I don’t have some food.”

“We’ll get you that, youngster; and then you must try and show us the way into the vault,” said the speaker. “We may get a better haul than we’ve had for many a day if it should prove one of the smugglers’ hiding-places.”

He then directed one of the men to run down to the next farmhouse and bring up some bread and cheese, or anything else he could obtain, and a jug of milk, or if that was not to be procured, some water.

I thanked him, begging the man to make haste, for now that the excitement was over I could scarcely stand.

“Do you know you are whitened all over?” he asked. “You look as if you had come out of a flour-bin!”

I had for the moment forgotten how I must have looked. The man good-naturedly began to brush the flour off my clothes and hair, and one of them lent me his handkerchief to wipe my face. They inquired what had become of my jacket and waistcoat. I told them how the smugglers had taken them from me.

“Perhaps the fellows may have hidden them somewhere about here. They wouldn’t like to have the things found on them. Jenkins and Brown, do you go and search all round. Maybe we’ll come upon another opening into the vault.”

The two men hurried off to obey the orders they had received, while the others examined the mill; and the chief boatman sat by me fanning my face, for he evidently thought me in a bad way. The time appeared very long since the man had started for the provisions, but I believe he was not absent many minutes. I was thankful when he returned, bringing a basket with some eggs, and ham, and cheese, and some delicious bread, and a bottle of milk. I fell to immediately like a hungry wolf, and felt very much better by the time I had finished.

“We’ll keep the remainder in case you want any more, my lad. And now we must get you to show us the way into the vault,” said the officer.

I was quite ready to do this, for I confess that I had a bitter feeling against the smugglers on account of the treatment I had received. We soon reached the trap which had been covered over by the sacks of flour. The men looked down, not quite liking to descend into the darkness. The spar by which I had got up was still in its place. I offered to go down first, but this the chief boatman would not allow, and he and another man at once lowered themselves to the bottom. It was, however, so dark beyond the smaller vault, that they declared they could see nothing, and they had to wait until a man was sent to the farm for a lantern. We then too descended, but as the lantern only dimly lighted up the vault, I could scarcely believe that it was the same place in which I had spent so many hours. I had fancied that it was of immense size and height, and crowded with piles of boxes, and bales, and casks. Instead of this there were only a few old packing-cases, in one of which I found I had been shut up. There were besides about a dozen bales, most of them apparently damaged, and what the revenue-men considered of more value, nearly

half-a-hundred small casks of spirits, and some boxes of tobacco. These had been covered over with planks. I had not felt them on my exploring expeditions in the dark. The revenue-men were well satisfied with their haul, as they called it, though they had thought that it was possible they might find some articles of value.

As I was anxious to return home to relieve the anxiety of my father and mother, I begged the chief boatman to let me do so at once.

“We cannot let you go alone; some of these smugglers might meet you and give you a clout on the head for having shown us their hiding-place. Wait a bit until I can send one of the men with you. We must first get these casks up. We can’t spare a hand at present, as one of the men must go on to the station to give information of our find, and to procure some carts for carrying the things away.”

In hunting about the men had discovered a coil of rope and some blocks, which had evidently been used for lowering the casks into the vault. The seamen were not long in fitting up a tackle to hoist them out. While one of the men was sent off as proposed, the rest worked away with a will. In a short time the chief contents of the vault were hoisted up and rolled outside.

“Here’s a job for you, my lad,” said the chief boatman. “You stay by these things, and give us notice if you see any suspicious characters coming, while we get up the remainder.”

This task I gladly undertook, for I was heartily sick of the vault where I had spent so many unpleasant hours, and glad to breathe the fresh air outside. I sat down on the cask, nibbling away at some of the contents of the basket, for my appetite had returned. At last a drowsiness stole over me, and slipping off the cask, against which I placed my back, I fell fast asleep. I was awakened by hearing some one shouting, and looking up I saw a person running towards me. I sprang to my feet, when what was my surprise to see my father, who rushed forward, and at the joy of seeing him I leaped into his arms.

“Why, Dick, my boy,” he exclaimed, “we have been in fearful anxiety about you. How have you got into this plight? Where have you been?”

What has happened?"

I answered him as fast as I could.

"I won't find fault with you now, though you had no business to steal out of the house at night. You have had a narrow escape. Though the ruffians who carried you off and put you into the vault might not have intended to leave you to starve, they most probably would have been unable to return. Several have been captured, and so hot is the hue and cry after the rest that they would have been afraid to come back to the spot to bring you food, or to carry you off, as you fancy they intended to do."

The chief boatman now came out of the mill, and was evidently well pleased to hand me over to my father, who thanked him for the attention he had paid me.

Just as we were setting off the carts arrived with a party of revenue-men, armed to the teeth, to carry off the smugglers' goods, for it was thought likely that a rescue might be attempted. We had got to no great distance, when on looking back I saw a cloud of smoke issuing from the old building. It increased in density, and presently flames burst out.

"Could they have set the place on fire?"

"Not intentionally," said my father; "but it is very evident that the mill is burning, and from the nature of the materials of which it is composed there is not the slightest chance of its escaping destruction."

Tired as I was, I persuaded him to go back to see what had happened. As we got nearer the building we saw that the whole of it was enveloped in flame. The revenue-men were busily engaged in loading the carts. They had soon found that any attempt to save the mill would be useless, and that they would only run the risk of losing their lives. We were at some short distance when a tremendous roar was heard, the ground shook beneath our feet, and the whole building came toppling down, a vast heap of burning ruins; while planks, and beams, and masses of earth, were thrown up into the air, showing that an explosion had taken place in the vault where I had been confined. No one suspected that any casks of powder had been deposited there, but that such was the case there was no doubt. I had now reason to be very thankful that I had not

found a tinder-box, for I should certainly have tried to light a fire in the vault, and probably the sparks would have communicated to the powder. How the fire originated no one could tell, but I suspected that one of the men had lit his pipe, and that the ashes had fallen out upon some loose grains of powder. We, as well as the revenue-men, had a narrow escape from being crushed by the ruins which fell close to us.

Such was the end of Old Grime's mill.

Chapter Eight.

My reception at home—Aunt Deb again gives her advice—My father and I pay another visit to Leighton Hall—Our guard—Interview with Sir Reginald—A score that was not settled to my satisfaction—My awkward position—My father receives a threatening letter—Aunt Deb decides on action—Preparations for my departure—The journey in the coach—Our fellow-travellers—A false alarm—My aunt's character further comes out—Our arrival at Liverpool—Our reception—Mr Butterfield—I explore Liverpool—My first visit to the "Emu"—I gain some information—I lose my way—Aunt Deb's anxiety on my account—A small difficulty well got out of—I pay another visit to the "Emu"—My ideas as to officers and seamanship receive a somewhat rude check—I make the acquaintance of Gregory Growles—I lose my cutter—"Thief! Thief!"—I speak to Mr Butterfield as to my going to sea—His opinions on the subject—He makes me a kind offer—Matters still unsettled—A reference to Aunt Deb.

My father supported me as we walked home; for, now that the excitement was over, I felt so exhausted that without his assistance I could not have got along. Before we had got far, however, we fortunately fell in with some of the people who had been sent by my father to look for me. They, taking me in their arms, saved me from the necessity of making further exertions. As we went on we met several seafaring men, boatmen and others, who I thought scowled at me as I passed.

The news of the capture of the goods having got abroad, it had been reported that I had given the information. My mother and sisters received me affectionately. To my satisfaction I found that Aunt Deb was out in the

village. On her return, having heard some account of my adventures, looking at me sternly she said—

“Well, Master Richard; and so you have been continuing your foolish pranks, and throwing us all out of our wits. Depend upon it, nephew, you’ll come to a bad end if you don’t manage to act with more discretion during your future course in life.”

I felt too tired just then to reply to Aunt Deb’s remarks as I should have liked to do. I merely said—

“I could not help being carried off by the smugglers; and as I have been the means of getting a good many of them captured, and also of enabling the revenue-men to seize their stores, I hope that Sir Reginald will now feel anxious to reward me by obtaining for me the appointment I have so long wished for.”

“If it suits Sir Reginald’s convenience he may do so,” said my aunt. “We shall see; we shall see.”

I had to give an account of my adventures to every one in the house, and I was very thankful when I was able to go to bed, feeling no inclination to put myself in the way of going through any fresh adventures.

Next morning, after breakfast, I asked my father if he would accompany me to Leighton Park, that I might make another appeal to Sir Reginald.

“You’ll only get a flea in your ear, John,” remarked Aunt Deb. “Sir Reginald will just consider you troublesome. You are much more likely to succeed if you let him alone.”

My father, however, for a wonder, ventured to differ with Aunt Deb, and agreed to take me to see the baronet. He had become, I found, very anxious about my safety, being convinced that the smugglers would, if they had the opportunity, punish me severely for having interfered in their affairs. This made him more than ever anxious to get me away from home. Not satisfied that even during the walk to Leighton Park we might not be attacked, he directed old Thomas, the gardener, to arm himself with a blunderbuss and a brace of pistols, and to follow, keeping us always in sight. He didn’t think it would become him as a minister of the

gospel to carry fire-arms through his own parish, and he was afraid to entrust them to me.

“Remember, Thomas, that if you see any smugglers come near, you are to march up and point your blunderbuss at their heads.”

“You may be sure, sir, as I’ll do that,” answered Thomas. “I have been a man of peace all my life, but I’m ready to fight in your cause, and I believe the Lord will forgive me if I kill any one.”

“I don’t think there is much chance of that,” said my father. “Your appearance with your blunderbuss loaded up to the muzzle will be sufficient to deter any of the ruffians from attacking us.”

We set out together. Thomas gradually dropped behind to the required distance. As we walked along I looked every now and then over my shoulder to be sure that he was following, for I had an uncomfortable feeling that the smugglers would be on the watch for me. We, however, reached the park without any adventure.

Sir Reginald kept us waiting longer than usual before we were admitted into his presence.

“Well, Mr Cheveley, we have succeeded at last in giving a blow to the smugglers which will put a stop to their proceedings for some time to come at all events. Though the ‘Saucy Bess’ got off, we captured some of her crew and several of the men assisting them.”

“I congratulate you, Sir Reginald,” said my father; “and I ventured to call on you to explain that my son Richard has rendered considerable service to the cause. It was through him that information of the intended run the other night was obtained, and he also discovered one of the smugglers’ hiding-places, ‘Grime’s Mill,’ and was the means of enabling the revenue-men to capture a considerable store of their contraband goods.”

Sir Reginald smiled.

“I’m glad to hear this,” he observed; “for to say the truth, I have had strong doubts as to your son’s connexion with the smugglers. He is intimate, I find, with an old sailor, Roger Riddle, who though too cunning

to be caught is known to aid and abet them in their proceedings. By his means young Mark Riddle, who is both smuggler and poacher, made his escape from my lock-up room only last week. Had it not been for my respect for you, I could not have passed the matter over, and I am happy now to be able to set the services you say he has rendered against his former conduct. I am the more willing to do this as young Riddle was taken just as he landed from the 'Saucy Bess,' and we shall now get rid of him, as he will be either committed to prison for two years or sent off to sea to serve his Majesty for seven years."

I was very sorry when I heard this, but of course did not express my feelings to Sir Reginald. My father looked rather uncomfortable; he was a nervous man, and Sir Reginald always awed him. He, however, mustered courage to proceed.

"I hope, Sir Reginald, that my son's good conduct will induce you to interest yourself in his favour, and that you will forward his views by exerting yourself to obtain the appointment he so greatly desires. I am very anxious to get him away from the neighbourhood, as I am afraid the smugglers, who are aware that he has been instrumental in the capture of their friends and goods, will revenge themselves on his head. I dare not let him leave the house alone, and even coming here I was obliged to bring an armed attendant for his protection."

"I have told you, Mr Cheveley, that I consider his late conduct is a set-off against his unpardonable proceeding. I will, however, remember his wish; and, should an opportunity occur, will forward his views. I must now wish you good morning, for my time is much occupied with my magisterial and parliamentary duties, and you must excuse me."

The baronet prepared to bow us out of the room. He shook hands with my father, who took the hint and backed towards the door, and gave me only a formal nod, without allowing a smile to irradiate his features.

We found old Thomas waiting at the hall door with his blunderbuss on his shoulder. My father walked on with hurried steps some distance, not uttering a word. At last he said—

"To what did Sir Reginald allude when he talked of your connexion with

young Riddle?”

I told him how Mark had been seized and locked up and how I had unintentionally assisted him to escape.

“I believe what you say, Richard; but you can’t be surprised at the baronet being annoyed, and I’m afraid from his tone that we must not expect much from him.”

We had got about two-thirds of the way home when we saw three men coming towards us, one of whom I recognised as Burden. I had not yet told my father that I believed him to be one of the men who had shut me up in the old mill. He started as he saw me, and then scanned me narrowly, as if uncertain whether it could really be myself.

Though I knew that old Thomas and his blunderbuss were close behind us, I felt very uncomfortable, as I could not tell how the men might be inclined to act. Mustering courage at last, I looked Burden in the face. My father nodded to him and the other men, as he was accustomed to do to his parishioners. They hesitated for a moment, and then passed on. I looked back and saw them watching old Thomas, but they didn’t speak to him, and he trudged sturdily after us without paying them any attention.

“I wonder what was the matter with Burden?” asked my father, as we got to some distance.

I then told him it was my belief that he was one of my captors.

“We can’t prove it, even if he were,” said my father. “He deserves punishment, but the law is expensive and uncertain, and I should prefer letting him alone.”

As far as I could tell the matter was likely to rest here. I lost a jacket and waistcoat, but was not otherwise the worse for my adventure. The next day, however, a letter came by the post addressed to my father, at the top of which was a death’s head and cross-bones, very rudely drawn, and beneath it the words:—

“Informers must look out for what informers deserve. The young master who got off t’other day must look out for squalls. He has been and dug

his own grave, and in it he'll lie before long; so he had better say his prayers. He won't have long to say them. This comes from one who knows him. John Grimes."

My father turned pale when he read the letter. Aunt Deb insisted on seeing it, and then my mother wished to read the contents. She almost fainted.

"This is terrible," she exclaimed. "Yet, surely, the smugglers will not have the barbarity to injure a mere boy like Dick."

"I'm not so certain of that," said Aunt Deb. "Warnings ought not to be neglected. I have long been contemplating paying a visit to my second cousin, Godfrey Butterfield, who is now a flourishing merchant at Liverpool. I'll write and say that I am coming, and bringing with me one of my nephews. I shall not wait for an answer, but will set off immediately; for I'm certain I shall be welcome."

When Aunt Deb said this I saw a smile on the countenance of my elder sisters and brothers, who had not been so much affected by the threatening letter as the rest of the family.

"I'll post the letter at once, and we will set off this evening. What do you say, John?"

My father at once agreed to Aunt Deb's proposal.

"Thank you!" exclaimed my mother. "I shall be much more at my ease when Dick is out of the reach of these terrible men."

Aunt Deb wrote and despatched her letter, and the rest of the morning was employed in making preparations for the journey. Ned had to give up one of his jackets and waistcoats, which exactly fitted me, and my other things were quickly packed in a small chest. I also unrigged and did up the cutter which Roger Riddle had given me, as I fancied I should have an opportunity of sailing it at Liverpool. I made Ned also promise to go and call on the old man, and to tell him how sorry I was to hear that Mark had been sent off to sea, and how much I regretted not being able to wish him good-bye before I went.

We had some distance to drive before we reached the town at which the coach stopped. My father at once sent off for a postchaise, and old Thomas went on the box, armed as before with a blunderbuss and a couple of horse-pistols. As we drove through the village Aunt Deb made me sit back, while she leant forward as if there was no one else inside. Whether or not this precaution was necessary I don't know; but at all events we reached our destination without being stopped by highwaymen.

There were two places vacant in the coach, and although I should have preferred going outside, Aunt Deb insisted on my remaining with her. The other passengers were fat old women, who eat apples and drank gin-and-water for supper, and then snored, and sneezed, and groaned all night long. I know that I wished myself anywhere but where I was. The old ladies talked of highwaymen, coaches stopped, and passengers murdered, till they talked themselves into a state of nervous fear. One or the other was constantly poking her head out of the window, and declaring that she saw a man galloping after the coach with a blunderbuss over his shoulder. However, as the guard gave no signal, I was very sure that their imaginations had conjured up the robber.

"Pray, ladies, do sit quiet," at length exclaimed Aunt Deb, who being a strong-minded woman was not influenced by similar fears. "It will be time enough to cry out if a highwayman does come to demand our purses, and we'll hope that the guard will shoot him dead before he has had time to open the door."

"Oh! How dreadful!" shrieked out one of the ladies. "I would sooner let him have everything he asked for than see a handsome highwayman shot."

"Fiddle-de-dee about a handsome highwayman," said Aunt Deb, in a scornful tone. "They're ugly ruffians, and miserable arrant cowards to boot. If one does venture to stop the coach, I'll not give him any of my property as long as I have hands to defend it."

Notwithstanding Aunt Deb's remarks, our fellow-travellers continued in the same state of alarm the greater part of the night, and to comfort themselves took further sips of gin; until, becoming perfectly fuddled, they

dropped off to sleep.

I almost wished that a highwayman would appear, to see how Aunt Deb would behave; but morning at length dawned, and I fell asleep, nor did I wake till the coach stopped for breakfast. We travelled on all day with the same unpleasant companions, and I was glad to find that we were to go no farther that night. I remember that I dropped off to sleep before supper was over, and was very unwilling to get up the next morning when Aunt Deb called me. The fear of offending her, notwithstanding, made me jump out of bed and hurry on my clothes, and I was in time to take my seat in the coach, which came up soon after breakfast. She still refused to let me go outside, and I had to endure another day's misery, shut up with her and a lady and a fat gentleman, who took snuff and snored, and nearly tumbled over me in his sleep, and a young woman with a baby, who at intervals kept up a chorus of squalls, which considerably aggravated my respected aunt; and I really thought that, if she had given way to her feelings, she would have tossed it out of the window.

As sublunary troubles always do, the journey came to an end, and the coach deposited us at the door of Mr Butterfield, Aunt Deb's cousin. The worthy merchant—a bald-headed, rosy-faced gentleman, of large proportions, who wore brown cloth knee-breeches, large silver buckles, a flowered waistcoat of ample length, with a snowy neckcloth, and a frilled shirt, a coat of the same hue as his unmentionables—received us, as he descended the steps, with a cordiality I little expected.

“Glad to see you, Cousin Deb, though times have changed since you and I played hide-and-seek in our great-aunt's garden. You have shot up in one direction and I have grown in the other considerably. And this is John Cheveley's boy, is he? You are welcome to Liverpool, lad. We'll see what we can make of you here. Plant you on a high stool, and set you quill-driving. Are you a good hand at figuring? We don't value the Latin and Greek most lads have crammed into their heads to the exclusion of all other useful knowledge. Pounds, shillings, and pence are what we have to do with in our commercial city.”

Thus the old gentleman ran on without even waiting for me to answer. He then conducted us to our bedchambers; and as soon as we had washed our hands we descended to the supper-room, where the board was

amply spread. He did not again allude to the high stool and quill-driving, but his remark had made a deep impression on my mind. There was nothing I hated so much as the thought of being shut up in a counting-house. He asked me if I was accustomed to go out alone, and satisfied on that score from what Aunt Deb and I said, he told me that I might amuse myself the next morning by exploring Liverpool, provided I took good note of the way home. This was just what I thought of doing, and to my relief Aunt Deb said she would be too tired to go out.

Accordingly the next morning, after breakfast, I got ready to sally forth. Mr Butterfield had gone to his office, and did not see me. I in reality cared very little for exploring the town, and accordingly inquired my way to the river. Instead of the stream I expected to find I saw a broad expanse of water, with vessels of all rigs and sizes in spacious docks, or moored alongside the quays. I was going along the quay when I saw a large ship taking in cargo. Making my way on till I got astern of her, I observed that she was called the “Emu.” I walked up and down admiring her amazingly.

“Now if I can’t go on board a man of war, and wear a cockade and a dirk by my side, I should like to take a voyage in a ship like that. What a magnificent craft! What proud fellows the captain and officers must be to belong to that ship. I wonder whether the captain would like me as a midshipman? The crew—I can fancy how they sit on the forecastle and sing ‘Rule Britannia,’ ‘Poor Tom Bowling,’ ‘One night it blew a hurricane.’ Happy chaps! I should like to belong to her. I think I’ll go on board and ask the captain to take me.

“Mr Butterfield evidently intends that I should go into his counting-house. Dreadful work to have to set on a high stool, to dot and carry one, and to scribble away all day. I could not stand it. It would kill me. It was bad enough to have to go to school, and then we had a good many play-hours; but in these stuffy, musty, dark offices, I have heard that they have only half-an-hour for dinner, and work away till ten o’clock at night. That sort of life would never suit me.

“Yes, I’ll go and see the captain, and I’ll tell him that I was intended for the navy, that I should have become an admiral some day, and that will make him treat me with consideration.”

Such were my cogitations as I stood, with my hands in my pockets, gazing at the "Emu." When it came to the point I felt somewhat nervous about going to speak to the captain. Perhaps he would not treat me with the respect I should desire. He might not have a vacant berth, and I could scarcely expect a stranger to make a place for me. At last, after walking backwards and forwards very often, I ascended a plank which led me to the gangway in the after part of the ship, and stepped on board.

For some time, all the men being occupied in hoisting in cargo, no one took notice of me. I was thinking that I must go and speak to the captain if I were to speak to him at all, when one of the men coming aft asked me what I wanted.

"I wish to see the captain of this ship," I said.

"He is not on board, and is not likely to be until she sails," he replied. "Do you bring any message for him? If you do, you had better see the second mate."

"No thank you," I replied; "I want to see the captain," in as important a tone as I could command.

"Well, then, you may find the captain at the ship-broker's in Dale Street."

This threw me out, for I knew that the second mate would not have power to receive me on board, and I did not like the thought of having to confront the captain in an office full of clerks. I therefore, losing courage, turned round and walked on shore again. Still I could not tear myself from the ship, but continued pacing backwards and forwards, now taking a look at her lofty masts and spars, now at her hull freshly painted, now at the men working at the cranes and tackles hoisting in cargo.

While I was thus engaged a sailor-like man, who I supposed was an officer, stopped near me.

"Please, sir," I said, "could you tell me where that ship is going to?"

"Yes, my lad. She's bound out by Cape Horn into the Pacific, and up the west coast of America, and perhaps to go across to Australia, and may be away for two or three years."

“Thank you, sir,” I said. “She’s a very fine ship.”

“As to that there are many finer, but she’s a tidy craft in her way,” remarked the seaman, turning on his heel.

“Now that is just the sort of voyage I should like to make. To double great Cape Horn. What a grand idea! And visit the country of the Incas and Peruvians, and the wonderful coral islands of the Pacific. I am much inclined to ask Mr Butterfield if he can get me on board her. Perhaps she’s one of his ships, and I shall then very likely come back as a mate. I might have to remain a long time in the navy before I became a lieutenant, and after all perhaps one might enjoy a much more independent life in the merchant service.

“Yes, I’ll ask the old gentleman; but then I’m afraid Aunt Deb will interfere. She doesn’t want me to go to sea, and she’ll say all sorts of things to prevent him doing what I wish. There’s nothing like trying, however; and if he agrees, I must get him to obtain Aunt Deb’s consent to my going. I’m sure my father won’t make any objection.”

Having arrived at this conclusion, I was now eager to get back to have a talk with Mr Butterfield. I forgot that he was not likely to leave his office till much later in the day. I had become desperately hungry also, and as I had come out without any money in my pocket, I was unable to buy a bun or a roll to appease my appetite. I set off, fancying that I should have no difficulty in finding my way, but I wandered about for a couple of hours or more before I succeeded in getting back to Mr Butterfield’s house.

Aunt Deb received me with a frown.

“Now where have you been all this time?” she asked. “I’ve had luncheon an hour or so, or more. I suppose the servant has cleared the things away, and you can’t expect her to bring them up again for your pleasure.”

“Thank you, Aunt Deb,” I answered. “But I’ll just run and see.”

To my infinite satisfaction, on going into the parlour I found the table still covered with roast beef, and pies, tarts, and puddings; for Mr Butterfield liked the good things of this life, and wished his friends to enjoy them also. Didn’t I tuck in. I often afterwards thought of that luncheon; it

presented itself to me in my dreams; I recollected it with longing affection during my waking hours. I helped myself to two or three glasses of wine to wash down the food. With a sigh of regret I felt that I could eat no more. I then stowed myself away in a comfortable arm-chair in the corner of the room, and very naturally fell fast asleep. I had a dim recollection of seeing Aunt Deb come into the room to look for me, but as I didn't speak, she left the room supposing that I had gone out of the house to take another walk. When I awoke Martha was laying the things for dinner.

"Why, Master Cheveley, Miss Deborah has been asking for you for ever so long," she said. "You had better go and see her, for she's in a dreadful taking, I can assure you."

I knew Aunt Deb too well to venture into her presence under the circumstances if I could avoid it, so I ran into my room, washed my hands, and brushed my hair, so as to present myself in a respectable state before Mr Butterfield. I watched for him till he went into the drawing-room, and then followed. Aunt Deb had not yet come down. I was thinking of asking him about my going to sea on board the "Emu." He didn't give me the opportunity, but he at once questioned me as to what I had seen in the city.

"You think Liverpool a very fine place?" he remarked.

"Yes, sir, a very fine place indeed," I answered boldly.

But when he came to inquire where I had been, and what part I admired most, I was nonplussed, and had nothing to say about the matter. My thoughts had been entirely occupied with the docks and the shipping.

"Ah, yes, Liverpool has become an important port; superior to Bristol, or Hull; and some day we shall be equal to London, we flatter ourselves."

I thought this would be a good opportunity of telling him how fond I was of the sea, and that I hoped he would let me go on board one of his ships, when just at that moment Aunt Deb entered. She began scolding me for having absented myself so long from her, but Mr Butterfield interfered.

"The lad naturally wishes to see a new place, where he may spend some time perhaps. So don't be too hard on him, Cousin Deborah."

We soon went down to dinner, and Aunt Deb said no more. I ate as many of the good things as I could, but after so large a luncheon I had less room than usual. Mr Butterfield placed my moderation to the score of my modesty.

“Come, come, lad, eat away,” he said. “These things were given to us for our benefit, and can’t fail to do us good.”

I at last had to give in, letting Martha take away my plate with a large portion of its contents untasted. I should have liked to have remained to talk to Mr Butterfield when Aunt Deb retired, but she insisted on my coming up, afraid that the old gentleman in his hospitality would be giving me more wine than would be good for me. I had thus no opportunity of talking to him alone. The following morning I begged leave to go out again. Mr Butterfield willingly consented, though Aunt Deb observed that I should be better employed at home summing and writing.

“He’ll have enough of that by-and-by. In the meantime he can learn his way about the city,” said the old gentleman.

I thanked him very much, and he went away to his office.

Going into my room, I bethought me that I would take my cutter down to the river and give her a sail. It took me some time, however, to step the mast and set up the rigging. As soon as this was done, not thinking it necessary to see Aunt Deb first, I started off, carrying the little vessel under my arm. The boys in the streets, I thought, admired her exceedingly. It made me feel that I was a nautical character amid the seafaring population. Though I didn’t exactly recollect the way, after making various turnings, I found myself at the quay where the “Emu” lay. “Now,” I thought to myself, “I’ll go on board, and if I can’t see the captain, I’ll have a talk with the crew. They’ll perceive by my cutter that I’m not a greenhorn, and I can offer to show them what I know by explaining how I sail her.” With more confidence than I had felt on the previous day, I walked up the plank. I could nowhere see the captain, nor any other officer, and therefore turned towards the spot where the men were at work taking in the cargo.

“Well, boy, what do you want?” inquired a rough, surly-looking old

seaman, who was handling a large case?

"I have come to see the ship; and as I like her, I think of getting the captain to take me as an officer," I answered, with as much confidence as I could assume.

"Officer!" the old sailor answered, with a hoarse laugh. "You an officer, jackanapes; why we should want a cow on board to give you milk."

"What is your name?" I asked, determined not to be put down.

"Gregory Growles," answered the seaman.

"Well, look, Gregory Growles, if that's your name, I understand sailing this cutter as well as you do," and I began to explain how I was wont to navigate her according to Riddle's instructions. I then announced the names of the ropes and sails.

Gregory Growles, with his arms akimbo, and several of the other seamen, stood listening to me, evidently highly amused. When I had finished, they all laughed in chorus.

"You know the ABC, maybe, of seamanship; but, look here, just tell us the names of some of the ropes and spars of this ship."

I looked about exceedingly puzzled, for I could not give the name of one of them.

"I thought so," said Growles. "You had better go to school again, and learn a little more before you think of topping the officer over us."

"I only want to become a midshipman," I said; "I could soon learn when I got to sea."

"We have no midshipmen on board the 'Emu,'" said Growles.

"Come, youngster, clear out of this, for we have to go on working, and you're in the way."

Abashed, I retired to the after part of the deck, followed by the derisive

laughter of the seamen, who went on, as before, hauling and hoisting in the cargo. I walked about, examining various things on the deck, and looking into the cabin, and thinking what a fine place it was, for it was handsomely furnished, and how I should like to be its occupant. No one took any further notice of me, and at last I unwillingly returned on shore. I looked out for a place to sail my vessel, but the landing-place was crowded with boats, and it struck me that if I let her go I should find it impossible to recover her. I had, therefore, to carry her about all day without any advantage, and my arms ached, though I held her sometimes under one arm and sometimes under another, and occasionally placed her on my shoulder. Several boys asked me what I would take for her, and one or two begged that I would let them examine her. At last one biggish fellow snatched her off my shoulder. I tried to recover her, but another tripped me up. Getting up, I made chase, but the thief, turning sharp round the corner, disappeared. I shouted in vain for him to come back. My cutter was gone. There was no one to whom I could appeal for help—no watchman, no constable. Some persons I met said it was a great shame, but they didn't help me. Others only laughed, and observed that such things were very common. I waited about. A number of boys joined me and shouted "Thief! Thief!" but, as may be supposed, I could not find him, and had to return home very disconsolate at my loss. That evening, much to my satisfaction, Aunt Deb had a bad headache, and could not make her appearance at dinner. This gave me an opportunity of speaking to Mr Butterfield.

"I should be happy to further your views, my lad, but I have promised your Aunt Deborah to take you into my counting-house, and I have only been waiting a day or two until a boy has left, whose place I intend you to fill. You'll begin low down, but by perseverance and industry you will, in the course of a few years, rise to a respectable position. Many lads fancy they would like to go to sea, and bitterly repent it afterwards. You will have a far more comfortable life on shore, and the position of an English merchant is as honourable a one as a man could desire to follow."

These remarks didn't at all suit my taste. I thanked Mr Butterfield, but told him that my heart had long been set on going to sea, and that I didn't expect to be happy in any other calling.

"That's what many lads say, but afterwards find out that they have made

a very great mistake," he remarked.

"But they don't all do that, or we should have no sailors," I argued. I then told him that I had been on board the "Emu," which, I concluded, would sail in a few days, and that I should much like to go in her.

"She's not my vessel," he answered, "though I know something of the captain. He is a good sailor, though he is not the man under whom I should wish to place a lad. However, when your aunt is better, I'll talk the matter over with her; and should she consent, then I'll see what can be done."

I fancied that I had made some way; and, in spite of the loss of my cutter, I went to bed more contented in my mind than I had been for some time.



Chapter Nine.

Mr Butterfield's office—My future prospects—I again visit the "Emu"—Aunt Deb's good advice—I rebel—All sailors are not beggars—My next visit to the "Emu"—Shall I stow myself away?—Conflicting ideas—Looking over the ship, I meet with an accident—Once more a prisoner—The hold of the "Emu"—Not a stowaway—My possible fate—No bones broken—"The blue above and the blue below"—Perseverance conquers all difficulties—On the high seas—Sea-sick—On the kelson—I give way to despair—"Help! Help!"—The yarn of Sam Switch's ghost—I feel the pangs of hunger—I review my past life—Never say die—Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink—My efforts meet with some success.

Aunt Deb made her appearance at the breakfast-table, but nothing was said about my plans for the future. As soon as I had finished, Mr Butterfield, looking at his watch, told me to run out for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, and said that when I came back he would take me down with him to his office.

"I shall not keep you there," he remarked; "you will afterwards come back to your aunt, who will probably find something for you to do."

I obeyed, and as soon as I got out of the house I ran off in the direction of the country. I wanted to see green fields and hedges and trees. I enjoyed the fresh air and exercise, and was longer away than I intended. On my return I found Mr Butterfield waiting for me at the door.

"Punctuality is the soul of business. Remember that," he remarked. "You have kept me waiting for ten minutes. Come along."

I begged pardon, saying that the time had passed faster than I had expected.

He walked along with sedate steps, for he was not given to rapid locomotion, his gold-headed cane heavily striking the ground as he went. He had not spoken since we left the house, and I felt that I was passing from the position of a guest to that of a junior clerk. Still, not being

overwhelmed with bashfulness at any time, and as I was anxious to know what had passed between him and Aunt Deb regarding my future career, I looked up and asked him.

“Your aunt will communicate her wishes to you,” he answered. “You will see presently the sort of work you will be expected to perform in my office. Let me tell you that many lads would consider themselves fortunate if they had the opportunity I am ready to give you.”

He said no more. His manner, it struck me, was far less cordial than it had been, and I could not help thinking that I was indebted for this to Aunt Deb, who had probably given him an account of my adventures at home. Now I am bound to say that I consider Mr Butterfield was right; but I did not think so at the time.

We at length reached Water Street, and entered the office of Tallow, Candlemas, and Co. It was a dingy-looking place, consisting of a small outer room, the walls covered over with posters announcing the sailing of ships and other information. In it was an enclosed space, behind which sat on high stools two venerable-looking clerks, busily engaged in writing. Speaking a few words to them, Mr Butterfield passed on to an inner room, where, at a long desk running from one side to the other were arranged eight or ten persons of various ages, all scribbling away as fast as their pens could move. Their thin and pallid faces did not prepossess me in favour of the life they were leading. At the farther end, in a darker corner, was a vacant stool.

“That will be your place, Richard, when you come here to-morrow or next day,” said Mr Butterfield. “You will gradually rise, till one day I may hope to see you one of my head clerks.”

I looked askance at the dark corner, and I then scanned the faces of the occupants of the other seats. I could say nothing likely to please Mr Butterfield, and I therefore kept silence.

“You will begin work on Monday. Now go back to your aunt, who wishes to have you with her for the present.”

I longed to say, “I thought, sir, you were going to talk to my aunt about my going to sea;” but before I could speak, Mr Butterfield, turning round,

walked into his private office and left me standing by myself and looking, I felt, very foolish. As I did not wish to undergo a long inspection from the younger clerks, who were peering at me from over the desks, I passed out, breathing more freely when I found myself in the open street.

Of course I ought to have returned home; but instead of that I made my way down to the docks to amuse myself as before, by looking at the vessels. I was not long in finding out the "Emu." She was now considerably lower in the water, having apparently got most of her cargo on board, although there were still some bales and packages lying alongside ready to be shipped. I had a great longing to go on board and try to see the captain, and to ask him if he would take me. I could see no one, however, whom I could imagine to be the captain; and I therefore, after walking up and down the quay for some time, and looking at a number of other vessels, guessed by my hunger that it must be near luncheon-time, and took my way homewards. On entering the house I met Aunt Deb, who was coming down into the dining-room, by which I knew that I was not late.

"I am glad to find that you are more punctual than usual, Dick," she said. "You will soon, I hope, become regular in your habits. Follow the example of so excellent a man as my cousin, Godfrey Butterfield. You are pleased with your excellent prospects in his office, I hope?"

To this remark I made no reply, but said, "I thought, Aunt Deb, that Mr Butterfield was going to speak to you about my wish to go to sea. He told me that he would do so, and that he would have no difficulty in getting me on board a ship."

"Fiddle-de-dee about going to sea!" replied Aunt Deb. "My cousin did speak to me on the subject, and I told him at once that I would never consent to your doing so, and that I felt sure your father would not do so either. What! To throw away the brilliant prospects which through my means have been opened out to you? What! Desert your family and me, your affectionate aunt, and the kind friend who so generously consents to become your patron from the regard he has for me? What! Go and run all the risks of a turbulent ocean, and perhaps lose your life, and cause sorrow to those who have an affection for you, merely to gratify an insane fancy? No, Dick—no! I told my cousin Godfrey Butterfield, at once, that if

he had any regard for me he would never encourage you in so mad a proceeding; and I begged him, as soon as possible, to give you employment in his office, so as to turn your mind away from the silly ideas you have entertained.”

“I’m not at all obliged to you, Aunt Deb, for what you have done,” I said, my choler rising. “It was no idle fancy in my mind, but my fixed resolution to become a sailor; and a sailor I’ll be, notwithstanding your opposition.”

“Hoity-toity!” exclaimed Aunt Deb, who was not accustomed to be set at defiance. “You will understand, Dick, that you were placed in my charge, and must obey my directions; and that I intend you to go into Mr Butterfield’s office, and to work hard there, so that you may do credit to my recommendation some day, and render support to your family. In case of your father’s death, what would become of you all? I, who have devoted my life to your family, should have the charge of their maintenance.”

“Sailors are not beggars, and I should very likely make as much money by going to sea as by any other means.”

“Fiddle-de-dee,” again exclaimed Aunt Deb; “eat your luncheon, and don’t talk nonsense.”

As I was very hungry, I obeyed her, but at first I felt as if the food I put in my mouth would choke me. Ultimately, however, I was able to get on as well as usual. Aunt Deb’s behaviour to me during the next few days did not contribute to reconcile me to my proposed lot. She kept me working at writing and adding up long columns of figures, not failing to scold me when I made mistakes. I pictured to myself my future dreary life—to have to sit in a dull office all day, and then to have to come home with no other society than that of Mr Butterfield and Aunt Deb as long as she remained at Liverpool. I knew nobody at Liverpool, and did not see how I was to form any acquaintances of my own. After luncheon, on Saturday, Aunt Deb, in consideration, she said, of my diligence, allowed me to go and take a walk by myself, as she felt indisposed to leave the house. I very naturally wandered down to the docks to have a look at the “Emu” before she sailed, and to inspect any other vessels that might take my fancy. I much missed my cutter yacht, as I found there existed places where I

could have sailed her. I had spent some time in walking about, when I again got back to the quay where the "Emu" was moored. As I was pacing to and fro, I thought of the high stool in the dark corner of Mr Butterfield's office; the dreary, dreary days I was doomed to sit there; the dull, dull evenings in the society of Aunt Deb and her cousin, and the not more lively Sundays, with attendances at three services, for Aunt Deb was very strict in this respect. Hapless fate, with nothing better to expect than a head clerkship. The business I knew I should detest. Then I thought of the free life on the ocean, the strange lands I should visit, the curious people I should see, and the liberty I fancied I should enjoy.

As I had had a fair education, and knew that I could master navigation, I expected without difficulty to work my way up till I became an officer, and then to have the command of such a fine ship myself, just such a one as the "Emu." But how was I to get to sea? Mr Butterfield positively refused to obtain an appointment for me without the consent of Aunt Deb and that of my father, and I was confident such would not be given. Would the captain take me without further introduction, if I should offer myself? I had sense enough to know that that was very unlikely.

Suddenly the idea seized me, should I stow myself away on board, and not appear until the ship had sailed out to sea? I had a notion, notwithstanding, that this would not be a wise proceeding. I should certainly not be treated as an officer, and should very probably be sent forward to become a drudge to the crew. Still, what other chance had I to get to sea? I thought and thought.

Well, I'll go on board at all events. The blue Peter was flying at the masthead, besides which there was a board announcing that she would sail with the morning's tide. It was the custom, in those days especially, for merchantmen to sail on a Sunday. The stages leading on board had been removed, with the exception of a single plank to the gangway. My longing to go on board increasing, I indulged it. None of the crew were moving about aft. The officers, if any were on board, were, I supposed, in their cabins. I looked forward, where I saw a few of the crew, who were preparing for their supper. The cook just then made his appearance from the caboose with a large bowl containing a smoking mess of some sort. I had never been below on board ship. I thought I should like to look round and see what sort of place the hold was. The tackle which had been used

for lowering the cargo was not yet unrove, and hung over the main hatchway, which had been left open for stowing some goods which, as it turned out, had not yet arrived. Seeing that no one was observing me, I seized the rope, and swung myself down till my head disappeared below the coamings of the hatchway.

Now at this place space had been left to permit of the lower hold being reached. The rope I grasped was not as long as I thought it was, and suddenly the end slipped through my fingers, and down I fell, hurting myself so much that I was unable to rise. Afraid of calling out for assistance, I lay there for some time, till the pain increased so much that I fainted away. When I came to my senses, what was my horror to find myself in total darkness, and on lifting up my hand as high as I could reach I discovered that some planks had been placed across the aperture through which I had fallen, and I was shut in. Though I had been doubtful about acting the stowaway, here I was, shut up against my will. Had I carried out the idea which occurred to me, I intended to have done it in a very different fashion, as I expected to find some comfortable place where I might obtain air, if not light and access to the store-room and water-casks. I had no notion of running the risk of starving myself, having had sufficient experience of the uncomfortable sensations accompanying inanition when I was shut up in the mill. I had thought myself very badly off then, but I was now in a much worse condition, and suffering great pain, and, as far as it appeared to me, with more than one limb broken. I tried to move, to ascertain whether this was the case. First I moved one arm, and then another. They were sound, though they hurt me. Then I tried my right leg, and then my left. They were certainly unfractured.

I was doubtful about one of my ankles. It pained me more than any other part of my body. I drew it up and felt it all over. It was tender to the touch, but none of the bones appeared to be out of their places. This examination occupied some time. I did not call out for fear of the consequences. The pain which had hitherto prevented me thinking about what would follow now decreased, and I began to consider the awkward position in which I was placed. I tried to persuade myself that I had not positively intended to act the part of a stowaway. I could not but know that I had thought about it, yet I had only gone below for the sake of seeing the hold of a ship. I could say that when I was discovered, with a tolerably clear conscience, so I fancied. Should I be discovered? That

was the question. For what I could tell I might be entombed beneath the cargo and be unable to get out till I was starved to death. The thought was too dreadful for contemplation, and I tried to put it from me. I remembered how I had escaped from the old mill and the way I got out without any one to help me.

“Perseverance conquers all difficulties,” I said to myself as I said then. My situation in some respects was very similar, only on that occasion I had expected, on obtaining my freedom, to meet my friends, and now I should find myself confronted by a rough crew and an irate captain, who might send me on shore, and, for what I could tell, have me put into jail if there was time for doing so. I had, at first, no idea of the size of the place in which I was shut up. I only knew that I could touch the boards above my head by extending my hand when sitting upright. I thereby knew that there would not be room for me to stand. I now crawled about and ascertained that I was in a tolerably wide place, extending fore and aft and from side to side. I was, in fact, in the lower hold or bottom of the ship, far, far down beneath a mass of cargo. How long I had been there was also a mystery to me. I might have remained in a fainting state only for a few minutes, or hours might have passed. I knew that I began to feel hungry, though I had had an ample luncheon—for on Saturdays Mr Butterfield dined early—which showed that I could not be very much hurt, and that I must have been some considerable time on board. I had, however, as I intended to stay out till dark, put a couple of buns, which I had bought at a pastrycook’s, into my pocket. I refrained, as yet, from eating them, not knowing how long I might have to remain below. I thought that it must now be night, and as I supposed the crew would be asleep forwards and the captain and officers aft, they would not hear me, even if I shouted out at the top of my voice. I therefore concluded that it would be foolish to exhaust myself uselessly. “I’ll wait for daylight, when they’re moving about, and I shall have a better chance of making myself heard,” I thought.

The place where I lay was dry and clean, though it smelt horribly of tar and other odours from which the hold of a vessel is seldom free, and was besides disagreeably close. After a considerable period had elapsed, and when the pain had much gone off, a drowsiness stole over me, and having got into a comfortable position, I fell fast asleep. I think I must have awoken at intervals, for I remember hearing a curious rippling sound

beneath me. It must have had a lulling effect, for I dropped off again.

The next time I woke I heard not only a rippling sound, but a dashing of water against the sides, and presently the ship began to pitch slowly and gently. The idea at once occurred to me that I must be at sea. If so, it was where I had long wished to be, though the circumstances accompanying my entrance into a naval life differed greatly from such as I had intended them to be. Could it then be daylight?—if so, I had been much longer below than I had calculated on. The ship, I remembered, was to sail with the morning tide. That might have meant one or two o'clock, for how the tides ran I didn't know. There must have been time, at all events, for her to get away from the wharf, and to descend the Mersey. In that case the day must now be well advanced. Probably, I thought, the ship has had a fair wind, and with a favourable tide must have got rapidly along. I could not sing:—

“I'm on the sea, I'm on the sea,
I am where I would ever be;
With the blue above, and the blue below,
In silence wheresoe'er I go.”

Silence there certainly was, but instead of the blue above and the blue below, there was pitchy darkness. The long sleep and the perfect rest had taken away all the pain which I had at first felt, except an uncomfortable sensation in one of my ankles.

When I was fairly aroused I again began to feel very hungry, so I ate one of my buns. I could have bolted the other, but I was becoming wonderfully prudent, and I knew that if I did so I might have nothing else to eat. All this time I had remained perfectly silent, for the reasons I have before given. I had become accustomed to the atmosphere, and I suppose that some fresh air must have come through some unseen apertures which enabled me to breathe without difficulty. It was sufficiently close, however, to make me feel drowsy, and having eaten the bun, I again dropped off to sleep.

I awoke with a horrible nausea, such as I had never before experienced. The sensations I experienced in the old vault were nothing to it. The air there, as I mentioned, was perfectly pure, besides which I was then upon

solid ground; now I felt an unpleasant movement, sometimes a sort of plunging forward, then a rise and fall, and then a rolling from side to side, though being close to the keel I didn't experience this so much as if I had been on deck. It was quite sufficient, however, to make me feel terribly sick.

Oh how wretched I was! Didn't I repent of having gone down into the hold. I would ten thousand times sooner have been perched on the highest stool in the darkest corner of Mr Butterfield's counting-house than have been where I was. I was too miserable to cry out. I only wished that the ship would strike a rock and go down, and thus terminate my misery.

I need not describe what happened. For hours I was prostrate; but at length the feeling of sickness wore off, and I again became not only hungry but thirsty in the extreme. I would have given anything for a draught of water; but how was I to obtain it. One thing I felt was, that if I could not I should die. Though I was hungry I could not masticate the smallest portion of my bun, but I tried to arouse myself and began once more to move about. As I did so my hand came in contact with what appeared to be a large cask. I felt it all over. Yes, I was certain of it. It must be one of the ship's water-casks stowed in the lower tier.

I thought I might possibly find some outlet through which I might make my way into the upper part of the ship, but none could I discover. I was, in reality, right down on the keelson, though I didn't know what it was called at the time. It is just above the keel, the object of it being to strengthen the vessel lengthways, and to confine the floors in their proper position. It is placed above the cross-pieces and half-floors, and a bolt is driven right through all into the main keel. The half-floors, it must be understood, are not united in the centre, but longitudinally on either side.

Of course I was not aware of this at the time. All that I knew was, that I was down in the bottom of the ship in a horrible dark confined space, where I should be starved to death or suffocated could I not find some way out. Again and again I made the attempt, but in every direction met with obstructions. Stretching out my arms, I found I could touch each side of my prison.

Resolute as I had hitherto been, I at length gave way to despair, and

shrieked and shouted for help. I bawled till my voice was hoarse and my strength exhausted; then I sat down in a state of apathy, resigned to my fate. But the love of life soon returned. I got up and crawled to the further end of my prison-house, where I met with some stout boarding which effectually prevented my further progress. After this I turned round and crawled to the other end along the kelson, but was stopped by a strong bulkhead.

Once more I stopped to listen, half expecting to hear the sailors making their way down to the hold to ascertain whence my shouts and cries proceeded, but no sound except the creaking of the bulkheads reached my ears. "I won't give in yet," I said to myself; "perhaps the crew are on deck or in the fore part of the ship, and the officers in their cabins, and my voice could not reach them; but somebody must, before long, be coming into the hold, and then, if I shout at the top of my voice, I cannot fail to be heard."

The question, however, was, when would any one come down? I had no means of ascertaining, though the steward must be getting up provisions, or the boatswain or carpenter stores from their store-room, and yet no sound might reach me, or perhaps my voice might not penetrate as far as where they were at work. Still, there was nothing like trying. Placing my hands to my sides, I shouted out, "Help, help! I'm shut up below. I shall die if you don't let me out. Oh, do come, sailors. Don't you hear me? Help! Help! Help!"

Then I gave way to a loud roar of agony and despair. After this I stopped for a few minutes listening as before, then putting my hands to my mouth, as if by so doing I should increase the loudness of my voice, I shouted with all the strength of my lungs. Suddenly the idea occurred to me that the sailors would hear my voice, but not knowing whence it proceeded would fancy the ship was haunted and would be in a dreadful fright. Strange as it may seem the thought amused me, and I gave way to an hysterical laugh. "Now I'll warrant not one of them will like to come below on account of the supposed ghost. They will be spinning all sorts of yarns to each other about hobgoblins appearing on board." Old Riddle had spun several such yarns, and they came to my recollection. One was about a boy named Sam Smitch. Sam was the dirtiest fellow on board, and could never understand what cleanliness meant. He was constantly,

therefore, being punished. That didn't mend his ways, and he was a nuisance to all the crew, who, of course, gave him a frequent taste of the rope's-end and bullied him in all sorts of ways. At last Sam declared that he would jump overboard and end his misery. The men laughed at him, and said that he hadn't the courage to do it.

"Haven't I?" said Sam, "you'll see that I'll do it, and my blood will be upon your heads."

Still none would believe that Sam would do away with himself, till one morning his jacket and hat were found in the head, and when the ship's company was mustered at divisions, Sam didn't answer to his name. He was searched for everywhere, but could not be discovered, and at length it became very evident to all that Sam must have put his threat into execution and thrown himself overboard during the night. Whether any of the men recollected that it was their cruelty that had driven him to this act of desperation I can't say, but probably it didn't much trouble their consciences; they only considered he was a fool for his pains. Two or three days passed away, when Sam Smitch was well-nigh forgotten.

One night, however, one of the carpenter's crew was going along the lower-deck, when he saw a figure in white gliding past him in the distance. The figure for a moment turned its head, when, as the light of the lantern fell on it, he recognised the face of Sam Smitch. It was more than his nerves could stand, and he bolted like a shot up the ladder. Night after night some one of the crew had a similar occurrence to relate, till one and all were convinced that the ship was haunted by Sam Smitch's ghost. At last the men, gallant fellows as they were, were afraid to go below even when sent on duty. Many of them swore that even when in their hammocks they had seen Sam Smitch's ghost gliding noiselessly about the deck. The whole crew were in a very nervous state, and many were actually placed on the sick list by the doctor. At last the circumstance reached the ear of the purser, who happened not to be a believer in ghosts.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, when he heard it; "that accounts for the mysterious disappearance of some of my stores."

He informed the first lieutenant, who placed a watch in the

neighbourhood where the ghost had appeared. The next night, in bodily form, the ghost of Sam Smitch was captured, dirtier than ever, but yet fat and sleek, though rather pallid. Not, however, till he was brought on deck, to be well scrubbed under the superintendence of the master at arms, were the crew convinced that the ghost was no ghost at all, but that dirty Sam, fool as he was, had been bamboozling them effectually, while he enjoyed his ease and plenty to eat below with nothing to do.

It is curious that this yarn should have occurred to me, but I suppose it did so from my case being somewhat similar to that of Sam Smitch, only he had voluntarily stowed himself away and had plenty to eat, while I was shut up against my will without a particle of food, except the buns I had in my pockets. It served also to draw me for a few minutes from the thoughts of my own misfortunes. The exertion of shouting increased the thirst I had already begun to feel. I was at the same time very hungry, but when I again tried to eat a piece of my remaining bun I could not get down the mouthful. I became rapidly more and more thirsty. The seasickness had worn off, but I felt more thoroughly uncomfortable in my inside than I had ever before done in my life. If any of my readers have at any time suffered from thirst, they will understand my sensations better than I can describe them. My mouth and throat felt like a dust-bin, and my tongue like the end of a burnt stick. I moved my mouth about in every possible way to try and produce some saliva, but so dry were my lips that they only cracked in the attempt.

I had scarcely hitherto believed that I should die, but now so terrible were my sensations that I didn't expect to live many hours unless I should be released. I thought over my past life. The numberless wrong and foolish things I had done came back to my recollection, while not a single good deed of any sort occurred to me. I thought of how often I had vexed my father and mother, how impudent I had been to Aunt Deb, how frequently unkind and disagreeable to my brothers and sisters. I tried to be very sorry for everything, but all the time I was conscious that I was not as sorry as I ought to have been.

Exhausted by my efforts as well as by my hunger and thirst, I lay stretched upon the kelson till I had, I suppose, somewhat recovered. Once more I said to myself, "It will not do to give in; out of this I must get." I managed again to get on my feet, feeling about in all directions. As I

was doing so my hands touched what appeared to me like the side of a large cask. I was certain of it. I could make out the hoops which went round the cask, and the intervening spaces. Suddenly it occurred to me that it was one of the water-casks of the ship stowed in the lower tier. I put my ear to it, and as the ship rolled I could hear the water move about. I felt, however, very much like the fellow I had read about at school, who was placed when dying of thirst in the midst of water which remained up to his chin, but into which he could never get his mouth. Here was the water, but how I was to reach it was the question.

I felt about in the hope that some moisture might be coming through; even a few drops would help to cool my parched tongue, though I could have drunk a gallon without stopping, but the cask was strong and perfectly dry outside. I considered whether it would be possible to knock a hole in the cask, but I had no instrument for the purpose, and should not have had strength to use it even if I had found it. It was indeed tantalising to hear the water washing to and fro, and yet not be able to obtain a drop. By chance I happened to put my hands in my pockets, which always contained a knife, bits of string, and all sorts of things. Suddenly I recollected that I had been making a stand for my cutter before she was stolen, and that I had had a gimlet to bore holes in the wood. To my joy I found that I had fixed a cork on the end of it and had thrust it into my pocket. There it was. I might, by boring a hole in the cask, reach the water. How anxiously I clutched the gimlet. How fearful I was that in attempting to bore a hole I might break it. Feeling as far as I could judge for the centre of the cask, I began boring a hole, using the greatest care. At length the gimlet went right through. As I drew it forth I put it to my mouth. It was wet. How deliciously cool it felt. I then applied my mouth to the hole, but bitter was my disappointment when no water came out. I sucked and sucked at the hole, and then I blew into it, but with no satisfactory result.

I was again almost driven to despair. I tried the hole with the gimlet. It passed through it, and the iron was again wet. "What a fool!" I exclaimed, just then recollected that to get liquor out of a cask two holes are necessary, the one to serve as a vent-hole to let in the air and the other to let out the liquid. I accordingly set to work and began boring a hole as high as I could reach above the former one. I soon accomplished my task, and as the air rushed in the water from the lower hole rushed out. I

eagerly applied my mouth to it and sucked and sucked away until I was almost choked. Still I didn't feel as if I had had enough.

How delicious was the sensation as it wetted my lips, moistened my mouth, and flowed down my parched throat. I felt very much like a pitcher being filled at a fountain. The hole was small, so that only a thin stream came out. It was fortunate for me that it was no larger, or I believe that I should have killed myself by over-drinking. Not until I had withdrawn my mouth did I recollect that I must find some means of stopping the flow of water. Feeling in my pocket, I found some pieces of wood, one of which I thought I could form into a plug. In doing so I nearly cut my fingers.

After a time I succeeded, and shutting up my knife, I knocked the plug I had made in with the handle. The vent-hole was not so important to stop, so I let it alone. I was now able to eat my remaining bun, though I recollected that it was the last article of food I possessed. I afterwards took another pull at the water-cask. I had no longer any fear of suffering from thirst, which was some comfort, but I had serious apprehensions about the means of obtaining food, should I fail to make my escape from my prison. I was, however, wonderfully hopeful. I remembered how I had fed myself on the musty flour in the old mill. I kept up my spirits, in the hopes of finding something to eat among the cargo. I was aware that few edibles were exported from England, our teeming population consuming the whole produce of the country, and as much more as they can get.

I could not tell all this time whether it was night or day, as I had no means of calculating how long I had been in the ship's hold. Had I been told that a week or more had passed, I should not have been surprised, the time appeared to me so long. I now began to feel excessively sleepy, and creeping about until I discovered where the planks, if not soft, were less rough than in other parts, I lay down, and in a few seconds was fast asleep.

Chapter Ten.

Dreamland—A vision of home—Strange proceedings of my brother Ned—Roughish weather—I make a slight progress—A ray of light—The cargo—The wooden case—A disappointment—In darkness

again—A welcome draught—My bed—My slumbers interrupted by ugly visitors—I determine to catch some rats—My further efforts at escape—My ill-success—My conscience troubles me, but I succeed in quieting it—My visions—Tantalising Aunt Deb and Mr Butterfield—The conference of the rats—Their opinion of mankind—Their grievances and proposed remedies—A sneeze and its effects.

My slumbers were far from tranquil. I think, indeed, that sometimes I must have been half awake, for I was convinced that creatures were running over me; but when I put my hand out they escaped. Then I began to dream, and I fancied I was at home again in my own room. How I got there I could not tell.

Suddenly my brother jumped out of bed, and began scrambling about the room, overturning the chairs and table, and then got behind the chest of drawers, and sent them down with a loud crash to the ground, laughing heartily as he did so. It was very unlike his mode of proceeding, as he was the quietest and best conducted member of the family. When he got tired of this sort of amusement he began pulling the bed about, and lifting it from side to side.

Naturally I expected to be tumbled out. I begged him to let me alone, as I had gone through a great deal of fatigue, and wished to be quiet. But he would not listen to me, and only shook the bed more violently than before. Losing patience, I was going to jump up and seize him, when I awoke.

I found that the movement was real, for the ship was rolling and pitching more heavily than she had before done, and I could hear the bulkheads creaking, and the timbers complaining, and the heels of the mast working, and the dull sound of the water dashing against the sides of the ship. There was still less chance than ever of being heard should I again shout out, so I refrained from exhausting my strength by the exercise of my voice. So much did the stout ship tumble about that I could not attempt to make another exploring expedition. I therefore lay still, waiting till the ship would again be quiet. I didn't know then that a storm sometimes lasts for days, and that I might be starved to death before it was over. Though the bun and draught of cold water had somewhat satisfied my appetite, I again began to feel hungry, though not so hungry

as I might have been without them. Having nothing to eat, I went off again to sleep.

When I once more roused up I began to think of the astonishment and alarm my disappearance would cause to Aunt Deb and Mr Butterfield. Would they have any suspicion of what had become of me? Perhaps they would fancy that I had fallen off the quay into the river; but then Aunt Deb would most likely insinuate that such was not to be my case. I confess that any anxiety she might feel didn't trouble me, but I regretted the anxiety my disappearance would cause my parents, and brothers and sisters at home. However I could not help it, so I put the thought from me. Hunger at last induced me to make another attempt to escape, in spite of the way the ship was tumbling about. I fancied that one of the bulkheads against which I had come was not so stout and strong as the others. I thought I would try and force my way through, but with only my hands how was that to be done.

Whilst creeping about I shoved my legs or arms into any opening I came across. In doing so I kicked against some object which moved. I worked my foot on till I came to the end of it, and then contrived to draw from under one of the casks what proved to be a handspike, which had probably on some occasion dropped down into the hold. I can't express the satisfaction the possession of this instrument gave me. I felt it all over, and tried its strength by a blow on the kelson, for at first I was afraid it might be rotten. It proved sound. Armed with it I returned to the bulkhead, against which I determined to make my attack. Standing as firmly as I could, I dealt blow after blow as high up as I was able to reach.

I suspected that had it not been for the noises which were constantly issuing from all parts of the ship the sound of my blows would have been heard. At last, to my joy, I felt something give way. This encouraged me to proceed. On feeling with my hands I found that I was working against a small upright door, which opened, I concluded, into another part of the hold. I redoubled my efforts, and getting in the handspike worked away till the door yielded still more. This further encouraged me to proceed, but the operation took me a long time. Occasionally no progress was made, but, like the dropping of water on a hard rock, ultimately prevailed.

Now one nail was drawn, now another, and I was sure that the door was

giving way. A strong man would with one or two wrenches have forced it open. Weak as I was for want of food, it now seems surprising to me that my exertions should have produced any effect. I had begun at the top. By working the handspike lower and lower down I by degrees tore away the door, or as I may more properly say the panel, as there were no hinges that I could discover. I was exerting all my strength in another effort when it gave way, and down I fell with my head almost through the aperture I had made. A faint light which came down from an opening far-away revealed the sort of place I was in. Had I not been so long accustomed to darkness I don't think that its strength would have been sufficient for me to discover the objects around. I made out several bales, cases, and packages, stowed tightly together; but still I failed to see any outlet.

After recovering from my fall, by which I was somewhat hurt, I crept out, endeavouring to move some of the huge packages; but I did so in vain. I tried one and then another, but they did not yield to the utmost efforts I could make. Though I could not move the packages, I determined to try if any of them contained something edible. I first felt the packages. I was convinced they were bales of canvas or loose cloth. At last I came upon a wooden case. This I hoped might prove to be full of biscuits or hams. I accordingly got out my knife, expecting by patience to make a hole sufficiently large to admit my hand. As I was completely in the dark I had to be very cautious not to cut myself or break my knife, an accident which I knew was very likely to occur, I cut out, therefore, only a small piece at a time. Then I felt with my left hand to ascertain how I had got on. The case was very thick, and it must have taken me a couple of hours or more before I could make a hole an inch square. Even then I was not through it. I cut and cut away, till to my satisfaction my knife went through. I now made fast progress, and before long, as I ran in the blade it struck against a hard substance. Still I went on, and at last found to my bitter regret that the case contained iron goods of some sort. In spite of all the care I had taken I had much blunted my knife, and I was afraid I might not be able to make a hole in any other case I might find. I was ready to cry with vexation, but it would be of no use to do that, so I shut up my knife until I could discover some promising package to attack. I felt about in vain for another case. By this time the faint light I had observed had faded away, and I thus knew that evening had come on. I had had only two buns all this time. Unless I could get some food I fancied that I must die. Though I had nothing to eat I had plenty to drink, and to refresh

myself I returned to the part of the ship out of which I had clambered. I soon discovered the water-cask, to which, pulling out the plug, I eagerly applied my mouth. The huge draught of water I swallowed greatly refreshed me, and prevented me feeling the pangs of hunger. I now went back once more to that part of the hold to which I had just gained access.

Feeling about, I came upon a piece of canvas, and I thought to myself that it would somewhat add to my comfort could I make use of it to sleep on. I dragged it out, and found that it was of sufficient size for my purpose.

The exertions I had made had greatly exhausted my strength. I should have lain down on the packages, but when I felt about I found that they would not form an easy couch. There was no room to stretch myself, and they were secured by hard ropes. Besides this I thought it possible that from the working of the ship some of them might slip out of their places, and come down upon me. I therefore dragged the piece of canvas into the lower part of the hold, and, stretching it under one of the water-casks, lay down to rest, intending before long to be up again and at work.

I quickly dropped off to sleep, but was soon awakened by feeling some creatures crawling over me. That they were rats I could have no doubt, from their weight and the loud thud they made as they jumped off and on the kelson. I lay perfectly quiet. Now I felt a fellow running up my leg—now scrambling over my body. But the rogues did not venture near my hands, their instinct telling them that they would have their necks wrung if they did so. My object was to catch one or two of them, and, disgusting as the idea would have been at any other time, I determined if I could to get hold of one forthwith to eat him.

I had often grumbled at home of having on a Monday morning to consume the dry bread which had remained over from the previous week. This system had commenced on the arrival of Aunt Deb, who would not allow a scrap of food to be lost, and she therefore persuaded my mother to give up the hot rolls which we previously had for breakfast on that day. It was the first of the many reforms introduced by our respected aunt which didn't endear her to us.

The rats continued their gambols. Now I felt a fellow perched on my leg—

now he would run along my arm, and before I could lift up my hand he was off again. I kept my feet covered up in the canvas, for I had no wish to have them nibbling at my toes. Somehow or other none of them came near my face, or I should certainly have caught one.

At length I jumped up determined to make chase, but the moment I moved they were off in all directions. Perhaps they thought they had a hungry enemy to deal with. I felt about everywhere, thinking I might find one of them stowed away under a cask, or in some hole or corner, but they had gone off, like imps of darkness as they were, at sunrise.

I wished more than ever for light. I thought that I could then infinitely better have endured my confinement.

Fortunately for me, the ship must have been well cleaned out before the cargo was taken on board; and as she was as tight as a bottle, there was no bilge-water in her. Had there been, I could not have existed so long far down in the depths of her hold.

The chase after the rats had aroused me, and I felt less inclination than before to sleep, so I got up, resolved to have another search for food of some sort. I was not very particular. A pound of tallow candles would have been welcome as a meal. I did not stop to consider whether I could have digested them. They would at all events have allayed the gnawing of hunger. I remembered reading of people suffering from hunger when navigating the ocean in open boats, and how much a flying-fish, or a booby, or a lump of rancid grease, had contributed to keep body and soul together. But neither booby nor flying-fish could I possibly obtain. I tried to think of all the various articles with which the ship was likely to be freighted. During my numerous visits to the quay alongside which she had been moored, I had had the curiosity to try and ascertain the contents of the packages about being hoisted on board. I had in some places observed large packages of raisins, dried figs, and hams, and kegs of butter, and dried fish, but they were being landed. I had, however, seen no things of the same description alongside the "Emu."

Still, unless I searched I was sure not to find; so, again crawling through the opening I had made, I once more began to feel my way about, and to try every package I could reach.

The cases I felt were all rough and strong. The packages were covered with a stout material, showing the nature of the goods within. Again I tried to move some of them so that I might make my way onwards, but I found as before that they were all firmly jammed in their proper positions. It was difficult to divine how the space I had got into had been left vacant.

I might have spent two or three hours in the search, for of course I was obliged to move slowly and with the greatest caution to avoid knocking my head against any object, or falling down again and injuring myself. I no longer felt any pain from my sprained ankle. The enforced rest I had given it had contributed to restore it to use.

How little those on deck supposed that a human being was creeping about so far down beneath their feet.

Before I gave in I tried another case, which seemed more promising than any of those I had hitherto discovered. I got out my knife. I carved and cut, feeling each little chip as I got it off; the case was of soft deal, so that I had no great difficulty in cutting it, but I did so without much hope of reaching food after all, and began to feel that I should have to fall back on raw rat for supper. That was if I could manage to catch the said rat. As before, I was disappointed. I got into the case, but could only feel a mass of hay serving to pack china or crockeryware of some sort. I had had hopes of success, and I could not help feeling much disappointed.

The desire of sleep, which I had for some time thrown off, returned, and I crept back to the spot which I had selected for my couch. I wrapt myself up in the canvas, taking care to guard my feet, and putting one hand over my nose, and the other under me, so that the rats should not be able to nibble any of my extremities, which I thought it likely they would try to do. I hoped, however, that if they made the attempt I should be more successful in catching one.

For some time hunger prevented me from going to sleep. Again I thought over my past life—my childhood's days—the time I spent at school—my various companions—my chums and enemies—the tricks I had played—the canings and floggings I had received—for instruction at that period was imparted with a much larger proportion of the *fortiter in re* than of the *suaviter in modo*. I used then to wish heartily to get away from school, but

now I would very gladly have found myself back there again, even with the floggings in prospect, provided I could be sure of an ample breakfast, even though that breakfast might have consisted of larded bread and sugarless tea. Though I had often had quarrels with my brothers and sisters, I would willingly have entered into a compact never to quarrel again. I would gladly have endured one of the longest lectures Aunt Deb had ever given me, repeated ten times over, always provided I was sure of obtaining a lump of bread and cheese after it. I would thankfully have listened to the driest of some of my father's dry sermons, with the expectation of obtaining a cold dinner on my return home from church. But I knew that regrets were unavailing, and that as I had made my bed so I must lie in it.

I thought and thought till my thoughts became confused.

The sound of voices struck on my ear. People were talking in whispers all round me, but I could not distinguish what they said. Then even the consciousness of where I was faded from me, and I was fast asleep. Even when I was sleeping I still suffered the painful sensations of hunger. I was tantalised by seeing in my dreams tables spread out, sometimes for breakfast, and at others for dinner or supper. My brothers and sisters were seated round them, laughing and talking merrily, and eating the good things with excellent appetite. Once Mr Butterfield brought me a bowl of turtle-soup, and assuring me of its excellence, ladled it into his mouth before my eyes, and then disappeared with a hop, skip, and a jump.

In the same way Aunt Deb appeared with a plate of crumpets, her favourite dish, and swallowed them one after the other, making eyes at me all the time they vanished down her throat. This done, she went off waltzing round and round the room, till she popped up the chimney. I cannot now remember one-tenth of the sensations which presented themselves to my imagination, showing, as I opine, that the stomach is in intimate connexion with the brain. Among others, by-the-bye, I fancied I was wandering about the streets of Liverpool, looking into cookshops and eating-houses, where people were engaged devouring food, which they in the most provoking manner held up to me on the ends of their forks, and instead of allowing me to take it, put it down their own throats.

Again all was a blank. Silence reigned around; when suddenly a faint light streamed across the space before me, and I saw armies of rats tripping from all directions and assembling not five feet from my nose. Over the casks and bales and packages they streamed in countless numbers, whisking their tails, leaping and tumbling over each other; some making somersaults, others playing at leapfrog. Numbers climbed up from beneath the kelson; some came from the fore part of the ship, others from aft. "Why, she must be perfectly overrun with the brutes," I thought. "I wonder how any human being can exist on board. It's surprising that they should never molest me." They were merry fellows. I could not help laughing at the curious antics they played.

Presently I heard a voice shout "Silence!" A buck rat had seated himself on the top of a plank, which I had not before observed. Much to my surprise he held a note-book in his hand, and opening it began to read. He was too keen-sighted, I suppose, to require spectacles, though how he managed to see in that light I could not tell.

"Silence!" he again cried; and he then shouted at the top of his voice, which was somewhat squeaky for an orator, "Friends, Romans, countrymen,—Lend me your ears."

I thought this a very odd way for a rat to commence an oration. As he spoke, all the rats, cocking up their ears, sat on their tails—some on the tops of the casks, others round and below me.

"Thank you for the attention you seem inclined to pay me, brother rats," he continued. "I wish to impress on your minds the serious fact that we, as a race, have been maligned, abused, hunted, and ill-treated in all varieties of ways. We have had traps set for us, and although we are not often caught in them, it serves to exhibit the malice of our enemies. Adding insult to injury, they have, as I have only lately discovered, designated us in one of their popular dictionaries as troublesome vermin of the mouse kind. Why should they not have described us as rodents of graceful form, endowed with wonderful sagacity and activity to which the smaller animal called the mouse is allied? These human beings have also the audacity to malign our character, to insinuate that we are fickle and undependable, besides being fierce and savage. Thus, when one of their own race changes sides, they say that the wretched biped has

'ratted,' Not content with abusing us, they make savage war against our race by every cruel mode they can devise. They chase us with cats and dogs. Not that we care much for the cats, who seldom venture into our haunts; but those horrid, keen-scented terriers, are, it must be confessed, justly to be dreaded. Still more so are those cunning little ferrets which insinuate themselves into our abodes. The hatred of our enemies is exhibited in their use. Nowhere are we safe from them. They make their way through the narrowest crevices, dive down to the lowest depths we can reach, disturb our domestic happiness, watch for us on our hunting expeditions, and rout us out of our securest strongholds. This fearful persecution is originated, aided, and abetted by our malignant persecutors, who, besides the traps I have already spoken of, even attempt our destruction by mixing poison in the food they leave in our way. We have only the melancholy satisfaction of creeping beneath the boardings of their rooms, there to die, and to allow our decaying bodies to fill the air with noxious odours. Friends, Romans, countrymen," he went on, repeating his former curious style of address, "we have met to devise means to assert our rights among created beings, and to revenge ourselves for the injuries we have for so many centuries of the world's history suffered. We are now decidedly in the majority on board this ship. We hold possession of her chief strongholds. Her captain, officers, and crew exist only on sufferance; so then, brother rats and sister rats, young and old, as it is our glorious privilege to belong to a free republic, express your opinions without fear. It is my business to note and record them."

Directly the speaker ceased, even for a moment, the rats began frisking and whisking about, biting at one another's tails and leaping over one another, till he again shouted "Silence!"

"Has no one any opinion to offer?" he asked.

On this a grave-looking rat from the top of a cask answered, "Yes, I have an idea, which I'll propound as soon as those frolicsome young fellows at the bottom of the hold will keep quiet."

On this the president again cried out, "Be quiet, you young rascals, or I'll singe your whiskers. Now, Brother Snout, let us hear what your idea happens to be," he said, turning to the rat on the top of the cask.

The last-mentioned rat accordingly spoke, curiously using the same expressions as the former one had done. "Friends, Romans, countrymen: we are resolved on revenge. Revenge is sweet. Is it not so?"

To which all the rats, in chorus, shouted out "Yes, yes."

"But the mode in which we shall execute our vengeance is the question. Now I have an idea—a bright idea. I propose that we should sharpen our teeth, and having sharpened them, that we should begin to gnaw a hole in the bottom of this ship. We can make our way, as we know by experience, through the stoutest cases. Why should we not do so through whole planks? 'Perseverance conquers all difficulties.' It will undoubtedly take time, but if we all work together and with a will we may bore not only one hole, but a thousand holes, when to a certainty the water will rush in and carry the captain, officers, and crew, our cruel tyrants, to the bottom, and our vengeance will be complete. So, brother rats, is not mine a bright idea, a grand idea, a superb idea? Who will second me?"

There was silence. When a grey-headed rat from the further end of the platform, lifting himself up, rose in his eagerness not only on his legs but on his tail, and said—

"Brethren and sisters. Has it not occurred to you that when we have succeeded—should we be so foolish as to make the attempt—in cutting holes through the ship's bottom, we ourselves should be involved in the same catastrophe as the captain, officers, and crew? When the water rushes in, what will become of us? Why, we should be whirled round and round, and to a certainty become the first victims, perhaps the only ones, for there are boats on deck by which the captain, officers, and crew may make their escape, if they don't happen to be loaded up with all sorts of lumber so that they can't be cleared in time."

"Ah, but I have a resource for that. Let us first nibble holes in the boats; it will be good practice, and we should succeed in the course of the night in effecting our purpose," exclaimed the previous speaker.

"Brother Snout, with all due deference to your opinion, you are talking nonsense," said the grey-headed orator. "To my certain knowledge there

are two dogs on board—one a Newfoundland, the other a terrier; I don't much care for the big fellow, but the terrier would be at us, let the night be ever so dark, and a good many of our race would lose the number of their mess. Let me observe, in the politest way possible, that your plan is not worth the snuff of a candle."

The orator on the top of the cask was thus effectually shut up.

"Has no one else an opinion to give?" asked the president.

"I have," exclaimed a ferocious-looking rat with long whiskers, which he twirled vigorously as he sat upright. "I propose that we marshal our forces, one division to march aft to the captain and officers, and the other to the part where the crew are berthed. That at a given signal we set upon them and let the blood out of their jugulars. We shall thus gain the mastery of the ship, and be able to enjoy unlimited freedom."

"General Whiskerandos, your remarks savour very much of war, but pardon me remarking, very little of wisdom," remarked the aged orator. "You have omitted to mention several important matters. In the first place, let me observe that the crew of a ship never sleep all at one time. Supposing a complete victory were gained over those below, the rest would discover the cause of their death, and would wage ruthless war against us. And what about the terrier? He sleeps at the door of the captain's cabin. He would not be idle, depend on that. He would be delighted to encounter our leading column. It would be rare fun to him, but a disastrous circumstance for us. Let me advise you, Brother Whiskerandos, that your idea is a foolish one. Suppose just for one moment that we should succeed, and that we should put to death every human being on board, what would become of the ship? She would float about unless dashed on the rocks by a hurricane till, her timbers and planks rotting, the water would rush in and she would go to the bottom."

"That suggestion seems to be disposed of. Is it not?" asked the president.

"I have a proposal to make," exclaimed an aldermanic old rat, sitting up on the top of a chest. "I suggest a course of proceeding which cannot fail of success, and will, at the same time, be pleasant and agreeable to ourselves. We will sally forth and eat up all the provisions in the ship, cut

holes in the water-casks and let out all the water. We will commence at the bottom, working our way upwards, so that we shall not run the risk of having our proceedings discovered. What we can't eat we will destroy, so that those wretched mortals triumphing in their strength and intelligence will be deprived of the means of sustaining life, and must succumb before long to inevitable death; and we whom they have despised and ill-treated will gain possession of the ship and be our own masters, and sail in whatever direction we may please. The kingdom will be our own. We shall be lords of all we survey, and there will be no one to interfere with our proceedings."

"What about Nero and Pincher?" asked a small rat with a squeaky voice. "What will become of them, Brother Doublechops?"

"When provisions run short they will to a certainty be killed and eaten by the bipeds," answered the stout orator. "I shall watch for the result with intense interest, and have made up my mind to have a nibble at their livers and other bits of their insides. It will afford me intense satisfaction to eat a portion of those who have destroyed if not devoured so many of our race."

"Oh! Brother Doublechops, oh! Brother Doublechops you are talking nonsense," said the aged orator, who was evidently one of the most influential rats of the assembly. "If, as I before observed, we were to kill the captain, officers, and crew, what's to become of the ship without any one to navigate her? She can't steer a course for harbour, and would remain tossed by the waves and blown about by the winds till she met the fate I before described, and went down to the bottom, carrying us with her."

"Has no one a further proposal to make?" inquired the president.

Nobody answered; even the squeaky voice of the little rat, who looked as if he had no end of suggestions to offer, was silent. A murmur of rattish voices filled the air.

"Friends, Romans, citizens, again I ask you all to lend me your ears," exclaimed the president, at which all the rats put on a look of profound attention. "You have heard the proposals offered as well as the answers

made to them. To me, speaking with due deference to the opinion of others, the proposals appear to be the most insane, foolish, and impracticable that could have been devised by rattish brains. Here we are, cut off from all connexion with the dry land and the whole race of rats. It is very clear that we can't navigate this ship into harbour by ourselves. If we sink her we ensure our own destruction. If we kill the captain, officers, and crew by any of the means hinted at, we are equally certain ultimately to suffer. Here we are, and here inexorable fate dooms us to remain till we once more get alongside the shore and a plank from the ship enables us during the dark hours of night to effect our escape. Let us, therefore, like wise rats, in the meantime, be content with our condition, and enjoy at our ease the provisions with which the ship is stored."

"Granted, Mr President, that your remarks are correct," exclaimed Whiskerandos, who had before spoken, "I have still an idea which has long been hatching in my brain. I suggest that we wait until the ship reaches port and is moored securely alongside, when we will attack her planks both tooth and nail, and by boring holes in her bottom let in the water and make our escape."

Loud cheers followed this suggestion. No one waited to hear what the president said. It was sufficiently encouraging to suit the minds of the most fiercely disposed, while the more timid were pleased with it as it indefinitely put off the time of action.

I had been an interested listener to all that was said, and was very thankful that the rats had arrived at this conclusion. At first I was afraid that they might decide on attempting to sink the ship, and though I might have tried to prevent them, yet should they have attacked me with overwhelming numbers I might have found it impossible to contend with them. I cared little for their projects of sinking the ship in harbour. I hoped before then to have made my escape. They had hitherto curiously enough not discovered me, and I hoped that I should be able to remain concealed, as I dreaded a conflict with the savage creatures now surrounding me in countless numbers. I remained perfectly quiet, scarcely daring even to breathe. Suddenly I was seized with a fit of sneezing.

At the first sternutation the rats jumped up and looked about them, evidently considerably alarmed. Again I sneezed, when off they scampered, disappearing like greased lightning, as our American cousins say, through countless crevices and holes and other openings I had not before perceived.

The light which had during the time pervaded the hold, faded away, and I was left in total darkness. It was sometime before I could persuade myself that what I had seen and heard had been only conjured up by my imagination, though I had no doubt that real rats had been running about in the neighbourhood, and had given rise to my dream.

Chapter Eleven.

The hold of the “Emu”—Further attempts at escape—The storm ceases—A rat hunt—Slippery customers—Oh, for a trap!—My ingenuity exercised—Caught at last—My repugnance to rat’s flesh—Hunger needs no sauce—My subsequent impressions—Cannibal rats—My solitary life—The rats grow cautious—The crate—I make a welcome discovery—A fresh expedition—As black as a nigger—Things might be worse.

Day and night to me were the same. My dreams having been troubled—which was very natural considering the circumstances—I did not feel inclined to go to sleep, so I once more got up to try if I could find some food.

I first took a draught of water. Indeed, had it not been for that, I could not have existed so long. Carefully putting in the plug, for I dreaded exhausting my store, I groped my way back to the opening I had lately discovered. I knew my position by feeling for the holes I had made in the cases.

As no light reached me, I knew it was either night or that the hatch had been put on. I was puzzled to decide which was the case. I listened for the sound of human voices. None reached my ear.

My hunger had become ravenous. Food I must have, or I should perish. I felt conscious that I was much weaker. I again tried to make myself heard, shouting and shrieking as loud as I could, but my voice was faint though shrill, more like that of a puny infant than a stout boy. I was becoming desperate. I first crept in one direction, then in another, trying to force my way between the bales and other packages, but to no avail. Everywhere I was stopped by some impediment I could not remove.

The storm, I concluded, had ceased, as the ship was comparatively quiet, so that I was less afraid than before of being jammed up between the heavy packages and turned into a pancake.

I felt about in every crevice for the possibility of finding something to eat. I

cared not what it was, provided I could get my teeth into it. I remembered that rats often dragged away bits of food into their holes to devour at leisure, and I would gladly have found such a store. The idea that I might do so encouraged me to proceed.

If I could get out of my confined space I knew that I should have a better chance of falling in with food, but how to get out was the question.

I crept back for the handspike, and tried to move some of the bales, but all my efforts were unavailing. I then, carrying the handspike with me, went to the bulkhead at the other end of my prison, and endeavoured by repeated blows to knock in a plank. They were all too stout to give way to my apparently feeble efforts.

I fancied that the blows must resound through the ship, and that the crew would come below to ascertain what produced the noise, but I waited and waited in vain.

At last I went back to my couch, and sat down to consider what was to be done. I knew that as I grew weaker both my strength and wits would decrease, and that I should be less capable of exerting myself.

After sitting quiet for some time, I heard the rats again running about. Frequently they passed close to me, but when I darted out my hands they slipped by them. Once I caught a fellow by the tail, but he wriggled it out of my fingers, and another whose nose I must have touched gave me a sharp nip and then bounded away.

At last I thought I would form a trap with my knife. Near me was a square case close to which I heard the rats frequently passing. I felt and discovered that there was a small opening between it and the large package. I had some string in my pocket, and my plan was to hang up my knife by the string, the lower end of which I hung close to the hole, while I passed the upper end over my finger. I thus hoped that when a rat should be running in or out of the hole it might be stopped long enough by the string to allow the knife to descend.

My first attempt was not successful. Down fell the knife, but when I felt about for the rat which I had expected to have been transfixed, it had gone. I tried again, but once more the rat escaped me.

I began to fear that the creatures would discover my device, and take some other route when they wished to emerge from their hiding-places. Still I knew that perseverance conquers all difficulties. I was convinced that my plan might succeed. Why it had before failed I could not tell. Perhaps I held the knife too high up, and the rat had got away before it had time to descend.

I now held the knife rather lower down. Several times I replaced the knife, but always found it exactly before the spot. Again it fell, when I heard a loud squeak, and sprang down on my hands and knees in a moment, and caught the handle of the knife, which was moving rapidly along the plank. The blade had entered the side of a fat rat. The creature made an attempt to bite me, but I squeezed it by the neck. It lay dead in my hands.

At first even my hunger could not overcome my disgust at the thought of eating the creature. I carried it by the tail to let the blood stream out of the body, and went to the butt, where I took a draught of water, hoping to put off the moment when I should find my teeth in its flesh.

But hunger called loudly; I could resist no longer, and having cut off its head, I skinned it as well as I could in the dark. Then stripping the flesh from the bones, I put a morsel of it in my mouth. It tasted infinitely better than I could have expected. There was no rankness, no disagreeable flavour. I wondered how I could have had so much objection to eating raw rat. I scraped the bones clean.

As there were undoubtedly plenty more in the hold, though not so many as I had seen in my dream, I hoped that I should have been able to supply myself amply with game.

I was now sorry that I had thrown away the head and the entrails, as they might have served me for bait to catch more. I therefore hunted about till I discovered the head, on the point, I suspect, of being seized by another rat, for I heard the creature scamper off as I put my hand upon my prize. The entrails must have been devoured, for I could not find them.

My success encouraged me to try and catch another rat in the same way as before. I, however, somewhat changed my mode of proceeding. I fastened the head to the end of the string, and hung up the knife directly

over it, by a small splinter which I stuck lightly into the crevice of the case. My expectation was that, when the rat pulled at the head of its slaughtered fellow, the knife would fall and transfix it.

I had to wait for some time listening to the sound of the rats' footsteps. At length down came the knife, but no squeak followed, and I found it lying where it had fallen. I began to fear that the first rat had been killed by chance, and that my clever device could not be depended on.

Though the keen edge of my appetite had worn off, I knew that I should very soon be again hungry, and I therefore wanted, before I went to sleep, to catch another rat. I was aware that I must be moderate in my banquets, as I guessed that rat's flesh was not likely to prove very wholesome; but I no longer felt, as I had previously done, that I should be starved to death.

I am afraid that I could boast of very few good qualities, but I possessed at all events that of perseverance. Perhaps I had gained it during my experience as a fisherman, when I used to sit for hours by the side of a pond waiting for a bite, and seldom failed to get one at last. I therefore again hung up my knife. I can't tell how often it fell, but at last I caught one rat much as I had done the first, though at the expense of a bite on the thumb. By this time I was again hungry, and very soon had the rat's flesh between my teeth.

To those who have not suffered as I had, my proceeding must appear very disgusting, but I would only advise any fellow who thinks so to try what he would do after going without food for three or four days. I certainly, during that time, had had nothing but two buns and unlimited draught of cold water. The cold water and the long spells of sleep I had enjoyed. I believe in reality that I was much longer than four days after I had finished the last bun, but I will not be positive, lest people should doubt the fact. The greater part of the time, however, was spent in sleep. My rat-dream, as I call it, might have occupied several hours, for I have not put down half of what I heard said, nor described the curious antics I saw, as I supposed, of the rats' play. I have since recollected that the words with which the president began his speech were those used by Mark Antony at the commencement of his oration over the dead body of Caesar, which I learnt at school.

After eating the second rat I felt greatly revived, and resolved to continue my explorations, but a drowsiness came over me before I made my way to the further end of the hold. I returned to my couch and lay down to sleep.

It would be a good opportunity of sounding the praises of sleep, and if I were a poet I might indulge my fancy and produce something wonderfully novel; but as I never wrote a line in my life worthy of being called poetry, I will not inflict anything of this sort on my friends.

I was becoming wonderfully accustomed to my solitary life. Having rolled myself in the old sail, I closed my eyes with as much sense of security as I should have done in my own bed at home. I had ceased to think of my friends there, or of Aunt Deb and Mr Butterfield. I could not go on for ever troubling myself with thoughts of the anxiety my disappearance must have caused them. An intensely selfish feeling—for such I knew that it was—possessed me. My only thought was how I could get out of my prison, and if I could not succeed, how I might provide myself with food. I had no longer any fear of the rats. I had become their master. I looked upon them as the owner of an estate does on his hares and rabbits. The hold was my preserve, and I considered that I had a right to as many as I could catch.

I must proceed faster in my narrative than I have hitherto been going, and must omit some of my wakings and sleepings and hunts for rats and searches for more palatable food. The rats, after I had killed four or five, had become cautious. They are at all times cunning fellows, and must have discovered my mode of trapping them. The ship all this time was gliding on with tolerable smoothness, and on some occasions, by putting my ear down to the planks, I could hear the rippling of the water. At other times, I guessed by the dashing of the sea against the sides, that there was a strong breeze. I knew also, by the steadiness of the movement, that the ocean was tolerably calm. I should have liked to have known where we had got to. I could only guess that we were bound for South America, and that we were holding a southerly course.

I had made several exploring expeditions in search of food, when I discovered close to the bulkhead what seemed to me like a strong crate. By some chance or other I had not before put my hands upon it. I now

moved them all over it, and at one place came to a space into which I could thrust my fingers. The board seemed loose. I tugged and tugged away till off it came with a crackling sound, and down I came. I picked myself up, happily not the worse for my tumble, and eagerly inserted my hand into the crate. There appeared to be several articles within, but what they were I could not make out. I had to take off another board before I could get hold of them. This I did, fixing my foot firmly so as not to fall back again, and after exerting myself for some time, the board gave way.

The first thing I laid hold of was a small keg. It seemed too heavy to contain biscuits, but I was nearly sure that there was something eatable within. I tried to open it with my knife, but nearly broke the blade in the attempt. That would have been an irreparable misfortune. My hands next came in contact with a thick glass bottle with a large mouth to it. I was too eager to ascertain the contents of the keg and bottle to continue my search. I therefore carried them down to my sleeping-place, where I had left the handspike, and there soon broke in the head of the cask. It contained some small, round, hard and greasy fruit, I eagerly tasted one. They were olives. I knew this because Mr Butterfield a few days before gave me some at dessert. I then thought them very bitter and nasty, but as I saw him eating them I nibbled at two or three. In the end I liked them rather better than at first, or rather, I didn't dislike them so much.

Having eaten half-a-dozen, I was very glad that I had found them. They were at all events a change from rat's flesh. I next took the bottle in hand, and with my knife scraped away the sealing-wax with which it was covered. Instead of trying to force out the cork I cut into it until I had made a hole big enough to insert my fingers, when I pulled it out. The bottle contained pickles. These, though they would not satisfy hunger would render the food I was doomed to live upon more palatable and wholesome. Having put them away in the most secure place I could think of, I returned to the crate.

By tearing off another plank I found that I could creep inside. It contained all sorts of things, apparently thrown in before the vessel began to be loaded to be out of the way, and afterwards forgotten. I came across two or three old brooms or scrubbing-brushes, a kettle with the spout broken, several large empty bottles, and other things I cannot enumerate. At last,

when I thought I had turned everything over, my hand came against another cask, considerably larger than the first. I dragged it out. It was not so heavy as I should have supposed it would be from its size. It was too big to carry, so I rolled it along before me. From the first I fancied it must contain biscuits, but I was almost afraid to too soon congratulate myself on my good fortune. A few blows with the handspike shattered the top, and eagerly plunging in my hand, to my intense satisfaction I drew forth a captain's biscuit. I ate it at once and thought it deliciously sweet, though it was in reality musty and mouldy. I had now a store of food to last me for days, and even weeks, should I not obtain my liberation, provided I used the strictest economy. All I wanted was fresh air. To obtain that, supposing I could not work my way out or make myself heard, was now my chief object.

Before setting out on another expedition, I placed my provisions where I hoped the rats would not be able to get at them, after carefully corking down the bottles of pickles and the jar of olives, and closing the keg of biscuits. I thought it very likely that the rats would try to make their way through the latter, but I intended to examine it frequently to ascertain whether they had commenced operations. I had been turning in my mind a better means of catching the rats than the one I had before adopted. I thought and thought over the matter, but could not arrive at any conclusion. Being no longer pressed by hunger, I was less in a hurry than I should have been had I only rats' flesh to depend on. I pined for fresh air, but at the same time I was most inconvenienced for want of light. I was, however, already able to find my way about in a wonderful manner.

I had pictured in my mind's eye all the objects around, and had the whole of my prison mapped out clearly in my brain, as I supposed it to exist. Perhaps it was not exactly according to reality. There were the keelson and the stout ribs of the ship, the planking over them, the water-butts on either side, the stout bulkheads. At one end my bed-place; the opening which I had formed at the other end, the bales, the packing-cases, the casks, and last of all the grate. Into this last I intended soon again to return, in the faint hope that I might force my way through it into some upper region. It was, I judged from the ease with which I had torn off the planks, old and rotten, and I could not therefore suppose that any heavy weight had been placed above it. I should have observed that I had reason to congratulate myself the ship was new and well caulked, and

that not a leak existed throughout her length, for had any bilge-water been in her the stench would have been insufferable, and would soon either have deprived me of life or produced a serious sickness. As it was, considering what ships' holds generally are, the air was comparatively pure, and I did not suffer much from the confinement. The fact I have mentioned would account for the number of rats in the hold, for being sagacious animals they are said always to desert a ship likely to go down. Probably, being inconvenienced by the water in the regions to which they are quickly driven when discovered, they take their departure on the earliest opportunity. I have known ships to founder with rats on board, so that they cannot be said to be a preventative to such a disaster.

I now set out on another expedition. As I got through the hole in the bulkhead a brighter light than I had before enjoyed came down into the open space, not directly, however, but through the various crevices among the numerous casks and cases piled up in the hold, so that I was able to distinguish the objects around me more clearly than I had hitherto done. I could not have read a book, but I could see my hands as I held them up before me, and they were as black as those of a negro. Probably my face was much in the same condition. I knew that my feet and my clothes also were begrimed with dirt. Strange as it may seem, I was so busy in taking a survey of the locality, that I forgot to shout out, for as the light came down my voice would certainly have been heard, as without doubt one of the hatches had been opened. My impulse was to take the opportunity of working my way upwards. I saw the crate close against the bulkhead and the place where I had torn off the plank. I eagerly scrambled in that direction, but could see no way over it. I must get inside, as I first intended. I thought then, if I could force off the top, I might make my way through it to an upper stratum of the cargo. I did as I proposed. In vain I tried with my back and hands to force up the top. I had forgotten to bring the handspike. It occurred to me that with that as a lever I should succeed. I returned for it.

The atmosphere I fancied had already become fresher, or at all events the foul air had escaped, and its place had been supplied by purer air through unseen openings. The light, dim as it was, which my eyes had enjoyed for a short period, made the darkness of the hold still darker. My senses were for a few moments confused, and for some time I searched in vain for the handspike. I was sure, however, that I remembered where I

had left it. At last my hand touched the instrument, and I dragged it back to the scene of my intended operations. As I reached the spot, what what was my dismay to find all in darkness. The hatch, had been replaced, and I had lost the opportunity of making myself heard. Only then did it occur to me that I ought, immediately on seeing the light, to have shouted out. My wits, generally keen enough, were, I suspect, becoming somewhat confused.

I had so long been accustomed to do things with the greatest deliberation, that I had lost the impulse to prompt action which was otherwise natural to me. I now shouted, but it was too late, no one heard me. The seamen had gone to their usual occupations at a distance from the hatchway. For some minutes I sat down, vexed with my stupidity and dilatoriness.

On recovering myself I resolved never again to lose a similar opportunity. I had for so long worked in the dark, that I was not to be deterred from carrying out my intention. Armed with the handspike, I entered the crate. I first felt in each corner, to try and find an opening in which I could insert the end of my implement.

Not one was to be found. I next drove it against the ends of the planks; they were too firmly nailed down to yield. I next knocked away in the centre, hoping that one of the planks might prove rotten, and that I should be able to force it upwards. Again I was disappointed, and at last, tired with the exertions I had made, I was obliged to abandon the attempt; but I did not give it up altogether. I resolved, as soon as I had regained my strength and stretched my limbs, which had become cramped from being so long in a confined position, to set to work once more. I had been employed, I fancy, three or four hours; it may have been longer. At all events, I had become very hungry, and with a store of food near at hand I could not resist the temptation of eating. I accordingly retired to my berth and sat down. I had not contrived to catch a rat, so I had to content myself with a musty biscuit and a dozen olives for dinner, washed down by a copious draught of water. I was thankful for the food, though it could not be called a luxurious banquet.

Chapter Twelve.

Still in the hold—Conscience again troubles me—My new food and its effect on my health—I picture to myself the crew on deck—Rather warm—Another storm—My sufferings and despair—A cold bath—I lose my stock of provisions—The rats desert me—The storm subsides—My fancy gives itself rein.

Days, possibly weeks, may have passed by; I had no means of calculating the time. The ordinary sounds from the deck did not reach my ear, or I might have heard the bells strike, or the voice of the boatswain summoning the watch below on deck. I scarcely like to describe this part of my adventures, for fear that they should not be believed. I have since read of similar accounts of young stowaways being shut down in the hold of ships, but whether they were true or not I cannot say. Perhaps they were written with the purpose of deterring boys running off to sea. If so, they had a good object in view, for from my own experience I can say that a more mad or foolish act a silly youth cannot commit. A sailor's life is not without its attractions; but to enjoy it he must have a good conscience, and be able to feel that he went to sea with his parents' or friends' consent; and then when disaster occurs, he has not bitterly to repent having acted contrary to their wishes. For my own part I tried to persuade myself that I was an unwilling stowaway, that I had only gone on board to take a look into the hold; but conscience whispered to me over and over again, "You know you thought of hiding yourself, and thus getting away to sea in spite of your Aunt Deb, and the kind old gentleman who was ready to do what he considered best for your advancement in life."

I tried to silence conscience by replying, "I didn't intend it, I should never have actually concealed myself in the hold if I could have helped it. I am simply an unfortunate individual, who is undergoing all this suffering through no fault of his own. Though I had no wish to become a merchant, I would, with all the contentment I could muster, have taken my seat in Mr Butterfield's office, and done my duty to the best of my ability."

Though I said this to myself over and over again, I found it more convenient to satisfy conscience and to think only of the present. I had plenty to do, much of my time being spent in endeavouring to catch rats. I seldom killed more than one in a day, though occasionally I was more successful. I ate them without the slightest disgust, taking some of the pickles at the same time with a piece of biscuit, my dessert consisting of

three or four olives. I was afraid of exhausting my supply, or I could have swallowed many more. The rats' flesh was tolerably tender. I suspect that I generally caught the young ones, for at length I caught one which must have been the father, or grandfather for that matter, of the tribe, as he was so tough that it was only with considerable difficulty I could masticate him. This food, however unattractive according to the usual ideas, must be wholesome, for I kept my health in an extraordinary manner. I was much indebted for this, I believe, to the olives, which prevented my being attacked by that horrible disease, scurvy. I was not aware at the time of its existence, but I have since witnessed its horrible ravages among crews insufficiently supplied with antiscorbutics, or who have neglected the ordinary precautions against it.

I every day made excursions to try and effect my liberation. The crate must have had something weighty on the top of it, I thought, or I should have been able to force it open. It had hitherto resisted all my efforts, though I frequently spent an hour within it.

The ship all this time was gliding on smoothly, and I supposed was making a prosperous passage. I occasionally pictured to myself what was going on over my head, canvas spread below and aloft, the ship under her courses, topsails, topgallant sails and royals with studdingsails rigged out on either side. The sea glittering in the rays of the sun, the sky bright, the captain and officers walking the deck or reading in their cabins. The crew lolling about with folded arms, smoking their pipes or spinning yarns. I forgot that some of them would be employed in spinning very different sorts of yarns to what I fancied, and that chief mates are not apt to allow man to spend their time with their arms folded, doing nothing. On and on sailed the ship. The atmosphere was becoming sensibly warmer. I supposed that we should soon get into a tropical climate, and that then I might find it disagreeably hot even down below. But I didn't allow myself to think of the future, as I was beginning to abandon all hope of working my way out.

My desire now was that the ship might reach a port in safety, and begin to discharge her cargo; when I should have the chance of liberating myself. I did not, however, abandon altogether my efforts, and the exercise I thus took every day contributed to keep me in health. During the time I was sitting down and not sleeping, I employed myself in

repeating all the English poetry and Latin speeches I had learnt, and sometimes I even attempted to sing the sea songs of which I had been so fond—"Cease, rude Boreas," "One night it blew a hurricane," "Come, all ye jolly sailors bold," "Here a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling," and many others; but my voice was evidently not in singing trim, and I failed to do what Orpheus might have accomplished, to charm the rats from their hiding-places.

The sea continued calm for some time; at all events I felt no movement to indicate that it was otherwise; but whether the ship was moving fast or slowly I could not tell. I expected that she would continue her steady progress to the end of the voyage. I had gone to sleep, and I now generally slept on for eight or ten hours at a stretch, so I could not say whether it was night or day. All was the same to me. Suddenly I was awakened by a fearful uproar, and I found myself jerked off my sleeping-place on to the hard boards. From the noises I heard I fancied the ship must be going to pieces, or that the masts were falling. She heeled over so much on one side it seemed impossible that the water-butts could keep their positions, and I thought every instant I should be crushed to death by the one on the weather side falling upon me. A fearful storm was raging. My ears were deafened by the dashing of the fierce waves, and the howling and whistling of the wind, which reached me even down where I was; and by the incessant creaking of the bulkheads. Crash succeeded crash; the whole cargo seemed to be tossed about, now to one side now to the other. I could feel the ship rise to the summit of a sea, and then plunge down again to the depths below. I had hitherto retained my composure, but I now almost gave way to despair. It seemed that the ship, stout as she was, would not be able to survive the fierce contest in which she was engaged with the raging elements. Not for a moment was she quiet; now she appeared to be rolling as if she would roll the masts out of her, had they not already gone; now she surged forward and went with a plunge into the sea, which made her quiver from stem to stern. I thought that ribs and planks could not possibly hold together. I expected every moment to be my last. It would have been bad enough to have had to endure this on deck, surrounded by my fellow-creatures—down in the dark hold it was terrible.

I now wonder that my senses did not desert me, but matters had not yet come to their worst. I dared not move, for fear of being dashed against

the casks. There I lay helpless and almost hopeless, while the violence of the movements increased. I did not feel sick, as before. Terror banished all other sensations. Suddenly I heard a loud crash close to me, and I found myself nearly overwhelmed by a strong rush of water. The instinct to live made me spring to my feet, for I should have been drowned had I remained where I was. I fully believed that the side of the ship had been forced in, and that before many seconds had passed I and all on board would be carried down to the bottom of the sea. Still I endeavoured to escape from the water, which in large masses came rushing against me, though my efforts would have been utterly useless had what I had supposed occurred. I made frantic efforts to escape out of the way of the torrent, and endeavoured to reach the only opening I was aware of by which I might escape if I could find egress to the upper deck. In my hurry, not using the caution I had generally exercised, I ran my head against a cask with so much force that I fell back senseless on the keelson. There I lay unable to rise, and believing that the water would soon cover me up and terminate my sufferings.

I was not altogether senseless; I should have been saved much wretchedness and suffering had I been so. I continued to feel the violent motion of the ship; to hear the uproar, the crashing of the cargo, the casks and chests being hurled against each other. I expected that the bulkhead near me, which had hitherto served as my protection, would give way, and that some of the huge cases would be hurled down upon me; but I had no strength to shriek out, and lay silent and motionless. Suddenly the rush of water ceased, and I heard only a little washing about beneath me. This surprised me greatly. I began to recollect that it must have been impossible that the side of the ship should have been smashed in, or the water would have continued entering with as much force as at first. This idea made me fancy that matters might not be so bad as I had at first supposed. By slow degrees I recovered my courage. "The ship is not going to sink, I may yet survive," I thought, and I got up to try and ascertain the cause of the rush of water. I was not long in doing this. In groping my way about I came upon one of the huge butts, which, from the large fracture I felt in its side, had evidently burst and let out the whole of its contents.

It was fortunately not the water-cask from which I drew my supplies of the necessary element, but I guessed that it would prove ultimately of serious

consequence to the crew, who would probably be depending on it when their stock in the other part of the ship had been exhausted. Still that at the time did not give me much concern. I was wet through, bruised, and exceedingly uncomfortable. I feared, too, that as one butt had given way, the others might before long follow its example, and that I should then have no water on which to support my life. Having made this discovery, I crept back to my sleeping-place.

As I had no other means of drying my clothes, I took them off and wrung them out, then wrapped myself in the sail, which being in a higher position had only been slightly wetted by the splash of the water. Unpleasant as my life was, this altogether was the most miserable period of my existence in the hold of the "Emu." I thought that the storm would never end. Hour after hour the ship went plunging and rolling on, every timber shaking and quaking, my heart beating I must confess in sympathy. Regrets were useless. My only consolation now was that should the ship in the meantime not founder or be driven on the rocks, this state of things must come to an end.

I tried to forget where I was and what was happening and to bring my senses into a state of stupor. I would willingly have gone to sleep, but that seemed impossible. I was mistaken, however. After some time, in spite of the violent movements and the terrific uproar, I began to doze off, and an oblivion of all things, past and present, came over me. It was sent in mercy, for I do not think I could otherwise have endured my sufferings. When I awoke to the present matters had not improved, so I endeavoured, and successfully, to go to sleep again. This occurred several times. At last, in spite of my painful feelings, I found that I had become very hungry, and to my surprise my clothes, which I had hung up against the bulkhead on some nails stuck in the upper part, were very nearly dry. I put them on, unwilling to be without garments should I be discovered. I had no rats in store, so intended to make my meal off biscuits and olives. I put my hand down to where I had stowed them, when what was my dismay not to be able to find either the cask of biscuits or the jars of olives and pickles. I felt about in all directions, hoping that I had made a mistake as to their position. I was at length convinced that they had gone.

I then recollected that the chief volume of water out of the butt must have

washed them away. Still they could not be far off. I lay down on the kelson and felt about with my hand on every side. My search for a moment was in vain. At last I picked up an olive, and then another. My fear was that the jar was broken. What if the pickles and biscuits had shared the same fate? That this was the case was too probable, and if so my stock of provisions, would be spoiled, if not lost altogether.

After further search I came upon the jar broken in two. It was especially strong, so that the bottle of pickles would have had no chance of escaping. I had fortunately my handkerchief, and I managed to pick up several olives, which I put into it. Creeping along I came at last upon the pickle-bottle, and nearly cut my hand in feeling for it. A few pickles were near it. I drew them out of the water which had escaped from the butt. Their flavour I guessed would be gone and all the vinegar which was so cooling and refreshing; but almost spoiled as they were, I was glad to recover them. I found, however, scarcely a fourth of the olives and pickles. The loss of the biscuits was the most serious. They, if long in the water, would be mashed up into a pulp, and perhaps dispersed throughout the bottom of the ship. The sooner I could recover whatever remained the better. I ate three or four olives and a piece of pickle to stay the gnawings of hunger, and went on with my search.

The ship, it must be remembered, was all this time rolling to and fro. I searched and searched, my hopes of recovering the biscuits in a form fit to be eaten growing fainter and fainter; still I knew that the keg, either entire or broken, must be somewhere within my prison-house, for so I must call it. I stopped at last to consider in what direction it could have been thrown. Perhaps being lighter and of larger bulk than the other things, it might have been jerked farther off, and rolling away got jammed in the casks or cases. My search proved to me that it could not be close beneath the kelson; I therefore felt backwards and forwards everywhere I could get my hand. I tried to recollect whether I had, when last taking a biscuit out, fixed on the head tightly or not. Having smashed it in, in order to broach the cask, it was not very easy to do so, and I had an unpleasant feeling that I had put on the top only sufficient to prevent the rats jumping down into the inside. If so, the chance of the biscuits having escaped was small indeed.

At length I touched the cask, which had been thrown from one end of the

hold to the other. It was on its side. With trembling eagerness I put in my hand. Alas! Only a few whole biscuits and a few broken ones remained. These I transferred to my pocket-handkerchief with the olives and pickles, for fear of losing them. The remainder must be somewhere on the way. I tried back in a direct line, but could not find even a mashed biscuit. I then recollected that the cask had probably been jerked from side to side before it had found its last resting-place. It was a wonder that any of its contents remained in it.

Without loss of time, I enlarged the field of my search, and picked up several large pulpy masses which had once been biscuit. They were too precious to be thrown away. I put them into the bottom of the cask. I got back also several bits, which, though wet, had not lost their consistency. I was grateful for them; for though they would not keep, they would assist me to prolong existence for some few days. I ate some of the pulp, and a couple of olives to enable me to digest it. The other pieces of biscuit and the olives and pickles had been, I suppose, washed away out of my reach, for I felt about in every direction, but could lay my hands on nothing more. It may be supposed that the exertions I had made were not very fatiguing, but it must be remembered that the ship was tossing about all this time, and that I had to hold on with one hand while I felt with the other, to prevent myself from being jerked about and battered and bruised. As it was, I slipped and tumbled several times, and hurt myself not a little. I therefore crawled back to my couch, and rolled myself up in the sail, to go to sleep. I had not for some time been annoyed by the rats, who I suspect sat quaking and trembling in their nests as much alarmed as I was, and possibly more so, and I was amused at thinking that they must have heartily regretted having come to sea, and wished themselves safe back on shore in the houses or barns from which they had emigrated. I hoped, however, that when the storm was over they would come forth again, and give me the opportunity of catching them. I expected that it would quickly cease, but in this I was disappointed. There came a lull, and the ship did not toss about as much as before. I was contemplating getting up and making an excursion among the cargo, supposing that I might do so without much risk, when I was again thrown off my couch by a sudden lurch; and from the sounds I heard, and the violent pitching and rolling, I had good reason to suppose that the hurricane was once more raging with redoubled force. With the greatest difficulty I crawled back to my couch, and drawing the canvas round me,

tried to retain my position. Every minute I imagined that one or the other water-butts would give way, and that I should be either crushed by its falling on me, or half-drowned by its contents. Then I thought what would be my fate should the fearful buffeting the ship was receiving cause her to start a plank. The water would rush in, and before I could possibly make my escape to a higher level I should be drowned, even should the ship herself keep above water, and that I thought was not very likely.

I had read enough about shipwrecks and disasters at sea to be aware that such a circumstance sometimes occurs. The end of a plank called a butt occasionally starts away from the timber to which it has been secured, and the water pressing its way in, opens the plank more and more, till the sea comes in like a mill-sluice; and unless the damage is at once discovered, and a thrummed sail is got over the spot, there is little chance of a ship escaping from foundering. When a butt starts from the fore end, and she is going rapidly through the water, her destruction is almost certain, as a plank is rapidly ripped off, and no means the crew possess can prevent it. Though I had heard crashing noises which had made me fear that the masts had been carried overboard, yet I judged from the movement of the ship that they were standing. She was seldom on an even keel, but when she heeled over it was always on one side. As yet all the strain to which she had been subjected had produced no leaks, as far as I could judge from the small quantity of water in the hold, and that was chiefly what had come out of the butt. Had I not put the remnants of the olives and biscuits in my pockets I should have starved. When hunger pressed, I took a small portion, sufficient to stop its gnawings. I suffered chiefly from thirst, as I was afraid of getting up to go to the water-butt, lest I should be thrown over to the opposite side after I had drawn out the spile, before I could catch any water as it spouted out, and that much of it would be lost. I felt the necessity of economising my store, for I so mainly depended on it for existence, as it enabled me to subsist on a much smaller quantity of food than I could have done without it. At length I could bear my tortures no longer, but getting up, cautiously crawled towards the butt, stopping to hold on directly I felt the ship beginning to give a lurch.

I must again observe, that close down to the keel as I was, I felt this much less severely than I should have done at a higher level. I went on, until I believed that I was close to the butt, then waiting for another lurch.

Directly it had taken place, I drew myself carefully up, and searched about for the spile. I found it, and drew it out, and let the water spout out into my mouth. How I enjoyed the draught. It restored my strength and sadly flagging spirits. I stopped to breathe, and then again applied my mouth to the hole. I should have been wiser had I refrained, for before I could drive in the spile I was hove right away to the opposite side of the hold, almost into the opening of the water-butt which had burst. I could hear the water rushing out, and it was some time before I could recover myself sufficiently to crawl back to try and stop it. I was almost wet through before I could accomplish this, though I had to mourn the loss of no small quantity of the precious fluid. My purpose accomplished, I made my way back to my couch. Hours passed by. Sometimes I would fancy that the storm was never to end. In my disordered imagination, I pictured to myself the ship, officers, and crew under some dreadful doom, destined to be tossed about on the wide Atlantic for months and years, then perhaps to be dismasted and lie floating motionless in the middle of the Sargasso Sea, of which I had read, where the weeds collect, driven by the current thrown off by the gulf-stream, till they attain sufficient thickness for aquatic birds to walk over them.

I remembered the description that Mr Butterfield had given me of the captain of the "Emu." I thought, perhaps, that he had committed some dreadful crime, and was being thus punished for it. The only one of the crew whom I remembered, Gregory Growles, was certainly a bad specimen of humanity. Perhaps, though pretending to be honest traders, they were pirates; and even when I had obtained my liberty they would not scruple to make me walk the plank, should my presence be inconvenient. I cannot, however, describe the hundred-and-one gloomy ideas which I conjured up. How far they were from the truth time only was to show. The ship continued her eccentric proceedings with more or less violence. The tempest roared above my head. Crashing sounds still rose from the cargo which had shifted, and which it appeared to me must ere long be smashed to atoms. The worst of the matter was, that I had no one to blame but myself. Had I been seized and shut up in the hold by a savage captain, I should have felt myself like a martyr, and been able to lay my sufferings on others. When I was able to reflect more calmly on my situation, I remembered that the storm must inevitably some day or other come to an end. I had read of storms lasting a week, or even a fortnight, and sometimes longer, but if I could hold out to its termination,

as by means of the biscuits and olives I might do, I hoped that I should at last effect my liberation. I must not, however, take up more time by further describing the incidents of this memorable portion of my existence.

Chapter Thirteen.

Still in the hold—Dreamland again—Chicken-pie—Return of the rats—I improve my plans for catching them—Two rats at one meal—My state of mind—“Mercy! Mercy!”—While there’s life there’s hope—I recommence my exertions to get out of the hold with some success—Purer air—My weakness returns—I recover my strength—Still no outlet—I perform my ablutions—My desire to live at all hazards returns—“Where ignorance is bliss ’tis folly to be wise”—The yarn of Toney Lawson—The evil effects of getting drunk—The “Viper”—Toney obliged to give in—Toney’s thoughts of escape—The fate of the “Viper” determines the question—Toney’s wonderful escape.

Perhaps one of the most painful circumstances connected with my imprisonment was the impossibility of calculating how the time went by.

I remember that I suddenly awoke after dreaming that I was at a jolly picnic with old friends near Roger Riddle’s cottage. That the cloth was spread with pies and tarts, a cold sirloin of beef, a dish of fowls, and a tempting ham, and that we were eating and drinking, and laughing and singing, in the merriest way possible. I had just had the breast and wing of a chicken and a slice of ham placed on my plate, and was running over to get the mustard-pot, when to my surprise it became covered with feathers, and off it flew. I was jumping up to catch hold of it, not wishing thus to lose my dinner, but instead found myself in total darkness, and gradually came to the disagreeable consciousness that I was in the hold of the “Emu,” and that I had only a few small biscuits and three olives remaining of my stock of provisions, independent of the pickles in the corner of my handkerchief.

The ship, however, was perfectly quiet. The gale must have ceased some time before, to allow the sea to go down. By putting my ears to the planks I could catch the sound of a gentle ripple as she glided along, but no other noise was to be heard. The bulkheads had ceased to creak, the

masts to complain, the cargo to crash, and all was perfectly quiet overhead.

My hunger showed me that I must have been a long time asleep, and I could not resist the temptation of eating the remainder of my biscuits and olives. I had thus only the pickles to exist on, unless I could catch some rats with which to eat them. I took a draught of water, and then sat down to consider the plans I had before thought of to trap my game.

One occurred to me as the most feasible. Though I could not see I could feel, and my idea was to form a bag with a piece of the canvas, and give it a small mouth so contrived that I could close it suddenly with a string. Among the articles in my pocket was a stock of string of various thicknesses; I found on measuring it that I had not only sufficient to make the bag, but enough to gather in the mouth with an additional piece to hold in my hand. My gimlet would serve as an awl or sailmaker's needle, though not an efficient substitute. I had been so long accustomed to the darkness that I fancied I could pass the string through the holes I had made without difficulty. My hunger was an incentive to perseverance.

With my knife I first of all cut a piece off my canvas of sufficient size for my purpose. I am sure that I could not have done it so well at any time before, had I attempted to perform the operation in the dark. I then turned in the edges, and passing the string through the holes I had made, united the two sides. Sometimes I could not get the string through without another boring, at others I succeeded at the first attempt, tying the string at each stitch. It was a slow operation, but the result was beyond my most sanguine expectations.

I had a long, thickish piece of hard twine, which I devoted to the mouth of the bag. I had to make the holes for these with great regularity, so as not to leave an opening large enough for a rat to jump out at. I worked on without stopping till my task was accomplished, as I was anxious to ascertain whether it would answer the object I had in view.

While I was working I heard the rats running about, and two or three knocked their noses against my feet, showing that they had again come out of their holes, and were either hunting for food or gambolling for their pleasure.

I had, however, retained a small piece of biscuit in my pocket, which, although I longed to eat it up, I had sufficient resolution to devote as a bait to the rats.

Placing myself near the shattered butt, which seemed to be the spot most numerous frequented by them, I put down the bag with my foot at one end of it, holding the string in my hands, and leaving only a very small opening, which I could close of a sudden.

I waited eagerly. Rats ran about near my feet, leapt over the bag, and skipped and frolicked, uttering squeaks of delight. Still none came actually into the bag. At last one more curious than his fellows poked his nose into the opening. I felt him running along inside, having discovered a biscuit within. With a sudden jerk I quickly closed the mouth of the bag. I felt about with my fingers, and soon came upon Master Rat inside. As I didn't wish to give him the opportunity of biting me, I grasped him tightly by the neck, and squeezed out his life.

After drawing him out, I again put down the bag to tempt some more of his kindred, while I held him up by the tail. In a few minutes I felt others approaching, curious to explore the interior of the bag. I again gave a sudden jerk, and found that I had caught no less than three, who, as they felt themselves drawn up, began fighting and biting at each other, and would, I believe, had I not speedily put them out of existence, have been like the Kilkenny cats, and left only their tails behind them.

I had now ample food, though not of the character most people would have desired, and had also a bag to keep it in. I soon disposed of the first rat, with which I ate some small pieces of pickle as a relish, and I must confess that I enjoyed my meal amazingly. To me it appeared of a peculiarly delicate character. I could have eaten another rat with perfect satisfaction, but I considered it prudent to wait, so as not to give myself a surfeit.

Before long, however, I was again hungry, and on this occasion I ate two rats with some small pieces of pickle and drank a pint or more of water.

I now felt sufficiently strong to recommence my attempt at escape. I was prepared for difficulties of all sorts, as I knew that the cargo had been

much displaced during the storm. I have so often described my journeys to and fro, that I am afraid of becoming wearisome, but I must mention what now took place.

As I made my way along I tumbled over several things which had not been there before, and had evidently been thrown out of their places by a violent jerk of the ship. At last I got to the bulkhead through which with such infinite pains I had previously made my way. What was my dismay to find it stopped! Human hands could certainly not have put the obstacles there that I found. As I was feeling about I discovered a huge case of some sort which had been thrown down from above, and stopped up the way. It was not likely that my strength would be able to remove it.

After feeling about to ascertain if there was any opening at the side or top through which I might squeeze myself, and finding none, I returned for my handspike, thinking that I would at all events try to force the case on one side or the other. It was so large, however, that when making the attempt I could not move it in the slightest degree, and after trying in all ways, I had to abandon the enterprise.

I had been sensible of the greater closeness of the atmosphere, and I had now no doubt that the case prevented the air which descended from above from circulating through the hold as it before had done. The temperature also, I had no doubt, was increasing as the ship got into more southern latitudes, and I had some fears of being stewed alive. I was already streaming with perspiration from my efforts.

I was, indeed, in a weak state, which was but natural, so that I was unable to undergo any exertion without feeling far more exhausted than I had previously done. Sick and weary, I returned to my resting-place. I was seriously afraid of falling really ill. If I did so, what hope could I have of escaping? The olives and pickles and biscuits, which had hitherto preserved me in health were exhausted. Rats' flesh might serve to keep me alive for a few days, but alone would certainly be very unwholesome. I was already beginning to feel a repugnance to eating it. Perhaps this was in consequence of my having devoured two rats at one meal.

My chief refreshment was cold water, and that I found a great luxury. I must have swallowed prodigious quantities of it, still the butt held out;

though, if my imprisonment lasted much longer, that also must come to an end. I had never heard of hydropathy, but I was heartily willing to sing its praises, and I have ever since been a resolute water-drinker.

I lay down to rest after my exertions, but my cogitations were not of an agreeable character. I was in different moods. Sometimes I thought that I would abandon all further attempts at escaping, and yield to my fate; then I would shout out as loudly as my weak voice would allow: "Help! Help! I am dying! Help! Help! Will any one come to take me out of this place? Mercy! Mercy!" Finally a more courageous spirit animated me. "I'll not yield while I have life!" I exclaimed. "I'll cut my way with my knife through case after case, and draw out the contents so that I may make a passage through them."

I got up, feeling resolute and bold, taking my knife and my handspike with me. I had no means of sharpening the blade of my knife except on a hard piece of oak, and that was not very effectual.

On reaching the place where the opening had been, I felt all over the side of the chest. It didn't feel to be as even and regular as I had expected to find it. I began at once to use my knife, so as to cut a hole into the centre. As I pressed against it, the plank yielded slightly. The operation must inevitably be a long one, so instead of cutting on I took the handspike, and dealt several blows as hard as I could strike. The first blow I struck produced a creaking sound. I renewed my efforts. The plank began to give way. I struck again and again. The side flew inwards. I then struck about so as to knock off the splinters. I crept through the opening thus made, and from the articles I then found I was convinced that it was the old crate through which I had before made my way, and which had fallen down in front of the opening. I was sure of this when I found that I could creep out through the smaller fracture on the opposite side.

Still I was not free. No light permeated between the bales and packages. I felt about, but could not recognise any of the things with which I was before acquainted. Many of the packages appeared so placed that I might, without great care, bring them down on myself. Still, being thus far free, I determined to persevere. I thought that if I could once more get near the hatchway, I might be able to shout and make myself heard. I tried in all directions to find an opening. At last I thought that I discovered

one at the spot from which the crate had fallen. I clambered up one huge bale, then got on another, and I was then on a higher level than I had been since I first fell into the hold. I was rejoiced at the prospect of liberating myself, when a faintness came over me, and I sank down on the top of the bale.

As I thus lay I pictured to myself the crew above me going through their usual avocations. I fancied that I could even hear their footsteps on the deck, as they walked about or hauled at the ropes. I was sensible of a gentle movement of the ship, which instead of tumbling furiously about, was gliding on, rising and falling slowly to the sea. The air was purer than that in the part from which I had made my way, and I could breathe more freely. Had my strength been sufficient I should have again shouted, as I felt sure I must have been heard, but when I attempted to raise my voice it failed me altogether. I could scarcely utter an articulate sound. I tried again and again, but in vain. I was conscious that I was becoming weaker and weaker.

One thing I was determined on, and that was not to return to the dreadful hold. I looked back at it with horror, and I shuddered to think of the amount of rats' flesh I had eaten. Yet in many respects I was not better off than before. I had not found any food. My position might be perilous in the extreme, for I could not tell what was around me. I might, should a sudden breeze come on, be thrown back again to the bottom of the hold. For some time I could not move, or exert my mental or physical powers. I again thought that I was going to die; but I was not really so weak as I supposed, for at length, a desire to live returning, I raised myself and tried once more to work my outward way. I could find no outlet, and as my voice had failed me, I was unable to shout, but I could manage to move about. I was very thirsty, and notwithstanding my previous resolution not to return to the lower part of the hold, I thought the wisest thing I could do was to go down and get a draught of water. I believed that I could easily find my way. I let myself down off one bale and then another, till I came to the crate. I crept through it, and curiously enough I felt as if I had returned home. I walked up to the water-cask as if it had been an old friend, with delight, and took a draught of water. It was cool and refreshing, and revived me greatly. I felt hungry; I had hoped never again to eat another rat, but the keenness of my appetite overcame my scruples, and I took one out of the bag. I even thought of placing the bag

ready to catch some more. I, however, only ate one of the creatures, though not without difficulty, in spite of my hunger. I then bathed my face and washed my hands, to look a little more respectable should I ere long make my appearance among the crew. For this purpose I withdrew the spile, and allowed the fresh water to trickle first over my hands, and then over my face. This still further refreshed me, and I wished that I had performed a similar operation oftener. Had I not suspected that the water at the bottom of the hold must have been by this time very foul, I should have taken off my clothes and had a bath.

I refrained, however, from doing this, and contented myself with the pleasant sensation of feeling cleaner than I had been for a long time. I suspect that had I had a looking-glass placed before me, I should not have known myself. On feeling my arms and legs, they seemed like those of a skeleton; my cheeks were hollow, and my hair long and tangled. The rat which I had last eaten had dulled the sense of hunger. I felt a peculiar sensation afterwards, which convinced me more than ever that I could not long exist on rats' flesh. I fancy that I might have been wrong.

It was night when I made my last attempt to get upwards, so I thought that I would take a sleep and renew my efforts in the daytime, when I should have a better chance of attracting notice should I get near the hatchway. I accordingly lay down to rest, hoping that it would be the last time I should have to sleep in the hold. I took only short snatches of sleep.

When I awoke I lay for some time without moving, and could not help thinking over and over again of the events which had occurred since I left the quay at Liverpool. I knew that the end of my confinement must be approaching in some form or other; I should either die, or be restored to the open air. In spite of the wretched condition to which I had been reduced, I had a strong wish to live. I especially wanted to go back to assure Aunt Deb that I had not intentionally run away, and also to relieve the minds of my father and mother, and brothers and sisters, of the anxiety I believed they must have felt on my account. Suddenly also I remembered with painful distinctness the remarks Mr Butterfield had made respecting Captain Longfleet, the commander of the "Emu," and his ruffianly crew. Certainly their appearance was not in their favour; and

old Growles, who had received me so surlily, was not a good specimen of British seamen. What if the ship should prove to be a pirate, instead of an honest trader? I had heard of the crews of vessels, fitted out at Liverpool, assisting slavers on the coast of Africa in carrying out their nefarious trade, some committing all sorts of atrocities.

Should the “Emu” prove to be one of these, even if I were not hove overboard, I might be sold as a slave in the Spanish possessions, perhaps to labour in the mines among the hapless Indians, who are thus employed by their cruel taskmasters. “Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise,” and I should have been much less anxious had I not heard so much about such things. I remembered especially a yarn old Riddle told me one day about a messmate of his, Toney Lawson. I may as well try to give the yarn in his own words, though that may be a hard matter, and I can scarcely hope to do full justice to his narrative.

“Toney, d’ye see, was once on a time knocking about Plymouth, after he had been paid off from the ship he last sailed in, when who should he meet but Joe Gubbins, who had served with him for many years gone by. Joe had always been a wild slip of a fellow when he was a youngster.

“Said Joe to Toney, ‘What are you doing in these ’ere parts, old Ship?’

“Toney told him how he had been paid off and had pretty well emptied his pockets of shiners, and was thinking that before long he must join another craft.

“‘That’s just what I was a thinking of too, so just step in here, mate, and we’ll have a talk about the matter over a glass or two,’ and he pointed to the door of a public-house which stood temptingly open to entice passers-by.

“Toney was not one of those chaps to get drunk on every occasion, but he had no objection to good liquor when it came in his way. So, intending to pay for what he had, he went in with Joe. Joe boasted of a craft he had served aboard—a privateer, he called her. She had taken no end of prizes, and had made every one on board her as rich as Jews, only somehow or other they didn’t keep their money as well as Jews did, ‘and that’s the reason why my pockets ain’t lined as well as they were a few

weeks ago,' observed Joe. Toney, who was a steady sort of a man, didn't quite like the account Joe gave of the 'Viper's' cruise Joe was talking about.

"'Why, to my mind, she's no better than a bloodthirsty pirate,' he said.

"Joe laughed. 'You're too particular, mate,' said he. 'Tain't no worse than many another crew afloat.'

"However, he didn't press the point any longer, but emptying his glass, called upon Toney to drink up his, and ordered more and more liquor in, when Toney said he would not take another drop. At last Toney didn't know what happened except that he found himself slipping off from his seat on to the sandy floor, and could not, for the life of him, get up again. He thought it would be better to go to sleep where he was, so he coiled himself away to have a snooze. When he woke he tried to recollect what had happened.

"He remembered that he had been sitting with Joe Gubbins, and that he somehow or other got down on the floor, so he felt about, thinking he was there still. But all was dark; and instead of a sandy floor and the legs of the tables and chairs, his hand touched only some hard pitchy planks. He stretched out his arm as high as he could, and found that there was a deck close above him. He crawled along, and came right against a bulkhead. He knew then that he must be on board a craft of some sort. He was not a man to make a fuss about nothing; and as he was still only half awake, he thought he might as well turn round and go to sleep again.

"When he roused up a second time, he felt the vessel moving to the heave of the sea. He had been too long afloat not to know that she was making good way through the water with a fresh breeze. As he was getting somewhat hungry, he didn't want to be any longer down in the hold. He thought it was time to sing out and let those on board know where he was. Having a good pair of lungs of his own, he shouted pretty lustily, but no one came near him, nor hailed him.

"'This seems a curious job,' he said to himself; 'have they taken me for a bale of goods and hove me down here to stay till they discharge cargo?'

"Presently he heard the sound of a gun fired overhead; right aft, he

judged, for he knew well enough by the movements of the vessel which way she was going. Then another, and another followed; then came a cheer, though he heard it but faintly down where he was. The guns again went off. He guessed that the craft he was on board of was being chased, and that the cheer was given because the crew had knocked away some of the enemy's spars. He could hear two or three shots strike the hull of the vessel, so he knew that they were not having the game all to themselves. Being fond of fighting, he wished that he was on deck to take his share in it. There was no use wishing without trying to get out, but whichever way he moved he found a strong bulkhead.

"Though he kicked with all his might he could not start a plank. He tried again and again, till every muscle in his body ached. At last he had to give it up. His temper was not growing very sweet, as may be supposed. He began to think whether it was Joe Gubbins that had brought him aboard, for he didn't come of his own accord, of that he was certain. He vowed that he would pay Joe off whenever he fell in with him. At last the firing ceased. He felt, by the quiver running through every plank and timber that the craft was carrying as much sail as she could bear. There was no more cheering, and he could not tell whether she had got away altogether, or was still trying to escape from a big enemy. He tried to fancy why he was kept down there all this time. He supposed that he had been forgotten by whoever brought him aboard. He could not tell whether the vessel was a king's ship or a privateer, but that she was not a merchantman he was pretty sure. Perhaps, if she was a man-of-war, or a privateer, she was being chased by a Frenchman, but if she was a pirate she was more likely to be running from an English frigate than any other. Still it was not likely that a pirate would venture into Plymouth Sound.

"In either case Toney didn't relish the thoughts of being captured. In one there would be a French prison in store for him, and in the other a man-of-war captain would not believe that he had been brought aboard against his will, and would declare that he had stowed himself away to escape. At last he got so hungry that he began to fear he should be starved to death. He tried another shout. His voice didn't reach those on deck. He knew by this time that it must be night. Having nothing better to do, he was going off to sleep when he heard a bolt withdrawn from the outside, and a light streamed in to where he lay.

“‘Who are you?’ he asked, springing up and knocking his head against the deck above him with a force which sent him backwards.

“‘I’m coming to see how you’re getting on, mate,’ answered his visitor.

“‘Badly enough,’ said Toney, ‘I’m as hungry as a shark, and don’t like being shut up down here. Who are you?’

“‘I’ve been sent down here to ask if you’ll, like a wise man, join this craft. She wants hands, and as you’re well-known to be a good seaman, you’ll get a good berth aboard.’

“‘I never join a craft unless I know what sort of a captain and messmates I’m a-going to have,’ said Toney.

“‘There are times when a man mustn’t be over particular,’ said his visitor. ‘You’re a fool if you don’t say yes, so just come on deck and sign articles. You’ll learn all about this craft afterwards.’

“‘No, no,’ said Toney; ‘I never buy a pig in a poke. Tell me what? Want to know, then I’ll tell you whether I’ll join or not.’

“‘You’ll join, whether you like it or not,’ said his visitor with a growl. ‘You’ve chosen to come aboard, and we don’t allow idlers.’

“‘I didn’t choose to come aboard,’ said Toney. ‘Somebody brought me aboard when I was obfuscated, I suppose, and I’ll have a reckoning with that somebody before long.’

“‘If that’s your notion you’ll stay where you are,’ said his visitor, and he slammed the door and bolted it.

“Toney was a determined fellow, but there was one thing he couldn’t stand, and that was hunger. He got worse and worse. He could not sleep, and he could not shout out. By the time his visitor came again he was as meek as a lamb.

“‘Are you going to join or are you not?’ was the question.

“‘I give in,’ said Toney.

“Come along then,’ said his visitor.

“Toney crawled out and up the ladder of the main hatchway. He found that he was on board a brigantine, a rakish-looking craft, with several officers standing aft by the captain, and a numerous crew, among whom he saw Joe Gubbins. He couldn’t help lifting his fist and shaking it at Joe, who stood with a brazen face looking as if the threat could not be intended for him.

“Are you hungry, my man?’ asked an officer, whom he supposed to be the captain.

“Can’t say but what I am,’ said Toney.

“Then there’ll be plenty of grub for you when you’ve signed these articles.’

“Should like to know what they are, sir,’ said Toney.

“There’s the book; you may read them,’ said the captain. ‘Put your name down at the bottom of the page.’

“Now Toney was no great hand at reading or writing. He could just manage to scrawl his name. He tried to make out what the articles were about, but it was more than he could do.

“Come, my man, are you ready for your grub?’ asked the captain.

“Toney felt as if he should drop if he didn’t get something to eat, and just then a whiff from the galley came across his nose. He took the pen and managed to write his name, in a fashion.

“That’ll do, my man,’ says the captain. ‘You’re now one of the crew, and under my orders. We’ve pretty strict discipline aboard here. There’s the yard-arm, and there’s the sea alongside.’

“Toney was now allowed to go forward and enjoy a good blow out, which he much needed. He felt more like himself afterwards. He soon showed that there was not a better seaman aboard.

“Nothing particular occurred to show the character of the vessel. Joe kept out of his way until he got into a better temper, and they became very good friends again. They ran to the southward till they were in the latitude of the Guinea Coast, when they fell in with a craft, into which they discharged part of their cargo in exchange for some bags of gold. They now carried on in a strange way, chasing several vessels, capturing some and taking their cargoes out of them, in spite of what their crews could say, afterwards putting them on board a Spanish or a Portuguese craft and getting doubloons in exchange. Their guns and their numerous crew made resistance impossible. They were wonderfully successful in their proceedings, until one day they fell in with a British frigate and had to up stick and run for it. The African coast had become too hot for them, so they stood away for the Caribbean Sea and Spanish Main. Here they carried on worse than before. The crews of all vessels which resisted were made to walk the plank, and the vessels, after everything had been taken out worth having, were sent to the bottom.

“Toney, being an honest man, could not stand this; but he knew that, being tarred with the same brush, if taken he would share the fate of the rest. He determined to cut and run on the first opportunity. A strict watch was kept on him; and Joe, who knew his thoughts, hinted that the yard-arm would be his fate if he made the attempt and failed. Still he was resolved to try and get off, but the matter was settled for him in a way he little expected. The brigantine, during a heavy gale one night, was struck by lightning and blew up, Toney and two others only finding themselves floating among the wreck. Joe Gubbins was one of these. Toney managed to get hold of the mainmast and clambered into the top, where he got his legs out of the water and was trying to help Joe Gubbins, when Joe, with a shriek, disappeared. The other man shared the same fate. Toney expected to die, but the next day he was picked up by an English sloop-of-war; and as he took care not to give a very clear account of the craft he had been aboard of, he was allowed to enter as one of her crew. Here he met Roger Riddle, to whom he gave the account of his adventure.”

I thought to myself perhaps the “Emu” is employed in the same sort of trade as the “Viper,” and if so, I shall be as badly off as Toney Lawson.

Chapter Fourteen.

The hold—My provisions become exhausted—A fresh attempt at escape—Pressed by hunger, I persevere—The spar-deck—Not out yet—A ray of light—My prostrate condition—My mind gives way—A curious trio—The main hatchway—Fresh difficulties arise—A last effort—I am rescued—Ghost of a ghost—I make a new friend and meet with an old one—The crew of the ship—My new quarters—I receive a piece of advice from my new friend—Mark's adventures, and how he came aboard the "Emu"—Poor Jack Drage—Mark gets into trouble.

The recollection of Toney Lawson's adventure didn't tend to make me feel any more comfortable than before. I could scarcely hope to be as well off as he was, or to have so fortunate an escape. My provisions being exhausted, I was aware that I must soon get out of the hold or perish, yet I didn't anticipate much satisfaction from obtaining my liberty. No time was, however, to be lost, and I therefore nerved myself up for a fresh struggle. Feeling that I had my knife about me, and having put on my shoes, I prepared to make a desperate attempt to effect my escape. I crawled on through the crate, and once more attempted to climb up over the packages into the main hold.

I tried to do this in several directions, but I found no opening so promising as the one which I had before explored. My weakness prevented me from making the exertions that were required to force my way between the bales. I was in momentary fear of falling down a crevice, and being jammed to death. My situation in some respects was infinitely worse than that of Toney Lawson, who was bolted in, but then people knew where he was. No one on deck was aware of my deplorable condition. Still I crawled on, resolved to succeed. While feeling about, I discovered a space between three or four bales. I crept in very much as a rat does into his hole, only he knows where he is going. I could not tell whether I should get through or have to force my way out again legs first. Still the cravings of hunger induced me to venture. On I crept, when on putting up my hand I found that there was nothing above me which I could touch, so that I was able to stand upright, though there might be some depth in front down which I might fall.

I moved with the greatest caution. It turned out, however, that they were only bales piled one upon another, and that I was standing in a sort of well. Still there were stepping-places, and with the ropes which bound the bales I was able to work my way upwards. Higher and higher I got. I could now distinctly hear the footsteps of the men on the deck, which I guessed, therefore, could be no great distance above me. The ship must have been moving calmly along, and I was thus preserved from being jerked off from the place to which I was clinging. I still moved on till I reached a part of the hold filled chiefly, it appeared to me, with large packing-cases and casks. I was almost on a level floor. It might have been the spar-deck. Wearied with the fatigue I had undergone, I sat down on a box to rest. I could now distinctly hear not only the tread of the men's feet, but their voices. They were the first human voices which had reached my ears for days, or rather weeks. I tried to shout to attract their attention, but my voice had completely failed me. Not a sound could I utter. I felt that I had not strength to move an inch further.

Twice I made the attempt, and had to sink back again on my seat. I was gazing upward, the only direction from which help could come, when a ray of light streamed right upon me. Forgetting my weakness, I started up. It must come, I knew, from the partly open hatchway, or from a fracture in the hatch itself. This I afterwards found to have been the case, the fracture being covered up with a tarpaulin, which had at that instant been removed. Again I endeavoured to shout out, but my voice was not under the control of my will. No sounds issued from my mouth. I stretched out my hands in an imploring attitude, fancying that I should be seen. I attempted to make my way directly under the opening, but ere I could reach it I sank down utterly exhausted.

I had never before been so completely prostrated. I didn't lose my senses, but all physical power had deserted me. I could scarcely move my hands or feet; still I thought that the hatch must be again opened before long, and that I could not fail to be discovered. I earnestly prayed that help might be sent me. How it was to come I could not tell. Notwithstanding what was before me, I still desired to be set free. Although I was not sleeping, strange fancies filled my brain. I saw people flit about in the darkness, suddenly coming into the light, and then disappearing. Some were people I knew, and others were strangers. Aunt Deb and Mr Butterfield came by, tripping it lightly, holding each other's

hands, he in a bob wig with a sword by his side, she in high-heeled red shoes and a cap decked with flowers and ribbons. She smiled and ogled, as if about to dance a minuet. I almost laughed as I saw them, they appeared so vivid and real. Then Captain Longfleet came upon the scene as I fancied him, dressed in a cocked-hat and feathers, a long sword buckled to his side, high boots, a red coat, and a waistcoat braided with gold.

I fancy that I must have seen some picture of the sort of a pirate captain to cause him thus to be presented to my imagination. He walked about flourishing his sword till he met Aunt Deb, to whom, instead of cutting her head off, as I thought he was about to do, he made a profound bow, and then vanished. Many other figures quite as bizarre and unnatural appeared before me. I mention these trivial circumstances to show the state of my mind. I had been so long by myself that I must be pardoned if I appear egotistical. Again all was quiet. I lay for some time, if not unconscious, with very little power of thought. I was afraid that another night would come on, and that I should have to endure my sufferings for some hours longer, if death did not put an end to them. I could still hear the tread of the men's feet, and even the voices of the officers, shouting their orders. How I wished that I could shout also, for then I knew I should be heard. I tried once more to move, and managed to drag myself on till I got directly under the hatchway. Although I could not shout, to my surprise I heard myself groaning.

There being light sufficient to enable me to observe objects, my eye fell upon a loose piece of wood. I grasped it with all my remaining strength, and began beating away on the top of a cask, which proved to be empty from the sound which emanated from it. I beat on and on, but no notice appeared to be taken of the noise I was making. I was too ill and weak to reason on the subject, but I remembered hearing a loud voice shouting out some orders. Presently there came a tramp of feet overhead, backwards and forwards and from side to side they seemed to run. The crew were evidently engaged in shortening or making sail, which it was I was unable to tell. I had sense enough remaining to know that whilst this was going forward on deck it was not likely that notice would be taken of my feeble knocking, for feeble it was, though it sounded loud to me.

Presently I felt a greater movement than I had experienced for some

time, and the ship heeled over on one side. My fear was that the cases on which I lay might be again shifted, and that I might be thrown down to some lower depth of the hold, with bales and casks above me. Of course I am describing what I fancied might happen, not what was likely to occur. I now guessed that a number of the crew must have gone aloft to shorten sail, and that even if they had heard the noise they would not have had time to ascertain what had caused it. I now more than ever feared that, before I could be liberated, I should become utterly exhausted, and should fall into a swoon from which I might never recover.

I was too weak to pray, or any longer exert myself. Still my senses did not altogether desert me. I lay on my back, looking up towards the hatchway. The ship heeled over more and more. To me, who had been accustomed to live so long down near the keel, it appeared at a frightful angle, and I thought, she would go over altogether. Again I heard voices shouting out orders, and the crew, I supposed, went aloft to take in more sail. I was afraid that another storm was coming on. Fearful would be the consequences to me if such should be the case. Presently I heard something dragged over the hatchway. The ray of light which had hitherto tended to keep up my waning spirits was obscured.

A tarpaulin had been placed over the hatchway. Perhaps the crew were about to batten down the hatches. In vain I tried, while this was going forward, to strike the cask. I had not sufficient strength to do it. A fearful faintness was coming over me. Perhaps the movement of the ship contributed to this. I think I must have fainted, for I cannot recollect what happened. I had no strength to hold on or to grasp the stick, and might have been thrown helplessly about like a shuttlecock till life was extinct.

I fancy that some time must have passed. When I recovered my senses, my first impulse was to feel for the stick. It was close to me. I had power to grasp it. The top of the chest on which I lay was perfectly level, but I expected to find it heeling over as before. Instead of that, no movement took place. The ship was apparently gliding forward on an even keel. The storm had ceased, or probably the ship had only been struck by a sudden squall, which had passed over.

My first impulse was again to try and strike the cask and to shout out, but I could only utter a few low groans. I managed, however, to give some

blows on the cask, which resounded through the hold. The noise was loud enough, I fancy, to be heard on deck, or indeed in every part of the ship. I beat on and on. Presently the tarpaulin was drawn off, and I heard some feet moving directly above me. A voice said distinctly, "Below! What's that?"

Almost immediately the hatch was removed, and as I looked up a flood of light burst down upon me. For some seconds I could see nothing. Gradually I made out a number of human faces peering down through the hatchway.

"Why, what can that be?" exclaimed one of the men.

"Ghost of a ghost," cried another.

"It can't be a live thing," said a third.

"Why, Jack, I do believe it's a boy," exclaimed a fourth; "we must get him up whatever he is, but how could he have come there?"

Presently a ladder was let down. None of the men seemed inclined to descend, evidently having some doubts as to my character, till the last speaker, calling the others cowards, came down. Instead of at first reviving me, the effect of the fresh air was to make me faint away. When I recovered I found myself lying on the deck, surrounded by a number of strange faces. A seaman—the one who, I suppose, had brought me up—was supporting me and applying a wet cloth to my head and shoulders, while another, kneeling down, was examining my countenance.

"Why, youngster, how did you come aboard here? Where have you been ever since we sailed from the Mersey?" he asked.

Too weak to answer, I could only stretch out my hand and then point to my lips, to show that I wanted food and water.

"If you've been down in the hold all these weeks, no wonder that you want something to eat," he remarked.

Still he didn't move, or propose to obtain any refreshment for me. As my lack-lustre eyes looked up at him, I recognised Gregory Growles, the old

seaman to whom I had at first spoken with my cutter under my arm. No wonder that he didn't recollect me in my present forlorn and dirt-begrimed condition. At last the seaman against whom I leant told one of his messmates to get me some water. With indifference, if not unwillingness, the man did as requested, and going to the water-butt on deck brought me a mugful, which I greedily drank.

"By the feel of his ribs he wants something more substantial than water," observed my friend. "We must get the poor young chap into a berth, and feed him up, or he'll be slipping his cable. There doesn't seem to be much life in him now."

"That will be seen."

"What business had he to stow himself away, and make us all fancy that a ghost was haunting the ship?" cried Growles, in a surly way. "We shall hear what the captain has to say to him. To my notion, as he's made his bed, so he'll have to lie on it."

"Come, come, mate, it would be hard lines for the poor young chap if he were left to die, without any of us trying to bring him through. I, for one, can't stand by doing nothing, so just one of you lend a hand here, and we'll put him into my berth, and get the cook to make some broth for him," said the kind-hearted seaman.

While he was speaking, a person, who was evidently one of the officers, came forward and expressed his surprise at seeing me, and inquired why he hadn't been informed of my having been discovered?

The men replied, that I had only just been found and brought on deck, and that they thought I was dying.

"It would have saved trouble to have hove him overboard before he came to himself," said the mate, with a careless laugh. "The captain doesn't allow of stowaways, and we don't want any aboard here."

He said this, I suppose, to frighten me, indifferent to the consequences.

"He's very bad, sir," said my friend, touching his hat, "and, maybe, it won't much matter what is done with him; but if you'll give me leave, I'll take

him below to my berth, after we've washed off the dirt that sticks to him. He wants food more than anything else to bring him round, and when he's himself we can make some use of him at all events. We want a boy forward very badly, and he'll be worth his salt, I've a notion."

"You may do what you like with him, Tom Trivett," answered the officer, "only don't let us be bothered with him. We've trouble enough with young Riddle, the mutinous young rascal. He'll have to look out for himself, if he don't mind."

The officer was the third mate of the ship, who happened just then to have charge of the deck. He made further inquiries about how I had been found, and asked the men whether they had before known of my being on board?

Trivett replied that they were entirely ignorant as to how I had come into the ship, but that hearing peculiar noises, they lifted the hatch, and that he had gone down and discovered me.

"We shall hear by-and-by what he has to say for himself. In the meantime, Trivett, take care of him, and I'll let the captain know he's been found. He's the ghost you fellows have been frightened about," said the mate.

"We were no more frightened than he was," I heard some of the men utter, "but who could tell where all those strange noises we heard came from when any of us went down into the hold. He's precious ready to call us cowards, but he was more frightened than we were. Why, he would never go down unless he had a couple of hands with him." While this was going on, Tom Trivett continued swabbing my head and neck. When the mate walked aft he called to the cook to bring him a bucket of warm water from the caboose, as well as a lump of soap, a scrubbing-brush, and a piece of canvas.

The sun was shining brightly, and the air was warm, so that I did not feel the exposure so much as it might have been felt. Tom forthwith set about to scrape me clean, taking his own pocket-comb to disentangle my matted hair after he had washed it. The operation, though somewhat hazardous, greatly refreshed me. Before it was concluded, Julius Caesar,

the black cook, who had some tender spot in his heart, brought out a basin of soup, from which Trivett fed me as tenderly as a nurse would a young child. This still further revived me.

“You shall have some more, boy, when I have done a-cleaning you,” said Tom.

The rest of the crew sat round making remarks, but not even offering to assist their shipmate, evidently perfectly indifferent as to what happened to me, though perhaps curious to see whether I should revive under the treatment to which I was being subjected. Judging by the colour of the water after I had been washed in it, I must have been as black as a coal. I rather think Julius Caesar must have fancied that I was one of his own race, and must have been greatly astonished at seeing a blackamoor washed white. When the operation was concluded, Growles again came and had a look at me.

“Why, I do believe it’s none other than the young chap who came aboard us at Liverpool,” he exclaimed. “I thought as when I saw him so often that he was up to something, but never fancied that he was going to stow himself away, or I should have been on the watch for him. Well, he’ll have to pay pretty smartly for the trick he has played us.”

My friend Tom took no notice of this and similar remarks made by others of the crew; but after having again fed me, he called to a stout-looking lad who was coming forward from the companion-hatchway to assist in carrying me to his berth under the topgallant forecastle. The lad, without hesitation, did as he was directed, and took up my legs, while Tom lifted me by the arms. As I was being carried along, my eyes turned towards the lad who was stepping backwards, when I at once recognised him as Mark Riddle, though he looked very different to the smart young chap he was when I last saw him, and he evidently did not know me.

“Can’t you find a shirt and a pair of trousers for the poor fellow?” cried Tom; “his own want washing terribly.”

Mark ran aft, and in a short time returned with the garments, in which Tom clothed me.

Notwithstanding the food which had been given me, I was still too weak

to speak. He and Tom lifted me into an upper bunk on the starboard side. As he did so, I stretched out my hand and seized his, which I pressed between my bony fingers. I could just say, "Thank you, Mark." He looked at me very hard, but still did not seem to have a suspicion who I was. This was not surprising, as he did not even know that I had gone to Liverpool. I was so altered, that even my mother would scarcely have recognised me. He, however, asked Tom Trivett who I was. Tom replied that I was a young stowaway, but that he knew no more about me than did the man in the moon.

"Go and fetch the remainder of the broth," I heard Tom say. "A little more will do him good, and then if he gets a sound sleep he'll come round, I have a notion."

"If he does, it will only be to lead a dog's life," murmured Mark, as he left to get the broth.

Tom stood by me arranging the blankets, and trying to make me comfortable till Mark returned with some soup, with some biscuits and rice floating in it. Though I could drink the liquid, it was with difficulty that I could masticate the latter, but I managed to get down a few pieces.

"He has eaten enough now," said Tom; "but, I say, Mark," he whispered, "you keep an eye on him whenever you can, so that none of the fellows play him any tricks. They'd do so, though they knew he was dying, out of devilry."

"Aye, aye," answered Mark. "They shan't hurt the poor young chap if I can help it, though I've enough to do to keep clear of them myself."

"Well, we shall be three now, and shall be better able to stand up against them," said Tom.

I heard no more; for after taking the food a drowsiness crept over me, and I fell into a sound sleep. When I awoke I was in the dark, and felt very much more comfortable than I had for a long time. At first I fancied that I was down in the hold, but the loud snoring and groaning of the men in the neighbouring bunks made me remember what had happened. I felt about, and was soon convinced that I was in Tom Trivett's bunk, in a clean shirt and trousers, and a blanket over me. I heard the watch below

turn out, the others shortly afterwards came in, but no one took any notice of me.

When the latter were fast asleep I heard some one come into the berth and stop near my bunk.

“Who’s that?” I asked.

“Glad to see you can speak again, my lad,” said the person whom by his voice I knew to be Tom Trivett. “Do you feel better?”

“Yes, thank you,” I answered. “You’ve saved my life, and I’m very grateful to you.”

“Don’t talk o’ that, lad,” he said, “it’s not much good I can do in the world, but I couldn’t bear to see you allowed to die from neglect, though I’m afraid there are hard times coming for you. You’re among as rough a lot as ever sailed on the salt ocean, and that’s saying a good deal. I want to give you a piece of advice; I mayn’t have another chance of giving it. Don’t be in a great hurry to get well, for though the fellows, bad as they are, won’t have the cruelty to ill-treat you while you’re sick, as soon as you come round they’ll be down upon you, and you’ll find that they’ll give you more kicks than ha’pence. However, you must not mind them. Don’t attempt to retaliate, for they’re too many for you. Above all things don’t grow sulky as poor Mark did, and has ever since well-nigh had his life knocked out of him. Now I must go on deck as it’s my watch, but remember what I have said.”

I again thanked Tom, and just as he was going I asked him if he could get me any more food.

“I’ll try and get you something as soon as the cook turns out; but he’s asleep in his bunk, and at this hour it would be a difficult job to find any. I’ll tell Mark, however, to ask him when he wakes, though I’d advise you to go off to sleep again.”

Saying this, Tom left the berth, and I once more closed my eyes. I was awakened by the men turning out.

The light streamed in at the door, showing me that it was morning. In

consequence of the advice I received from Tom, I kept quiet and pretended to be asleep. Soon afterwards I saw Mark Riddle standing by my side.

“Tom told me you’re hungry, boy,” he said; “so I managed to get something for you from the pantry. I hope it won’t be discovered, or the third mate will be giving me a rope’s-ending.”

He had brought me a captain’s biscuit and a slice of ham, with a tin mug of water.

“I’ll bring you a cup of hot coffee,” he said, handing me the food.

Hungry as I was I could not help exclaiming, “What, don’t you know me, Mark?”

He looked at me very hard, still not remembering me.

“No, I don’t think I ever saw you before,” he answered; “but how do you happen to know my name?”

“I didn’t think I was so changed,” I said. “I’m Dick Cheveley.”

“Dick Cheveley!” he cried out, looking at me still harder; “Dick Cheveley on board this ship! And yet it must be; and are you really Dick Cheveley?”

“I don’t believe I’m anybody else, though I have sometimes fancied I must be.”

“Yes, yes, I see you’re Master Cheveley,” cried Mark, “though I can’t say I feel much happier to see you for your own sake, though I’m right glad for mine to have you with me,” taking my hand and grasping it. “Oh, Master Cheveley, what did bring you aboard?”

I briefly told him while I was discussing the food he brought me.

“It’s a bad business for you, Master Dick,” he said; “but the only thing now to be done is to make the best of it. They’re a precious bad lot, and the captain and officers are no better. I’ve made up my mind to run as soon as I can, and I’d advise you to do the same.”

“That I certainly will when I have somewhere to run to, but at present it seems we should have to run overboard,” I answered.

“We must wait until we get into harbour. We shall have to touch at a good many places, and if we keep our wits about us we shall manage it one way or another.”

“We’ll talk about that by-and-by, but tell me how you happened to be here. I heard that you had been sent on board a man-of-war,” I said.

“So I was, and I wish I had remained aboard her, too; but as I had been sent against my will, I cut and run on the first chance I got. She was the ‘Beagle’ sloop of war. We were ordered to cruise on the Irish coast. We were not far off the town of Belfast, when a boat’s crew to which I belonged pulled ashore under charge of a mid-shipmite. While he went into a house to deliver a message, I ran off as fast as my legs could carry me. I at last reached a cottage in which there was a whiteheaded old fellow, a girl, and two young men. I told them that I had been pressed and ill-treated, and was trying to make my escape from the cruelty of the English. The young men said at once that they would protect me, and would answer that I should not be retaken. The old man warned them that they were playing a dangerous game, and said that he would have nothing to do with the business, advising them to take me back to the boat. The girl, however, pleaded for me, and observed that now I had run, my punishment would be ten times greater, and that it would be cruel and inhospitable to refuse me shelter. She prevailed on her old grandfather. That evening the young men took me down aboard a little ‘hooker,’ which they said was just going to sail for Liverpool, and that if I liked I could go in her. Her cargo, they said, was timber and fruit, but turned out to be faggots and potatoes. I knew that at Liverpool there was no chance of being discovered, and I at once agreed. We reached the Mersey in a couple of days. As ill-luck would have it, I landed close to where the ‘Emu’ was getting ready for sea. Knowing that I could not venture to return home, I went on board and asked if a boy was wanted. The first mate at once said yes, as one of the apprentices had cut and run and could not be found. I thought I was in good luck, but we hadn’t been to sea many days before I found that I had fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire. The other apprentice, poor Jack Drage, told me that he had been kicked and cuffed from the first moment that he had stepped on board,

and that if he had had any friends on shore, he'd have taken French leave as the other had done. Things had grown worse instead of better, and he was already weary of his life. I advised him not to give in; that in time things must mend; but he was a poor-hearted fellow and only wrung his hands and cried, declaring that he was utterly miserable. I did my best to keep up his spirits, but it was all of no use. One night during a gale we had soon after sailing, he disappeared. Whether he had thrown himself overboard into the sea, or been knocked overboard no one could tell. Of course it was entered in the log that he had been knocked overboard. In my opinion he sacrificed his life rather than endure his miseries. I told the first mate so, and he knocked me down. The next time he called me a sulky rascal, but I answered that I was not going to do away with myself like Jack Drage, and that I would make a complaint of him to the British Consul whenever we touched at a port. On this he knocked me down again. I know that I was taken with the sulks, and for days afterwards didn't speak to him or any one else; but as I had no wish to be killed, I did what I was ordered to do, and got on somewhat better. Ever since that not a day passes that I don't get a kick or have a marline-spike hove at my head by either the officers or men forward. They're all very much alike for that matter, except Tom Trivett, and he's as good a fellow as ever lived. He has a hard life of it, for the men are always playing him tricks; and the officers spite him, and are constantly making him do dirty jobs which no able seaman should be called on to perform. But, I say, I mustn't stand talking here any longer, or I shall be suspected of being your friend. Don't let any one find out that we know each other, and we shall get on all the better. I'll tell Tom Trivett, and he'll bring you the coffee if I can't manage it; meanwhile you stay quiet in the bunk, even if you feel well enough to get up."

"There is no chance of my being able to do that for some days," I answered, "for I don't think I could stand if I were to try."

Mark now left me, and I fell back nearly exhausted from having talked so long to him.

After some time Tom appeared with a basin of hot black coffee, with some biscuit floating in it.

"Can't I have a little milk?" I asked.

“We’ve not any cows on board here,” he answered with a laugh; “and there are no dairies in the Atlantic, unless Daddy Neptune happens to keep sea-cows.”

“You must have thought me very silly to ask for milk,” I said, as I ate up the sopped biscuit, and drank the hot coffee, which was well sweetened with sugar.

“It shows you are something of a greenhorn, lad,” he answered, laughing, “but no wonder your wits aren’t of the brightest after having been shut up in the dark so long; you shall have something else by-and-by. Remember what I told you; don’t be getting well too soon, that’s all.”

Chapter Fifteen.

My convalescence—Julius Caesar befriends me—We pass the Cape de Verde Islands—Our hopes of a change of diet disappear—My turn at last—A severe discipline—Captain Longfleet—“Please, sir, I couldn’t help it”—“There goes the baby and his nurse”—Caesar’s sympathy—How I owed my life to Tom Trivett—Bad food—“It makes me sick to cook it”—The deputation to the captain—The discontent increases among the crew—Crossing the line—“What ship is that?”—We receive a visit from Daddy Neptune and his court—Rough play, and what it might have come to.

I intended to take the advice of my friend and not get well too soon, but in reality there was no malingering in the case, for I remained too low and weak to get out of my bed.

Tom Trivett all the time, having given up his berth to me, slept in a far more uncomfortable bunk right forward, but never uttered a word of complaint, or tried to induce me to turn out. His was true Samaritan charity, and I was grateful to him. He even, I knew, tried to influence the rest of the crew for good, but did not succeed. They let him alone, which was all he could expect of them. The third mate, who knew I was there, never came near me to inquire how I was getting on.

Mark paid me a visit whenever he could venture to do so, and brought

me my food when Tom was on duty.

The only other man who was kind to me was Julius Caesar, the black cook, and he frequently sent me wholesome messes which he had concocted for my special benefit; but he had to charge Mark and Tom not to let the other men see them, lest they should be gobbled up on their way. Mark told me this, for Julius Caesar himself never came to have a look at me.

“If I come, den dey say I friend of his—it worse for him.”

Both Mark and Caesar slept in the larboard berth, so that they had no business in the one I occupied.

I should explain that the space under the topgallant forecastle was divided by a bulkhead running fore and aft into parts forming separate cabins, one called the starboard, and the other the larboard berths, with bunks built up on both sides, one above another, or rather, in two stories, to explain myself better.

In moderate weather they were tolerably comfortable, but with the sun beating down on the deck they were fearfully hot. In a gale of wind, as the seas dashed against the bows or she pitched into them, the noise and movement were tremendous. However, to that I in time got accustomed.

Sometimes the decks and upper works leaked, and the water coming in wetted the clothes and bedding. However, in other respects they were better than the forepeak in a flush-decked ship, which is generally close and hot, full of horrible odours, and totally destitute of ventilation, and often wet into the bargain, from unseen leaks which are not of sufficient consequence to trouble the officers, as they do not affect the safety of the ship.

At length, one day Tom told me that we were within sight of the Cape de Verde Islands, at which he believed the captain intended to call. He was very glad, he said, of this, as he hoped to be able to get me a supply of oranges and limes, which he thought would do me more good than anything else.

The very name of fruit made my mouth water, and I thought I would give a great deal just to have one good suck at an orange. Great was my disappointment, therefore, when shortly afterwards Mark came in, and said that a strong north-easterly wind had sprung up, and that we were standing away from the islands, but that the captain, he believed, intended to put into Rio de Janeiro.

"I must wait patiently till we get there," I said. "I hope it won't take us long."

"We have to pass through the horse latitudes, and to cross the line first, and Rio is some way to the south of that, so I'm afraid you must suck your fingers instead of oranges," he answered.

I was now rapidly getting better, and I began to pine for fresh air and exercise.

"You'll be wiser to stay where you are, Master Dick," said Mark. "No one believes that you're a gentleman's son, and if they did I'm very sure it would make very little difference. I should, perhaps, benefit by your getting about, as you would have all the dirty work to do which now falls to my lot. It's only surprising that the captain has allowed you to remain so long in the berth, for he knows that you're aboard, though he takes no notice of you. Still I'd advise you, as long as you can, to stay where you are."

I had not long the opportunity. Two days afterwards the third mate came into the berth with a short, knotted rope in his hand.

"Come, youngster, you have been long enough malingering here," he exclaimed; "I find the cook has been serving out no end of good grub to you, and you've done nothing for it. We don't want idlers aboard the 'Emu;' show a leg there pretty smartly."

I attempted to rise. Tom had washed and dried my clothes. I got hold of my trousers, and slipt my legs into them. When I attempted to stand upright, my knees gave way and down I sank. At the same moment the mate's colt descended on my back. I was taken so completely by surprise that I shrieked out with pain. I tried to lift myself up by the supports of the bunk, and succeeded in getting on my feet.

“I thought I’d cure you. Do you want another dose of this rope?”

“Oh! No, sir! No, sir! Don’t! I’ll dress as fast as I can,” I called out.

The moment I let go I felt that I must slip down again. Still the fear of another lash made me exert myself in a way I could not otherwise have done, and I tried very hard to put on my waistcoat and jacket, and to tie my handkerchief, by sitting down on a lower bunk.

“Now, come along!” said the mate; “the captain wants to speak to you.”

I attempted to walk, but as I tottered on my knees again failed me, and I should have fallen had not the mate caught me by the shoulders and dragged me along the deck.

It was a severe discipline, but it was effective, for the air and the necessity of moving quickly brought back strength to my limbs, and by the time I reached the quarterdeck I was able to keep my feet, though I should have fallen had not the mate still held me.

We there found the captain pacing to and fro. On turning he stopped when he saw me.

“Is this the young stowaway, Mr Huggins?” he asked, eyeing me very sternly. “What business had you to come aboard, boy, without leave?”

“Please, sir, I couldn’t help it,” I said, and I told him that when merely intending to look round the ship I had fallen into the hold.

“A likely story, youngster, which I don’t intend to believe. You came on board to please yourself, and now you’ll learn to please me, and do the work you’re set to do.”

“I’ll do my best, sir,” I answered, for I saw he was not a man to be trifled with; “but I am not fit for much at present.”

“You contrived to live down in the hold in an extraordinary manner—how did you manage it?”

I told him in a few words.

“Another likely story,” he remarked. “In other words, you stole the ship’s provisions as long as you could get at them, or you had an accomplice who kept you fed—he’ll be made to smart for it.”

On hearing this, I began to tremble for the consequences to Mark. Though the captain didn’t mention his name, I guessed that he pointed at him. I was much inclined to say who I was, and to speak of Mr Butterfield, but shame prevented me, and the captain made no inquiries on the subject.

“Now go forward,” he said; “look out sharp, get back your strength, and make yourself useful.”

He turned on his heel, not deigning to hold any further conversation with so insignificant a person as he considered me.

The mate let me go. I tried to walk, but staggered like a drunken man, and could only just manage to reach the side, and catch hold of a belaying-pin. I remained there until the captain turned round, when, afraid of his looks, I once more set off to make my way along the deck, the mate taking no trouble to help me, while the crew jeered and laughed at me; till Tom Trivett, who had been at work on the other side, crossing over, took my arm and led me along to the forehatch, where he bade me sit down.

“There goes the baby and his nurse,” said one of the men.

“Tom will be getting him some pap presently,” said another—at which they laughed in chorus.

The third mate, seeing Tom standing over me, ordered him back to his work. Mark made an attempt to join me, but was sent to perform some task or other, and I was left alone and forlorn to endure the gibes of my hardhearted shipmates.

Caesar, however, came out of his caboose, and whispered as he passed —

“Neber you mind, Dick, as long dey only use der tongue.”

He grinned and pointed with his finger, so that the rest fancied that he was only mocking me as they were.

Notwithstanding this, the fresh air and the necessity of exerting myself did me good, and after I had taken some food that Caesar brought me when the men went into their berth to dinner, I felt quite another creature.

At nightfall I was allowed to slink into my bunk, of which Tom still refused to deprive me.

"I'm very well where I am. I'm accustomed to it, and you are not, Dick," he said, when I begged him to let me change places.

The next day I was still better, and after this I rapidly recovered my strength, notwithstanding the cuffs and kicks and rope's-endings I frequently received, and the hard work I had to perform.

My clothes were soon again as dirty as they were when I came out of the hold, and torn and tattered besides.

"Never mind, Dick," said Tom; "I'll rig you out in a suit of mine, which I'll cut down to suit you when we get into colder latitudes. It doesn't much matter about having old clothes now the weather is so hot."

Mark regretted that he could not help me, as he had only the clothes he stood up in, which would have been almost as bad as my own had they not been of stronger material, and thus held out better.

Though the rest of the crew ill-treated Mark and me, and Tom also when they had the chance, the captain and officers tyrannised over them in the most brutal fashion. It was no unusual occurrence for the first mate to heave a handspike at one of the men when he did not go about his work in a way to please him, and both captain and mates swore at the men on all occasions in the most fearful way.

At first I was horrified, but in time I got as much accustomed to it as they were, and was only thankful that the oaths were not accompanied by a rope's-ending.

All this time the discipline was really very slack, and the men behaved to

each other as they pleased, and never failed to neglect their duty whenever the mates' eyes were off them. Still they resented, notwithstanding, the treatment they received, growling fiercely, if not loudly, when the quality of their provisions had begun to fall off. At first the food had been pretty good, but it now became worse and worse, and the men swore that they would stand it no longer. At last, when some rancid pork had been served out with musty peas and weevilly biscuits, the men went aft in a body, headed by the boatswain, Sass Jowler, and Growles, who were deputed to be spokesmen, to the quarterdeck, where the captain was walking.

"I axes you, Captain Longfleet, whether you think this ere stuff is fit food for British seamen?" said the boatswain, holding up a piece of the pork at the end of a two-pronged fork.

"It makes um sick to cook it," said Caesar, who was standing behind the rest.

"And I wants to know, in the name of the crew, whether this 'ere biscuit as is all alive with maggots, is the stuff we poor fellows forward should be made to put into our mouths?" cried Growles.

"What's that you're talking about, you mutinous rascals?" cried the captain; "stop a bit, and I'll answer you."

Saying this, he sprang back into the cabin, and while the men stood staring at the door without advancing, he reappeared with a pistol in the one hand and a cutlass in the other. I observed that he had a second pistol in his belt.

"You know I never miss my aim, you scoundrels. The first man that utters a word on the subject I'll shoot through the head. The food's good enough for better men than you, so be off forward, and let this be the last time I hear any complaint. If not, look out for squalls."

The men stood irresolute, and no one liked to run the chance of having a pistol-bullet sent through his head.

"Are you going, you villains?" thundered the captain, pointing his pistol at the boatswain.

He used a good many other stronger expletives, which need not be repeated.

The boatswain was a bold fellow, but his courage gave way, and he stepped back. The others, overawed by the determined manner of the captain, imitated the example of their leader, knowing that the pistol might be turned towards any one who stood his ground, and together they retreated forward, tumbling over each other in their endeavour to put as wide a distance as possible between themselves and their now furious commander.

For my part, I felt a greater amount of respect for him than I had ever done before. His eye did not for a moment quail, his arm appeared as firm as iron. Had he shown the slightest hesitation, the men, in the temper they were in, would have been upon him, and he would have lost his authority.

Mark and I remained at one side of the deck, where we happened to be at the time. Tom Trivett had not come aft, having refused to take any part in the affair, whereby he gained still greater ill-will than before from his shipmates.

The discontent which had thus shown itself, though kept down for a time, was by no means quelled. We had to eat the food, bad as it was, though perhaps not altogether as bad as the samples exhibited to the captain.

The third mate came forward much oftener than before, and tried hard to win back the men into something like good-humour, but his efforts were unavailing.

"You see, Mr Simmons, as how we poor fellows have got to work hard, and except we gets good grub we can't do it," I heard the boatswain remark in an insinuating tone; "it's very hard lines for us to have to eat rancid pork and weevilly bread, when we knows well enough that the captain and mates has good grub in the cabin. Share and share alike, and we sha'n't complain. But we must abide by it till the ship gets into harbour, and then we suppose that the captain will be getting good stores aboard and will serve out fresh meat and vegetables."

"Oh! Of course he'll do that," said Mr Simmons, pleased, as he thought,

at having brought the men to reason. "You know Captain Longfleet is a just man, though he's a determined one, and won't stand nonsense. Everything will go well, I hope, by-and-by."

I should have observed that our boatswain held a very different position among the crew to that occupied by a warrant officer on board a man-of-war. He was merely one of the men, and was so called from certain duties he had to perform, and was a sort of link between the officers and the crew.

We were now in the tropics. When there was a breeze the heat was supportable enough, but when it fell calm we could scarcely bear our clothes on, and went about in shirts and trousers, with bare feet, and were glad to have the opportunity of getting into the shade. The pitch boiled up out of the seams, and old Growles declared that he could cook a beefsteak on the capstan-head, if he only had a beefsteak to cook.

The heat did not improve the temper of the men, and the ship became to Mark and me a regular hell afloat. Matters were almost as bad with Tom Trivett, but he could hold his own better than we could.

One day Mark came to me.

"I say, Dick," he exclaimed—a common fate had made us equal, and he had long ago dropped the master—"I've been hearing that to-morrow we're to cross the line. I wonder what sort of place we shall get into on t'other side; as far as I can make out, it's a kind of bar, and those who go over it for the first time have to pay toll to old Daddy Neptune, who is coming aboard to collect his dues."

I was surprised that Mark had never heard of the line, and so I tried to explain to him what it was. As to Neptune coming on board, I knew that that was all nonsense, and so I told him.

During that evening and the next morning some of the men were busily engaged in their berth, into which they allowed no one but themselves to enter.

Soon after noon the captain, having taken his observations, gave notice that we were about to cross the line. Mark and I had been sent aft, when

we heard a voice hail as if from under the bows.

“What ship is that?”

“The ‘Emu,’” answered the captain, who with the officers was standing on the poop.

“Where did you come from, and for what port are you bound?” asked the voice.

“From Liverpool, and we’re bound to Rio and round Cape Horn,” answered the captain.

“All right, Captain Longfleet; with your leave my wife and I will pay you a visit and bring some of our children and attendants, and if you have any youngsters who have not crossed the line before, we shall have a word to say to them.”

“You’re welcome, Father Neptune, for I suppose no one else would be desirous of giving me a call out in these seas.”

It was amusing to observe Mark’s look of astonishment when immediately afterwards a party of grotesque figures appeared clambering over the bows. The first was an old fellow with a long white beard, a gold paper crown on his head, and a sceptre in his hand, and dressed in a flowing robe painted all over with curious devices. With him came a huge woman, also wearing a crown and garments of many colours, a necklace of huge beads and a couple of clasp-knives hanging down from either side of her face to serve as ear-rings; another figure followed them equally curiously dressed, with a basin under one arm, a pair of sailmaker’s shears hanging round his neck, and a piece of rusty hoop shaped like a razor in his hand. A fourth person, tall and gaunt, was seen in a cocked-hat, a thick cane in one hand, and a box of pills of large proportions in the other. Following them came a party of monsters in green dresses with long tails, and heads covered by oakum wigs.

The captain, wishing to humour the men, shouted out—

“Glad to see your majesty on board my ship. You’re welcome to come aft and look out for any of those whose acquaintance you have not before

made.”

On this the whole gang came tramping aft. Mark and I saw that their eyes were fixed upon us. We had no place to fly to but up the mizen rigging. We made the attempt, but were quickly caught by some of the monsters, who managed to climb up in spite of their tails.

The barber had in the meantime placed a huge tub on the deck, and a couple of small casks. On these we were compelled to sit down, when he immediately with a paint-brush began to daub our faces over with the contents of a bucket of grease. He then drew out his razor, and scraped us in the most cruel fashion, taking off the skin at every stroke.

The doctor in the meanwhile, with mock solemnity, felt our pulses, and then observing that we were terribly sick, crammed one of the boluses out of his box into our mouths, and forced it down with his tarry finger.

“A bath would do them good,” he growled out.

We were seized, and soused head over heels in a tub till we were well-nigh drowned. In vain we struggled and shrieked. Every time we opened our mouths the barber shoved his brush into them, and the monsters then ducked our heads under water to wash them out, as they said.

More dead than alive we were at last allowed to go, but had scarcely strength left to crawl away.

Tom Trivett was next dragged aft, though he declared that he had often crossed the line. Daddy Neptune refused, however, to believe him, protesting that he had never seen his face in those parts before. Though he fought bravely he was overpowered, and was even worse treated than we had been, the monsters, aided by the doctor and barber and Mrs Neptune, holding his arms and legs.

The captain and officers all the time in no way interfered, but seemed to enjoy the cruel sport. They wished, indeed, to allow the sailors to take their full fling according to their barbarous fancies.

Mark and I, seeing how our friend was treated, attempted to go to his rescue, but we had better have remained quiet, both for his sake and our

own, for we were cuffed and kicked even worse than before, and with difficulty again made our escape.

A double allowance of grog was served out, which made the men even more savage than before; and when they were tired of ill-treating us they took to rough play among themselves. Daddy Neptune's crown was torn off, his sceptre broken in two, his wife was despoiled of her finery; the doctor's hat and spectacles shared the same fate; he was made to swallow his own pills, and the barber had his brush nearly shoved down his throat.

They would have come to serious blows had not the captain ordered them to knock off and return to their duty. The mates, with boats' stretchers in their hands, had to rush in among them before they could be induced to desist. Not until a breeze sprang up, and they were ordered aloft to make sail, were they brought into anything like order.

For days afterwards Mark and I limped about the deck, with aching heads and sore faces, and Tom Trivett could with difficulty get through his duty.

This relaxation of discipline had no good effect on the men. They still grumbled and growled as much as ever at every meal over the food served out to them.



Chapter Sixteen.

Land ho!—Cape Frio—The Sugar-loaf Mountain—The Castle of Santa Cruz—The harbour of Rio de Janeiro—A taste of fruit—We receive some passengers—A gale springs up—Man overboard—Poor Tom Trivett—Captain Longfleet's inhumanity—Mark and I are treated worse—I overhear a conversation—A proposed mutiny—The plot—Differences will arise—Who's to be captain?—I determine to reveal the plot—I consult with Mark—Our determination—Southern latitudes—The Southern Cross—The Falkland Islands—Mark escapes, but I am retaken—Highland blood—Mark's probable fate—A battle with an albatross.

"Land ho!" was shouted from the masthead. In a short time we came off Cape Frio, a high, barren, almost insular, promontory, which runs into the Atlantic to the eastward of Rio de Janeiro. We stood on, the land appearing to be of a great height behind the beach, till we came in sight of the Sugar-loaf Mountain; the light land wind preventing us from entering the harbour, we had to stand off and on during the night.

"Well, I've made up my mind to get a precious good tuck out," I heard old Growles say to the boatswain; "I suppose the skipper will order a good store of provisions aboard after the talk we had with him the other day."

"Not so sure of that, old ship," said the boatswain; "but if he doesn't, he'd better look out for squalls, as he said to us."

The other men were rejoicing in the expectation of a hearty meal and wholesome food, and so indeed were Mark and I; for we were not better off than the rest, except that Mark occasionally got some pickings at the captain's table, and now and then, when he could manage it, brought me some.

Next morning a sea-breeze setting in, we stood towards the harbour, and as the fog lifted, several small islands near its mouth came into sight, and the Sugar-loaf Mountain loomed up high on the left, while on the right we saw the battlements of the Castle of Santa Cruz, which stands at the foot of the mountain. As we passed under the guns of the fortress, we were

hailed by a stentorian voice, which came out from among the stone-built walls, but the speaker was not seen.

“What ship is that? Where do you come from? How many days out?”

The captain answered the questions through his speaking-trumpet as we glided by. We at length came to an anchor about a mile from the city of Rio de Janeiro, in one of the most beautiful and picturesque harbours in the world. I can't stop to describe it, or the fine-looking city, or the curiously-shaped boats filled with black, brown, and white people, though the whites were decidedly in the minority; indeed some of them could be only so called by courtesy. To our disappointment no one was allowed to go on shore. The captain and second mate almost immediately took a country boat and pulled for the landing-place.

“I suppose they intend to send us off some grub,” said old Growles, in a voice loud enough for them to hear; but they took no notice, and pulled on. We waited in anxious expectation for the arrival of the provisions, but no boats appeared. It looked very much as if the captain had forgotten our necessities. At last a small one came alongside with fruit and vegetables, which those who had money eagerly purchased. I had a few shillings remaining in my pocket, but Mark had nothing, and I insisted on buying enough for him and myself. Mark declined taking them from me, saying he could do very well without them; but I pressed him, and we discussed a couple of dozen oranges between us. How delicious they tasted! We both felt like different creatures. Those of the crew who had money were put into much better humour, but the rest were more sulky than ever.

In the evening the boats brought off some fresh water, but no provisions. When the captain came on board at night we learnt that he had refused to purchase any, on account of their high price. Whether this was the case or not I don't know, but it made the men very angry. Next day he went on shore again, returning in the afternoon with four gentlemen, whom we heard were going as passengers round to Columbia River, in North America.

We soon found, from hearing them speak, that they were Scotch, and of this I had no doubt when I learned their names, which were McTavish,

McDonald, McKay, and Fraser. Their vessel had been wrecked off Cape Frio, and notwithstanding the character borne by Captain Longfleet, they were glad to have an opportunity of continuing their voyage in the "Emu." Just before daybreak a small boat came alongside with fruit and vegetables; but they were all for the cabin, and the crew were none the better for them.

Next morning we sailed at daybreak with a land wind, followed by three or four other vessels, some bound round Cape Horn, others to cross the Atlantic. They were still in sight when it came on to blow very hard. In a short time a sea got up which made the ship tumble about in a way I had not experienced since I had been down in the hold. The captain stood on, wanting to keep ahead of the other vessels. The topmasts bent like willow wands, and every moment looked as if they would go over the sides. We carried on, however, until it was nearly dark, when he ordered the hands aloft to reef sails. I had not as yet been ordered to perform this duty, but Mark was as active as any one. He and Tom were on the lee fore-topsail yard-arm. Two reefs had already been taken in when the sail had to be closely reefed. It was now quite dark. The operation was being performed, when there was a cry from forward of "A man overboard!" To round the ship to might have been hazardous; but the second mate, who was the best of the officers, at once shouted out for volunteers to lower the boat.

"Hold hard," says the captain; "I'll not have the hands thrown away for a careless, useless lubber who can't hold fast."

I had run aft when I heard some one say that the man who had gone was Tom Trivett. Without waiting for orders I hove overboard an oar and a hen-coop, with half-a-dozen cackling hens in it, which not having been properly secured, had fetched away. In my excitement I was proceeding to throw some spars and other articles into the sea, when the captain, catching sight of me, ordered me to desist.

"Let the fellow drown," he exclaimed; "it's his own fault, and it'll be a lesson to the rest of you."

Though the men had no love for Tom Trivett, bad as they were these remarks greatly enraged them.

“He cares no more for our lives than he does for that of a dog. It would have been just the same if any of us had gone,” exclaimed several of them.

The passengers were very indignant at the captain's barbarity. Two of them had been ready to go in the boat, and they all declared that the seaman might have been saved if proper efforts had immediately been made. I heard the captain in a peremptory tone tell them to hold their tongues, as they knew nothing about the matter. He was captain of the ship, and would act as he thought fit, and not endanger her safety for the sake of a single man who was not worth his salt. I deeply grieved for Tom since I discovered that he had been my firm friend, and I truly believed that I owed my life to him. Had it been daylight we might have watched to see whether he had got hold of any of the things thrown overboard, but almost immediately after he fell he was lost to view. The gale lasted only a short time. We made sail again as soon as we could, and quickly lost sight of the other vessels.

Now that Tom Trivett had gone, my position became harder than ever, as I had no friend to stand up for me. I had often been protected by him when the others were inclined to bully me, and thus escaped many a cuff and kick. Julius Caesar was the only person who befriended me, and he didn't dare to do so openly. He often, indeed, appeared to be bullying me worse than the rest. I had been ordered to assist in cleaning his pots and pans, and sweeping out the caboose. Whenever the rigging had to be blacked down I was sent to do it, and was called to perform all the dirty jobs. The men, knowing I was a gentleman's son, took pleasure in seeing me thus employed. Mark would willingly have helped me, but he was always sent aft to some other work when seen near me.

I would gladly have changed places with him, but he told me that he was as badly off as I was forward, for he got as much kicked about by the captain and officers as I was by the men.

I had no one to talk to, for I could seldom get the opportunity of saying much to him. I felt that I had not a friend aboard. The men, when they had exhausted a few fresh provisions which they themselves had purchased, again began to grumble at the bad quality of their food. They took care, however, to say nothing when the third mate was forward, but

they went about their duty in a manner which it seemed surprising he did not observe.

One evening, being my watch below, still feeling the effect of the rough handling I had endured, I had crept into my berth to be out of the way of my persecutors. Mark, as usual, was attending to his duties in the cabin.

I had fallen asleep, when I was awakened by hearing some men speaking close to me, though it was too dark to see who they were, and even if they had looked into my berth they would not have discovered me; but I recognised the voices of old Growles and the boatswain, and two other men, who were the worst of the crew and the leading spirits for bad on board. I was not much alarmed, though I scarcely dared to breathe for fear of attracting their notice. I cannot repeat all they said, for they frequently made allusions which they knew that each other understood; but I heard enough to convince me that they were hatching a plot to overpower the officers and passengers, and to take the vessel into Buenos Aires, or some other place on the banks of the River Plate. One of the men proposed killing them and throwing them overboard. Old Growles suggested that they should be put into a boat and allowed to shift for themselves, just as their officers were treated by the mutineers of the "Bounty." The boatswain said that he thought the best way of treating them would be to put them on shore on some desert island far-away to the southward, seldom visited by ships, so that they could not make their escape.

"But they'll die of hunger, if you do that," remarked another man.

"They'll die, at all events, so it matters little," answered the boatswain. "Our business is to get rid of them, and either to go cruising on our own account, or to sell the ship at a Spanish port to the westward, and enjoy ourselves on what we get for her."

"Dead men tell no tales," muttered the first speaker.

"Heave them overboard at once, and we shall be done with them."

"I'm not for that sort of thing," said old Growles. "I shouldn't like to see their white faces as they dropped astern; they'd be haunting us, depend on that."

The boatswain and the others laughed.

“Who’s to take the ship round Cape Horn, if we do away with the officers?” asked one of the men.

“I know enough navigation for that,” said the boatswain, “it won’t be a long job.”

“Then I suppose you intend to turn captain. Is that it?” said another man.

“We don’t want no captain aboard.”

“If the ship was caught in a squall, you’d soon be calling out for some one to command you. Call me what you will, there’s no man, except myself, knows how to navigate the ship when the officers are gone.”

“I sees what you are after, boatswain,” said old Growles. “We should be just getting rid of one captain, and having another like him in his place. We must all be free and equal aboard, or it’ll never do. I propose that one is captain one day, and one another; and that you, if you can, or any one else, shall navigate the ship. Otherwise one man’s as good as another, to my mind, and knows as well as you how to make or shorten sail.”

“Well, I don’t see how that can tell one way or the other,” said the boatswain, who evidently didn’t like the turn the conversation was taking.

To me it seemed that the villains were ready for any mischief, but had not wit enough to carry it out. I lay as quiet as a mouse, scarcely venturing to breathe, for I knew that they would not scruple to put an end to me should they discover me, and fancy that I was awake and had overheard them. I determined, should I be found out, to pretend to be fast asleep. They talked on for some time longer, till all hands were summoned on deck to shorten sail. I was considering, as well as I could, what I had better do. The captain and officers had ill-treated me, but that was no reason I should allow them to be murdered, if I could in any way warn them of the danger, while the guiltless passengers must be saved at all costs. I thought that if I told Captain Longfleet, he would treat my statement as a cock-and-bull story, and declare I had been dreaming. Probably I should be sent off with a kick and a cuff, and the crew would hear that I had informed against them. I thought, however, that I would

tell the second mate, who was better disposed, and far more sensible than the rest of the officers. Then it occurred to me that I had better consult Mark first, and hear what he thought. Perhaps he would consider it wiser to speak to one of the passengers, three of whom were determined-looking men. The fourth, Mr Alexander Fraser, was much younger, and I liked his appearance. He had given me a kind nod sometimes when I went aft. Their presence prevented the captain and officers from ill-treating Mark and me as much as usual. We were therefore inclined to regard them with a friendly spirit. I finally came to the conclusion to tell Mr Fraser what I had heard, if I could get the opportunity of speaking to him out of hearing of the rest of the crew, though that might be difficult. I knew that, after all, I must be guided by circumstances. The would-be mutineers talked on, and might have talked on for a whole watch, had not all hands been summoned on deck to shorten sail. I waited till they had gone up the rigging, and then crept out. The ship had been struck by a squall. Sheets were flying, blocks rattling, officers shouting, and a number of the men on deck pulling and hauling, made a hubbub so that I escaped aft unperceived, and was able to join Mark at one of the ropes it was his duty to attend to. As there was no one near, I was able to tell him by snatches what I had heard.

"I'm not surprised," he answered. "The villains would murder their own mothers or grandmothers if they could gain anything by it; but I only doubt whether they will venture to attack the captain."

"Still, we must let one of the officers know, or else their blood will be upon our heads. I propose warning Mr Fraser, or one of the other gentlemen," I observed.

"That will do," said Mark. "Either you or I may find a chance to speak to one of them; but there's no time to be lost, for we can't say at what moment these ruffians may take it into their heads to carry out their villainous designs. We must be careful, however, that they don't suspect us of giving the information, or they might heave us overboard some dark night without ceremony."

Some time was occupied in taking in the canvas, but in the course of an hour the squall passed off, and we had again to make sail.

While this was being done, Mark and I had time to discuss the matter.

That night, while it was my watch, I managed to get aft, where I found a person walking the deck, occasionally stopping and gazing at the bright stars overhead, the southern cross and others so different from those of the northern hemisphere. I waited till he had gone right aft out of earshot of the man at the wheel. I knew by his figure that it was Mr Fraser, so I went boldly up to him.

"I have got something to say to you," I whispered. "It's of great consequence. I mustn't speak loud."

I then briefly told him that I had heard the men propose to get rid of the officers and passengers in some way or other.

"I've already heard something of this from your young messmate, but I'm very incredulous about it," he answered.

"Pray don't be that, sir," I said. "Your life, and the lives of many others besides, depends on your believing the truth of what I say and taking measures to protect yourselves;" and I then told him more circumstantially what I had heard. He now seemed to listen attentively, and evidently considered that there was something in what I had said.

"I'm very much obliged to you for the information you have given, and I'll consult my friends on the subject," he answered. "The captain seems to be a man who will know well how to deal with the villains, if what you say is true. We'll tell him what has come to our ears."

"Indeed what I say is true," I exclaimed with energy. "They may be upon you at any moment, while you are unprepared."

"Well, laddie, I'll lose no time," said Mr Fraser; and, afraid that if we remained much longer we might be observed by some of the men, I crept forward under the shadow of the bulwarks.

I waited anxiously during the remainder of the watch to see what would occur; but as the men turned in, I was thankful to find that they had no intention of carrying out their project that night, and it was not likely that they would do anything in the daytime, when their movements would be

observed by the officers. My only fear was that they might have seen Mark and me talking to Mr Fraser, and might have their suspicions aroused. If so, Mark and I would run, I knew, great risk of being knocked on the head as soon as darkness again came on. I therefore kept a sharp look out whilst I was on deck during the night, though I had an uncomfortable feeling that I might possibly be smothered in my sleep, or that Mark might be treated in the same way. Daylight, however, returned without anything having occurred.

On meeting Mark, I expressed my fears to him.

“Do you know, Dick, I was thinking of the same thing, and I have made up my mind to cut and run on the first opportunity, and I advise you to do the same thing. Indeed, I should not be happy if I left you behind; in truth, I would not run unless you promise to desert also.”

“That I will, with all my heart, though I don’t think that Mr Fraser and the other gentlemen are likely to allow themselves to be taken by surprise, or to neglect putting the officers on their guard.”

“They can’t protect us; and the men, if they find themselves even suspected, will certainly think that we informed on them.”

Whenever we had the opportunity, Mark and I discussed our plans for escaping. As far as we could judge, the officers and passengers were at their ease, and didn’t act as if they thought any mutiny would occur. As the weather was now getting cold, the passengers had an excuse for coming on deck in their cloaks; and one day, when Mr Fraser’s blew aside, I observed that he had a brace of pistols in his belt. They also brought their rifles on deck, and amused themselves by firing at passing birds, sometimes at porpoises, sharks, and other monsters of the deep who showed their backs above water. I guessed at last, by the looks of the men, that they saw that the passengers were on their guard. Even the third mate didn’t come forward as he had been accustomed to do; and at night, what was very unusual, there were two officers on deck at a time. We had now contrary winds and thick weather, which greatly delayed us for several days. No observations were taken.

One morning land was discovered on the weather bow, which, the

captain said, was the coast of South America, and he carefully kept along shore in order to pass between the Falkland Islands and the main land; but at noon, when a meridian observation had been obtained, he found that what he had at first supposed to be the main land was in reality the Falkland Islands. We had for many days been sailing entirely by dead reckoning, while the current had set us out of our course. As we had not taken a full supply of water on board at Rio, and, owing to the bursting of the butt, which had frightened me so much, we had less on board than usual, the captain steered for one of the islands, where he knew that it could be obtained.

We came to an anchor about half a mile from the shore just at sunset. As it would take the crew the whole day to get water, which had to be rolled down in small casks to the beach and brought on board, the passengers expressed their intention of making a shooting excursion on shore to kill some wild cattle—of which there are numbers in the island—or any other animals or birds they might fall in with. As the captain had no objection to having a supply of beef without cost to himself, he agreed to let them have a boat the next morning to take them on shore. They asked for one or two of the men to carry the meat. The captain said that they could not be spared, but finally told them that they could take Mark and me, as we were of little use on board.

“Now,” whispered Mark, “is our opportunity. If there are cattle, we shall have some meat to live on; and I propose that we hide ourselves away, so that when the gentlemen return on board we shall be missing.”

The captain, we were sure, would not take the trouble to look for us. I agreed, provided that from the appearance of the island we should have the chance of obtaining food and shelter; if not, we might die of starvation, and it would be better to endure our miseries, and the danger we ran of our lives, for a short time longer than to do that.

“Well, as to that we must see about it,” answered Mark.

Soon after, our watch being over, we turned into our respective bunks. I didn't feel altogether comfortable, not knowing what the men might do to us. For some time I lay awake, for I wanted to be on the watch, lest any trick should be attempted, but at length dropped off to sleep. As we were

in harbour, only an anchor watch was kept, and I was allowed to have my night's rest out, from which I rose fresh and ready for anything some time before daybreak. Mark, who had gone aft to call the gentlemen, returned with an order for me to get ready to go in the boat. Sufficient provisions for the party were put into the boat; and the gentlemen, taking their rifles and pistols with them, and with their swords at their sides, we shoved off, the boat being partly laden with empty water-casks. As there was not room for Mark and me forward, we sat aft with the gentlemen, when Mr Fraser talked in a friendly way to Mark and me. I saw the men eyeing us savagely at this; and I thought to myself at the moment, "Those villains suspect that we have had something to do in putting the gentlemen on their guard." I answered Mr Fraser, however, and he went on talking to me. We landed not far from where the casks were to be filled with water. The gentlemen then, taking their guns, divided the provisions between themselves and us, and we set off towards the interior of the island, where we hoped to meet with the wild cattle. There was nothing attractive in its appearance. Here and there were low scrubby woods, and the country generally was covered with thick patches of tussack grass, which, at a distance, gave it the appearance of being green and fertile. Between the patches, the soil was dry and sandy, so that it cost us much fatigue to make our way over it.

We had seen plenty of wild cattle, but the gentlemen had not yet succeeded in killing any. They winded us on all occasions on our approach, and scampered off beyond the limit of rifle range. At last the gentlemen agreed to separate by going in small parties, and thus hoped to get nearer to the creatures. Mr Fraser invited Mark to go with him, and Mr McTavish took me; the other two gentlemen went together. Before starting they deposited their provisions inside of a hollow in a high bank, which, from its position, was easily to be found, and they agreed to return to dinner. If any one of the party killed an animal, he was to summon the rest to carry the meat. The object of the gentlemen was to kill as many animals as they could; for, as the weather was cool, it was hoped that the meat would last until we were well round Cape Horn. The island was of good size, but still there did not appear to be much risk of our losing our way. Mr Fraser, who was the most active of the party, said that he should go to the further end of the island and work his way back; that he was determined to kill some birds, if he couldn't knock over a cow.

“Remember,” whispered Mark to me, “that I shall slip away; and you do the same, and come and join me.”

To this I agreed. Mr McTavish and I went away to the right. We had been looking out for cattle for some time when we heard two shots, and from the top of a hill we saw the two other gentlemen, standing by a couple of cattle they had shot.

“Come, Dick,” said Mr McTavish; “though we cannot boast of killing a beast ourselves, we must go and help them.”

I thought that this would be a good opportunity to escape, and while he went down one side of the hill I proposed running down the other. I was just going when he caught sight of me.

“Hillo, youngster, where are you going to?” he cried out; and he came after me evidently with no intention of letting me escape. On getting up with me, he inquired, “What made you try to run off? Come, tell me as we go along.” He spoke very kindly.

At last I confessed that I had determined to run away from the ship in consequence of the ill-treatment I had received.

“You would have been starved to death in the midst of plenty,” he said in a kind tone. “Had the island been fertile, and you could have supported yourself, I, for one, would never have hindered you, for I have observed the way the officers and men behave to you. But for the future I think we can prevent that. I have a notion that we owe our lives to you and your messmate, and we’re grateful to you for it; so come along, and don’t again attempt to run away.”

He spoke so kindly that at last I promised to follow his advice, hoping that Mr Fraser would also have prevented Mark from hiding himself, and would induce him to come back likewise. The gentlemen fired several shots to attract Mr Fraser’s attention, but none were heard in return. They, in the meantime, cut up the animals and loaded themselves with as much as they could stagger under. The rest they covered up closely with the hides so as to keep the flies off, proposing to send some of the men for it. With our loads we returned to the place where we had left our dinner. As we were all very hungry we didn’t wait for Mr Fraser, but set to

at once, expecting that he and Mark would appear before we had finished. We waited, however, for some time, the gentlemen lighting their pipes to enjoy a smoke.

“I’m afraid that young companion of yours has bolted, and that Fraser is delayed by looking for him,” observed Mr McTavish. “We can’t delay much longer if we’re to save the flesh,” said Mr McDonald. “Fraser knows what he’s about; he will easily make his way down to the beach by the landing-place in the morning, and we must send a boat on shore for him.” As the day was advancing the others agreed to this proposal; and, leaving the remainder of our provisions for Mr Fraser and Mark, we set off. It was almost dark as we approached the harbour, and I began to fear that the crew would have taken the opportunity of attacking the officers—perhaps would have got the ship under weigh, and left us to our fate. I didn’t, however, mention my fears to any one. I was greatly relieved when I made out through the gloom the ship at anchor, and soon after, the boat close to the beach.

Old Growles answered Mr McDonald’s hail. I observed that my companions had examined their pistols and reloaded their rifles, so that they would be on their guard should any treachery be attempted.

On arriving on board, the captain received the gentlemen in a somewhat surly way, and inquired why Mr Fraser had not returned.

Mr McDonald replied, that we had waited for him, and that he had not appeared; but they expected that he would turn up on the beach on the following morning; if not, they proposed going in search of him.

“There won’t be time for that,” said Captain Longfleet. “We have got all the water we require on board to-night. If passengers choose to go on shore and not return at the time they are told to do, they must take the consequences.”

Mr McDonald’s Highland blood was up in a moment. “You have made a great mistake if you suppose that we will allow our friend to be deserted. We intend to go on shore to-morrow, and must beg to take two or three of your men with us, to ascertain what has become of Fraser and his young companion,” he exclaimed.

“We shall see who commands this ship,” cried the captain, turning on his heel and entering the cabin, outside of which this scene took place.

This was nuts to the crew, who must have perceived that if there was division aft they had a good chance of succeeding in their project.

Next morning, at daybreak, the hands were turned up to get the ship under weigh. Directly after, Mr McDonald and the other gentlemen came on deck. “We protest against this proceeding, Captain Longfleet,” he exclaimed.

“I told you that if Mr Fraser chooses to absent himself at the time I was prepared to sail, he must take the consequences. It may delay us a whole day if we send to search for him,” answered the captain.

“If it delays us a week we must look for him till he’s found,” exclaimed Mr McDonald, drawing a pistol. “Get the ship under weigh at your peril.”

Bold as Captain Longfleet was, he quailed under the eye of the determined fur trader.

“Hurrah! There’s our friend,” cried Mr McTavish. “We must send a boat for him, and that will settle this dispute, I hope.”

“A boat shall not leave the ship,” cried Captain Longfleet. “I can’t spare the men.”

“I say again, get the ship under weigh at your peril,” said Mr McDonald, stepping a pace towards the captain.

None of the officers or crew attempted to interfere. Those of the latter who were near only stood observing the scene and grinning their satisfaction.

“Are you going to send a boat?” again asked Mr McDonald.

Just then another shot was fired.

“I’ll do as you wish,” replied the captain; “but I tell you it’s more than your friend deserves.”

“I will go in her,” said Mr McDonald.

“No, you can’t do that. I will send my own men; for what I know, you may delay the boat,” answered the captain.

“It matters not, provided Fraser and the lad return,” said Mr McTavish, who was inclined to conciliatory measures.

The captain now directed three of the hands to go in the smallest boat which was large enough for the purpose, while the rest were ordered to loose sails and heave up the anchor. While these precautions were going forward I observed the gentlemen watching the boat through their telescopes. She reached the shore, and after a short delay was seen returning.

I looked out anxiously for Mark, hoping that after the account I had received of the island that Mr Fraser would have brought him back. Great was my grief and disappointment when I did not see him in the boat. Still I hoped that the passengers would induce the captain to send a party on shore to look for him. I intended to ask Mr McTavish to obtain leave for me to go, for I knew that if Mark heard my voice shouting for him he would come out of his hiding-place.

No sooner had Mr Fraser stepped on board than the boat was hoisted up. On this I ran off to ask Mr McTavish to insist on the ship being delayed to allow of a search for Mark.

“We’ll do what we can, my laddie,” he answered; “though the captain doesn’t appear to be in the humour to grant any requests.”

As Mr Fraser greeted his friends, I heard him say that he had missed Mark, and supposed, after searching for him for some time, that he had joined one of our parties; and that at length he had made his way to the beach, having satisfied his hunger with some of the provisions we had left behind. It was night when he had come near the harbour; and as he knew the boat would have returned, he formed himself a nest under a bank with some tussack grass and slept soundly till daylight.

When he found that Mark had not returned, he was as eager as Mr McDonald to go in search of him, but all they could say would not move

Captain Longfleet.

“He is one of my crew, and you have no business to interfere with him,” he answered.

Mr McDonald replied, that he could not but say that this was the case, but that the lad had accompanied them, and they felt themselves answerable for his safe return.

The captain, however, would not listen, but continued shouting out his orders to the men, who obeyed them with more alacrity than usual.

I could not help thinking that they rejoiced at having thus easily got rid of Mark. For my own part I regretted not having run away also, and shared his fate, whatever that might have been. Had the distance not been so great, I should, even now, have jumped overboard and tried to join him. But the attempt would have been equivalent to suicide, and I dared not make it.

Away stood the ship out of the harbour, leaving my old friend all alone on the desert island. I pictured to myself his horror and disappointment at not seeing me; the miseries and hardships he might endure for want of food and companionship, and his too probable early death. I went about my duty in a disconsolate mood. I had now no friend to talk to. Not one of the men appeared to pity me. Even Julius Caesar uttered no word of comfort. We soon lost sight of the Falkland Islands and shaped a course to round Cape Horn. The ship was now surrounded by albatrosses, penguins, and pintado birds. Several were shot, and others taken with a hook and bait. An enormous albatross was thus hauled in, and being brought on deck fought bravely for some time before it could be killed.

Chapter Seventeen.

South Sea whaler—I write a letter home, and how far it got on its way there—The Earl of Lollipop—Mr McTavish saves me from a flogging—My prospects somewhat improve—Another storm—We lose another man—A struggle for life—Tierra del Fuego—Cape Horn—In the Pacific—The coast of Patagonia, and how we nearly got

wrecked—Juan Fernandez—Robinson Crusoe's Island—I again determine to run away, but am prevented by an offer I receive—“Shark! Shark!”—A narrow escape—Valparaiso—Callao—Paíta—The Sandwich Islands—The king and his court—Royal guests—Some queer dishes—Pooah—Am again prevented from deserting—Columbia River at last—A glimpse of freedom—A farewell dinner—An untoward incident—Once more a prisoner—My captors' fears my only safety—My friends give up the search—At sea again—My release—“Dis curious ship.”

We had left the island for some days, when we fell in with a homeward-bound South Sea whaler. As the ocean was calm, and the wind light, her captain came on board and politely offered to convey any message or letters home. “Now,” I thought, “will be an excellent opportunity of returning home. I'm sick of this life, and shall be glad to go back to Mr Butterfield's office and the high stool, and listen to Aunt Deb's lectures.” How to accomplish my purpose was the difficulty. I went up to the captain of the whaler.

“I'm a gentleman's son,” I said; “I came off to sea unintentionally, and I want to go home again.”

He gave a loud “Whew!” as I said this.

“I can't take you, my lad, without your captain's leave,” he answered. “If he gives it, I shall be happy to do so.”

Captain Longfleet just then came out of the cabin.

“I don't know how he came on board, but here he is and here he'll remain,” he said, as the captain of the whaler spoke to him. “Go forward,” he said to me, “and think yourself fortunate to escape a flogging for your impudence.”

However, I persevered, and turning to Mr McTavish, asked him kindly to say a word for me. Captain Longfleet in reply told him that he had no business to interfere.

“I've lost one boy through you gentlemen, and I'm not going to lose another,” he answered.

In vain Mr McDonald and the other gentlemen spoke to him; he replied in his usual rough way.

“I’m sorry, my lad, that I can’t take you out of the ship without your captain’s permission,” said the whaling captain; “but if you’ll get a letter scribbled off, I’ll undertake to post it.”

I had neither paper, pens, nor ink, but Mr McTavish, hearing what was said, instantly brought me some, and I ran off into the berth to write it, hoping that I should be there undisturbed. I had great difficulty in penning the letter; and while I was kneeling down at the chest, old Growles came in and mocked at me, and another fellow asked me whether I was sending a love-letter to my dearie, and a third gave me a knock on the elbow, which splattered the ink over the paper and nearly upset the ink-bottle. Still I wrote on.

“Ship ‘Emu,’ somewhere off Cape Horn.

“My dear Father,—I didn’t intend to run away, but tumbled down into the hold and was carried off. When I came to myself I found that I was at sea, and could not get out of my prison. I lived there for I don’t know how many days, till, when almost dead, I was released. I have been treated worse than a dog ever since by the captain, officers, and men. He’s a terrible tyrant and brute, and if it had not been for Mark Riddle—whom, wonderful to say, I found on board the ship—he and his mates would have been knocked on the head and hove overboard.

“I would much rather be seated on the high stool in Mr Butterfield’s office than where I am. I wanted to return home, but the captain wouldn’t let me. I intend, however, to run on the first opportunity, and to get back if I can. I tried to get away in the Falkland Islands, but was prevented. Mark succeeded, and was left behind. Whether he’ll manage to live there I don’t know, but I hope he will, and get back to Sandgate one of these days, I have no time to write more; so with love to mother, and my brothers and sisters, and even to Aunt Deb—

“I remain your affectionate son—

“Richard Cheveley.”

“PS—Please tell old Riddle all about his son.”

I hurriedly folded this letter, and addressed it to the Reverend John Cheveley, Sandgate, England; and having no wax, I sealed it with a piece of pitch which I hooked out of a seam in the deck. I rushed out, intending to give it into the hands of the captain of the whaler; but what was my dismay to see his boat pulling away from the ship. I shouted and waved my letter, thinking that he would return; but at that moment the third mate snatched the letter out of my hand, and waved to the men in the boat to pull on. I turned round, endeavouring to recover the letter, but instead got a box on the ear. I made another snatch at it.

“What’s this about, you young rascal?” shouted the captain; “give me the letter, Simmons. You’ll try next to take it out of my hands, I suppose.”

In spite of all my efforts to regain it, the mate handed the letter to the captain, who, looking at the superscription, at once tore it open. He glanced at the commencement and end.

“So you pretend to be a gentleman’s son, you young scapegrace,” he exclaimed. “You’ll not get me to believe such a tale. Why, bless my heart, the last voyage I had a fellow who was always writing to the Earl of Lollipop, and signing himself his son. The men called him My Lord. He was made to black down the rigging, notwithstanding, and polish up the pots and pans. He was found at last to be a chimney-sweeper’s son.”

I was convinced that the captain said this to be heard by the passengers, and to try and throw discredit on me, as they were already inclined to treat me kindly, through seeing that I was at all events a boy of education; and from the service I had already rendered them in giving them warning of the crew’s design. I was in hopes that the captain would let me have my letter back, but to my dismay he again looked at it and read it. I saw a thunder-cloud gathering on his brow; his lips quivered with rage; I cannot repeat the terms he applied to me.

“And so, you young anatomy, you dare to call me a tyrant and a brute,” he shouted out in a hoarse voice; “to write all sorts of lies of me to your friends at home. You see that yard-arm. Many a fellow has been run up for a less offence. Look out for yourself. If the crew don’t finish you off

before the voyage is over, I'll make you wish you had never set foot on the deck of the 'Emu.'"

"I wish I never had," I exclaimed.

"What! You dare speak to me," roared the captain. "Here, Mr Simmons, take this mutinous young rascal and give him three dozen. We'll keel-haul him next, if that doesn't bring him into order."

Here the passengers interfered. Mr McTavish declared that he would not stand by and let me be unjustly punished.

"If it were not for young Cheveley, where should we be by this time, Captain Longfleet?" he asked. "You know as well as we do what was intended. If your mate attempts to touch him, he must take the consequences."

The captain was silent for some minutes. Perhaps some sense of what was right overcame his ill-feeling.

"Let him go, Simmons," he said, turning to the mate. "It's lucky for you, boy, that this letter was not sent," he said, looking at me. He tore it up and threw the fragments overboard. "Remember that the next time you write home, I intend to have a look at your letter. You may let your friends know where you are, but you can't accuse me of carrying you away from home."

As the captain turned from me, I thought that the best thing I could do was to go forward. I saw two of the men, who had been within earshot while the captain was speaking, eyeing me with no friendly glances. I looked as innocent as I could; but weary though I was, when it was my watch below I was almost afraid lest I should never awake again in this world. When I was forward the men treated me as badly as ever, but I found the conduct of the captain and officers towards me greatly improved, owing to the influence of the passengers. I had frequently to go into the cabin to assist the steward, who, though he often gave me a slight cuff, never did so in the presence of my friends. Knowing that I had those on board interested in me, I bore my sufferings and annoyances with more equanimity than before. I one day, unknown to Captain Longfleet, had the opportunity of giving my father's address to Mr

McTavish. He promised to write home from the first place at which we touched. It would be useless for me to attempt writing, as my letter would, I knew, be seen and taken from me. This was some comfort. I can but briefly relate the incidents of the voyage.

While still to the southward of Cape Horn, the appearances of another heavy storm came on. The lighter canvas was instantly handed. Almost in an instant a heavy sea got up, into which the ship violently pitched as she forced her way ahead. The flying jib having been carelessly secured, the gaskets, or small ropes which bound it to the jibboom, gave way. Two hands were immediately sent out to make it fast. While they were thus employed, a tremendous sea struck the bows. One of the men, old Growles, scrambled on to the bowsprit, to which he held on like grim death, but before the other man could follow his example, the jibboom was carried away and he with it. I saw the poor fellow struggling amid the foaming seas. The captain did not on this occasion refuse to try to save him. The ship was hove-to, and pieces of timber, an empty cask, and a hen-coop, were hove overboard to give him the chance of escaping. He failed to reach any of them. Mr McTavish and two of the men and I were on the point of jumping into the jolly-boat to go to his rescue, but the captain shouted out in no gentle terms, ordering us to desist, and asked us if we wished to lose our lives also. This, if we had made the attempt, we should certainly have done. The boat could not have lived many moments in such a sea. For fully ten minutes the poor fellow was observed buffeting with the waves, but he at length disappeared. The ship was kept away, and we stood on our course. We soon afterwards perceived the snow-capped mountains of Tierra del Fuego rearing their majestic heads, and looking down on the raging waters below them.

The weather soon after moderated, and as we sighted Cape Horn the captain ordered the topgallant and royal masts to be got up, and the lighter sails to be set. With a gentle breeze from the eastward we rounded the dreaded Cape, and found ourselves in the Pacific. I heard some of the men say that they had never passed Cape Horn in such fine weather. Whales, and porpoises in countless numbers, were playing round us, and if we had had harpoons and gear on board we might have captured many of the former and filled up our ship with oil. We were not destined, however, to enjoy the fine weather long. Another gale came on and nearly drove us on the western coast of Patagonia, carrying away

our bulwarks, and doing much other damage. When within about five or six miles of the coast the wind shifted, and we once more stood off the land. We sighted the far-famed island of Juan Fernandez, the scene of Robinson Crusoe's adventures, or rather those of the real Alexander Selkirk. The ship was hove-to when we were about two miles off shore, and the pinnace and jolly-boat were sent to obtain wood and water. The passengers taking the opportunity of going also, I slipped into the boat with Mr McTavish, without being perceived by the captain. The second mate, who had charge of the boat, did not inquire whether I had leave. I was not aware till the moment before that the boat was going.

There was no time for consideration; but the hope seized me that I might manage to make my escape and remain on the island. If Robinson Crusoe lived there, so might I. A solitary life would be infinitely better, I thought, than the existence I was doomed to live on board. I said nothing to Mr McTavish, for fear he should try to prevent me. We found when approaching the shore that a heavy sea was breaking over it, and that it would be impossible to land. We soon, however, discovered that we had entered the wrong bay, and pulling out again, we got into another, where the landing was less difficult, though not free from danger. While some of the party remained on the beach to fill the water-casks and to draw a seine which had been brought to catch fish, I accompanied Mr McTavish and the other gentlemen into the interior. The island appeared to be one vast rock split into various portions. We pushed on up a deep valley. At the bottom ran a stream of fine water, from which the water-casks were filled. The valley, scarcely a hundred yards wide at the entrance, gradually widened. We climbed up the wild rocks, ascending higher and higher, startling a number of goats, which scrambled off leaping from crag to crag; some of them fine-built old fellows with long beards, who looked as if they must have been well acquainted with Robinson Crusoe himself. We frequently had to turn aside to avoid cascades, which came rushing down the mountain's side. Sometimes we were involved in the thickest gloom, and then again we emerged into bright sunlight as we gained a higher elevation. The appearance of the country was picturesque in the extreme, though it didn't tempt me to make it my residence for the remainder of my life; and then again, I considered that there must be other parts of a more gentle character where Robinson Crusoe must have resided. I had been often looking about, considering how I might accomplish my object, when Mr McTavish said, "I know what you are

thinking about, Cheveley, but for your own sake I do not intend you to succeed; and even if it were otherwise, I am bound to see you safe on board the boat. So come along. You mustn't play me any trick."

"Well, I did think that I should like to stop here and live as Robinson Crusoe did. Perhaps I might give an account of my adventures when I got home," I answered.

"The chances are that you would be starved, or break your neck, or die of some disease, and never get home; so I intend to keep an eye on you, my laddie," said my friend, in a good-natured tone. "Besides this, my friends and I propose to induce Captain Longfleet to set you at liberty when we reach the Columbia River, and you can either wait at the fort till you can hear from your father, making yourself useful there as a clerk, or you can turn fur-hunter, and lead a life which I believe would be to your taste."

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir," I said, "and accept your offer, and will not attempt to run away."

After a tiring excursion we got back to the boats just as they were about to shove off. We after this touched at Massafuero, an island mountain rising abruptly from the sea, surrounded by a narrow slip of beach. Here we obtained a vast quantity of fish and a few goats. The abundance of food contributed much to tranquillise the minds of the crew, and also, I suspect, to prevent them from carrying their plans into execution. One day when we were becalmed, several of the crew who could swim jumped overboard to take a bathe, and as I was a good swimmer I did the same, and got farther than the rest from the ship. While I was sporting about, I heard the dreadful cry of "Shark, shark!" The rest of the men quickly making for the side, clambered on board. I was swimming towards the ship, when I saw a dark fin rising between her and me. I knew what it indicated, for I had seen several sharks before. To gain the ship without encountering the monster seemed impossible. I therefore, instead of swimming on, stopped and trod water, beating the surface with my hands, and shouting out. I saw some of the men leaning over the sides with ropes. Presently there was a shout. One of the men had lowered a rope with a bowling knot into the water, when the shark in its course round the ship ran its head and upper fin between it. At this

moment it was secured to the cathead, and before the brute could get free it was hoisted on deck. I now darted forward, and seizing a rope which hung over the side hauled myself up. As I saw the monster floundering on deck, I was thankful that he had not caught me in his jaws.

“You have had a narrow escape, my laddie,” observed Mr McTavish. “It will be a lesson to you not to swim about in these latitudes.”

Not many other incidents worth relating occurred for some time.

We touched at Valparaiso, where we discharged some of our cargo, and afterwards at Callao, where we got rid of a still larger quantity. We also put into Paita farther north. As goods brought in English vessels were subject to a very high duty, or were altogether prohibited, they were smuggled on shore. Had I been so disposed I might on two or three occasions have made good my escape, but I was relying on the promise of Mr McTavish. From the coast of Peru we steered to the Sandwich Islands, of which I should like to give a description. We there took on board three of the natives, to supply the place of the men who had been lost. The king and a brace of queens, besides several chiefs and a number of white men, visited the ship. The king and his brown consorts came in a large double canoe, formed by lashing two canoes together separated by bars. Each canoe was paddled by twenty or thirty men. On the bars was raised a kind of seat, on which the ladies reposed.

Raised considerably higher than his consorts was a sort of throne placed on the top of a large arm-chest full of muskets, and on this his Sandwich Island Majesty was seated in regal state. In front of him stood a dark-skinned native, carrying a handsome silver hanger in imitation of the sword-bearers of European monarchs; behind the king sat a boy holding a basin of dark-brown wood, in which his Majesty ever and anon spat abundantly. Instead of a crown the king's head was covered by an old beaver hat. His coat was of coarse woven cloth of ancient cut, with large metal buttons. His waistcoat was of brown velvet, which had once been black, while a pair of short, tight, and well-worn velveteen pantaloons, worsted stockings, and thick-soled shoes covered his lower extremities. His shirt and cravat had been once probably white, but had attained the hue of his own swarthy skin.

On coming on deck he shook hands with every one he met between the gangway and cabin, assuring them of his affection. I had to attend at the dinner, to which the royal party were invited. The ladies, however, had to sit aside, the king taking his place at the table at the right hand of the captain, while the minister, who carried his saliva bowl, squatted behind him. He ate voraciously, and washed down the solids with numerous glasses of Madeira. He drank the health of each person present, finishing well-nigh three decanters of his favourite wine. As soon as the king, the captain, passengers, and first mate had risen, the ladies were allowed to approach their dinner, which had been cooked on shore, and was now placed on the table. It consisted of a couple of roast dogs, several dishes of small fish, and a white mixture called pooah, of the consistency of flummery.

The steward and I could scarcely keep our countenances as we saw them dipping the two forefingers of the right hand into the pooah, and after turning them round in the mixture until they were covered with three or four coats, by a dexterous twist rapidly transfer the food to their open mouths, when, with one smack of their lips, their fingers were cleared.

Their dress consisted of a cloth worn over the shoulders—a long piece of cloth wrapped in several folds—round the waist and reaching to their knees.

The king spent a part of the afternoon in going over the ship, and measuring her from stem to stern, while the ladies played draughts and beat their antagonists hollow. There were a number of English and other white men settled on the island. Two acted as the king's chief counsellors, and took an active part in all the affairs of the country, many of them having become very rich.

I may here remark, that the daughter and granddaughter of one of these gentlemen afterwards became Queen of the Sandwich Islands. The country, as far as I could see, appeared to be highly cultivated. The people in their habits and customs presented a curious mixture of savagery and civilisation.

As I gazed on the shore on which I was not permitted to set foot, I considered whether I could not manage to get away and offer my

services to the king, as I was better educated than most of those about him. I thought that I should probably rise to the highest dignities of the State; perhaps become his prime minister, his commander-in-chief, or admiral of his fleet, but I found that I was too strictly watched by old Growles and the boatswain to accomplish my object. Had Mark been with me, I had little doubt but that we should have managed to escape. I at last asked Mr McTavish if he would take me on shore.

“No, no, my laddie, I know what is running in your mind,” he said. “The natives would be too ready to assist, and I might find it difficult to prevent your being carried off and stowed away till the ship sails. You may fancy that your life would be a very pleasant one, but I know what it is to live among savages. You would, in course of time, have a brown wife given to you, and, unwilling to leave her, you would become a banished man from home and country. Follow the plan I at first proposed. If you will remain with us you will in the course of a few years make your fortune, and be able to return home and enjoy it.”

I felt that the advice given was sound, and I promised Mr McTavish not to try and run away while we remained at the Sandwich Islands. He said that the next day he would take me on shore if the captain would give me leave. Shortly after, however, we went out of harbour. We had a quick passage to the entrance of the Columbia River. A dangerous bar runs across the mouth of it, so that the captain was unwilling to enter until we had a fair wind and a favourable tide. Boats were sent ahead to sound. While thus engaged a canoe, followed by a barge, were seen coming off. The canoe, which was paddled by six naked savages, and steered by an old Indian chief, was soon alongside, but as they could not understand a word we said we could gain no information till the barge arrived, when our passengers greeted a number of their friends who had come off in her. The ship now entered the river, and came to an anchor off a fort which had been erected by the fur-traders. I never felt more happy in my life, believing that my sufferings were over, and that I should regain my liberty. I hoped that Mr McTavish and his friends would at once go on shore and take me with them; but as it was late in the day, and they heard that the accommodation in the fort was limited, they accepted the captain's pressing invitation to remain with their friends on board till next morning. A more sumptuous repast than I had yet seen was prepared. The captain produced his best wine in abundance. The steward and I had

to wait at table. The captain, when giving me my orders, spoke in a far more conciliatory tone than he had ever done before. "I suppose he wishes to make amends to me for his past conduct, and to show my friends that he has no ill-will towards me," I thought. The wine flowed freely, and hilarity and good-humour prevailed for some time, till a remark was made by one of the officers of the ship which offended a gentleman from the shore. His Highland blood being up he hove a glass of wine in the face of the mate, telling him that the bottle should follow if he didn't apologise. This the mate did, in a somewhat humble fashion, at the request of the captain, and order was restored. The wine continued to flow freely; songs were sung and speeches made, and every one appeared to be talking at once at the top of their voices. The captain at last ordered me to go on deck with a message to the second mate, who was the officer of the watch, and to come back and let him know how the ship was riding. He said this in a loud voice so that every one might hear.

I could not find the mate aft, so, supposing that he had gone forward to examine the cable, I was making my way in that direction when suddenly I found myself seized. A cloth was shoved into my mouth, and another bound over my eyes, so that I was unable to see or cry out, and I was carried down the main hatchway in the strong arms of a man whose voice I had been unable to recognise, though I fancied that he was either Growles or the boatswain. In vain I struggled to get free. On reaching, as I supposed, the spar-deck, another man bound my arms and my legs, and I was then carried still farther down into the hold, when I was shoved into some place or other, a door was shut and locked on me, and I found myself alone. I was very nearly suffocated with the cloth in my mouth, but I managed after much exertion to work it out. Having done this, I was inclined to shout; but I feared that if I did so old Growles would return and put it back, and perhaps ill-treat me into the bargain. I therefore thought it wiser to remain silent, and to try and get the handkerchief off my eyes. I lay quiet for some time to recover my breath. Though I could not move to feel about, I was convinced, by the closeness of the atmosphere, that I was in a small place—probably in a compartment of the boatswain's store-room. My next object was to get the handkerchief off my eyes, to ascertain if any light penetrated my place of confinement. It was a difficult matter to do this without hurting myself, but I tried, by turning over and rubbing the knot at the back of my head against the boards on which I lay, to work it upwards, though at the expense of making a sore place, so

tightly was it secured. At last I succeeded in getting it off. All was dark, as I had expected. The next task I undertook was to free my arms. This was a far more difficult undertaking. I made up my mind to bite through the ropes if I could get my teeth into them; but that, after many attempts, I found to be impossible. I avoided, as much as I could, drawing them tighter round my wrists. I endeavoured, by making one of my hands as small as I could, to draw it out of the knot, but again and again I was obliged to desist. Still I recollected how I had before escaped from the hold, as well as from the mill, and I repeated to myself, "Fortune favours the persevering."

I had been on foot for a number of hours; and, wearied by the exertions I had lately made, I at last began to feel very sleepy, and shortly dropped off into an uncomfortable slumber. I was awakened by a gruff voice, which I recognised as that of the boatswain.

"Gregory, I do believe the young rascal is dead," he said.

"It may save a world of trouble if he is," answered old Growles; "for those passengers are making a precious fuss about him. If he was to get ashore, he'd be telling tales. We can say he died in his sleep, and let them have his body, which will show how it happened."

"Not if he's black in the face. Here, hand the lantern, and let's have a look."

All this time I was afraid to open my eyes, or even to breathe; and I thought that, if I could sham being dead, they would carry me on deck, and I would then soon show them the contrary. I guessed that I must have rolled over with my face away from the door, so that they couldn't see it. Presently I felt a hand placed on my shoulder to draw me round. I let them move me as they liked, and I knew, from the light which I saw through my eyelids, that the rays of a lantern were cast on me. I flattered myself that I was succeeding very well, till I heard the boatswain remark —

"People don't die with their eyes shut."

Then a hand was placed on my face, and old Growles observed—

“The young chap’s as alive as I am; he’s quite warm. Rouse up, Dick, you rascal! But take care you don’t sing out, or it’ll be the worse for you.”

Still I endeavoured to make them believe I was really dead. It was a satisfaction to find that they were casting off the lashings from my arms and legs; but when one of them lifted up my arm I let it fall down again, like that of a dead person. This seemed to puzzle them, and old Growles gave me a cruel pinch on the arm. Though I didn’t cry out, I had the greatest difficulty not to flinch. He then bent back one of my fingers. It was a wonder he didn’t break it. Not able to endure the pain, I cried out.

“I thought so,” he said, with a low laugh. “You can’t play your tricks off on us, youngster,” said the boatswain, “and you’ll gain nothing by it.”

I said nothing, but looked up at him as if I had just awakened out of a sleep or a trance.

“Now mind you,” he continued, “if you shout out or make any noise, we’ll gag you and leave you to starve; but if you keep quiet you shall have some food, and you won’t be worse off than when you were shut up before in the hold.”

“What are you going to do with me?” I asked.

“That’s not for you to know,” answered the boatswain. “We’re not going to kill you, for fear you should haunt the ship, not for any love to you. We could have made away with you long ago, if we had thought fit. We’re not going to let you go ashore, and let you give a bad name to the ship and us. We know who ’peached to the captain, and you may think yourself fortunate that you were not dropped overboard next night. Will you promise to keep quiet?”

I knew that I was in the hands of unscrupulous ruffians, whose fears alone prevented them from doing away with me; so there was no use holding out. I therefore said that I would make no noise if they would unleash my arms and legs and bring me some food. I found that I was in the place I had supposed—a big locker which had been cleaned out to make room for me. It smelt horribly of tar and rancid grease, and coils of small rope and balls of twine, mats, cans, pots, and brushes, up in the corners, showed me what was usually stowed in it.

“Shall we trust the young rascal?” asked the boatswain of his companion.

“He daren’t break his word,” answered Growles; “he knows what he’ll get if he does.”

Thereupon they unlashd my arms and legs. I considered for a moment whether I could spring past them and gain the deck. Perhaps they thought I might make the attempt; and before I had time to do more than think of it, they had shut the door and locked me in. I knew, from the quietness of the ship, that she was still at anchor, and I hoped that my friends might make inquiries about me that might lead to my discovery; and this idea kept me up. As I lay perfectly still I could hear the crew hoisting the remainder of the cargo out of the hold. The noise they made would have drowned my voice, even had I ventured to cry out. I guessed, also, that most of them knew of my imprisonment, and would not assist me. My only solace was the thought that Mr McTavish, who had been so friendly to me, would insist on searching the ship, and then I thought it probable a story would be told of my having fallen overboard. They would very likely say that I had got drunk with their wine, and been seen rolling along the deck, or something of that sort.

I did not, indeed, altogether despair of making my escape. As I lay in the ill-odorous locker I thought and thought of all sorts of plans. In spite of the smells I was getting hungry, and I wished that the boatswain or Growles would return with the food they had promised. If only one came I made up my mind to seize him by the throat, put my fingers into his eyes, spring up past him, and try to gain the deck. It would be hazardous in the extreme; for, if he caught me, he would not let me go, and in the struggle I should certainly be overcome, when he would not fail to punish me severely—perhaps to deprive me of life. Still, anything was better than to have again to endure the sufferings I had gone through in the hold. I nerved myself up for the undertaking I proposed. All was again silent in the hold. The crew had, I concluded, knocked off work; whether to go to dinner or for the day I could not calculate. After some time I heard the sound as of some one moving near me, the door opened, and the light of a lantern fell on my face. There were two heads instead of one. It would be madness to attempt to spring past them, so I lay quiet.

“Here’s the food I promised you,” said the voice of old Growles. “Eat it

and be thankful; it's more than you deserve."

It consisted of biscuit and meat, and a cooked root of some sort. He placed also a can of water by my side.

"Don't capsize it; for you'll get no more," he said, drawing my attention to it.

Wishing to soothe him and throw him off his guard, I answered and thanked him. Before I could finish the sentence he had shut to the door and left me to discuss my meal in the dark. I heard him and his companion go away. The air which had come in had revived my appetite, and I eagerly ate up the provisions and drank the water, supposing that I should have more in due time. As soon as I had finished my meal I tried to see if I could force open the door, but I could discover no tool of any description. I made up my mind therefore to wait patiently till the opportunity offered of getting out. Perhaps the next time old Growles or the boatswain would come alone, or they might send some one else; or, should my friends be searching the ship, I might make them hear me. While these thoughts were passing through my mind I again fell asleep.

It might be found wearisome were I to describe my thoughts and sensations, my hopes and fears, while I was awake, or to say how often I slept. Day after day passed. Old Growles and the boatswain invariably came together; they seemed to divine that should only one come I might in my desperation attempt to pass him.

As far as I could judge the crew were now taking cargo on board, as I could hear the bales descending into the hold. They consisted, I afterwards found, of skins and peltries. How much longer the ship would remain in harbour I could not tell, nor could I conjecture when I was to be set free. They would scarcely keep me a prisoner during the remainder of the voyage, as, shut up, I could do nothing, but if I were at liberty I could make myself useful. Drearily the time passed away. Fear still prevented me from shouting out; for, from the position I was in, I could certainly have made myself heard by the crew, although my voice would not have reached to the cabin. From the remarks that I had heard from the passengers, when we were approaching the Columbia River, I guessed that, having loaded with furs, we should cross the Pacific to China, where

they would fetch a high price, and thence, as I knew beforehand, with the produce of that country, we should proceed to Australia, where we should load with wood for home. If I were kept a prisoner for the whole period I should lose my health, if not my life. How many days or nights I had been kept in confinement I could not calculate, when I heard the sounds of heaving up the anchor; a trampling of feet, as if sail was being made. Some time afterwards I was sensible of a movement in the ship, and presently she plunged into a heavy sea, and I could hear much rushing of water against her sides. Again she made a more furious plunge, and I guessed that we were crossing the bar. I knew that I was right, as shortly afterwards the ship glided on with a comparatively slight movement. All hope of being rescued by my friends was gone. I knew that we must have crossed the bar while it was light, but I was allowed to remain in prison for another night. At last the door was opened, and old Growles and the boatswain appeared.

“You may go on deck now, youngster,” said old Growles; “but remember, as you value your life, that you don’t tell the captain or any one else who put you down here. You played the stowaway once, and you must say you did so again, ’cos you didn’t want to go ashore and live among the injins. If he believes you or not, it doesn’t much matter; only you stick to it, and, mind yer, you’ll come to a bad end if you don’t.”

I made no answer, for although I wished to get out of the locker and enjoy the fresh air once more, I could not make up my mind to tell a falsehood, notwithstanding the threats of the old ruffian. Neither he nor the boatswain seemed to expect an answer. Perhaps they thought it mattered very little whether or not I promised to do as they ordered me, not believing that I would keep my word if it suited my convenience to break it; for, without saying another word, they bound my eyes, and one of them dragged me along among bales and other articles of cargo, which I could feel as I passed by.

“Stay here,” said the boatswain, “till it strikes four bells. You may then find your way on deck as you best can, and spin any yarn you like to account for yourself being there, only mind you don’t ’peach on us, or, as I said afore it’ll be the worse for you.”

As he spoke he took the bandage off my eyes, and I heard the men

retiring. I was still in total darkness, but I had been so often accustomed to find my way about under such circumstances that I was not very anxious on that account. I thought it prudent, however, to remain seated until I heard four bells strike, when on feeling about I was almost convinced that I was on the spar-deck. I could distinguish the tramp of feet overhead as if sail was being made, and shortly afterwards, the hatchway being lifted up, daylight streamed down upon me. Pining for fresh air, and desperately hungry, I lost no time in making my way on deck.

There stood the captain and two mates. The ship was under all sail, gliding rapidly before a strong breeze over the ocean, while the blue outline of the land could dimly be seen astern. I stood irresolute whether to go at once up to the captain and get the worst over, or to run forward and ask the cook to give me something to eat. I was about to follow the latter course, when I heard the captain's voice shouting, "Halloa, youngster, where on earth do you come from?"

"That's more than I can exactly say, sir," I answered.

"Why, we thought you had gone overboard and been drowned, or had slipped ashore and been carried off by the Indians," he continued; "Mr McTavish and the other gentlemen were making a great ado about you. You have been playing your old trick again. For my part, I should have supposed you would have been glad enough to get out of the ship, as I understood they wished to take you with them."

"Please sir, I hope you'll pardon me for what has happened," I said, an idea at that moment striking me. "I want to become a sailor, and I'll promise to try and do my duty, and learn to be one if you'll allow me."

The captain, from what I said, at once took it for granted that I had again acted the stowaway, and I flattered myself that I had not spoken an untruth, while I had avoided saying anything which would offend him. I observed that old Growles had come aft, and was then within earshot. The captain seemed rather pleased than otherwise that I had not wished to leave the ship.

"Go forward," he said, "and let me see that you do your duty."

He was evidently in better humour than usual, having got a rich freight which he had not expected. Touching my cap, I hurried to the caboose. Caesar rolled his eyes and opened his mouth with astonishment when he saw me.

“Where you been all dis time, Dick?” he asked.

“That’s more than I can tell you, Caesar. Do in mercy give me some grub, for I’m well-nigh starved,” I answered.

He gave me part of a mess he had been cooking for himself.

“Dis curious ship,” he said, as he remarked the ravenous way in which I devoured the food. “I no ask questions, you no tell lies, dat is it. Oh you wise boy.”

I suspected from this that Caesar had observed the visits of old Growles and the boatswain to the hold, and shrewdly guessed that I had been a prisoner. I could not understand, however, how the captain didn’t make some fuss about it, unless he also was cognisant of the fact; but of that I was left in uncertainty. I had expected from the way he had first treated me that some change for the better would take place in my condition, but in this I was mistaken. I was at the beck and call of every one, having to do all the dirty work in the cabin, and being knocked about and bullied by the men just as much as before.



Chapter Eighteen.

My position does not improve—Another attempt at escape frustrated—Becalmed off Japan—Macao—A fresh cargo—Extension of the voyage—Not dead yet—I gain some important information as to the future fate awaiting me, and I determine to quit the ship—A carouse—My escape, and how I accomplished it—Alone on the ocean—I sight land—The rock and my landing-place—My search for food—I meet with an accident—I lose my boat.

I must pass rapidly over the voyage across the Pacific. Whatever better feelings the captain had at one time displayed towards me completely disappeared. I was treated by him and the officers and men as badly as ever. My spirit was not broken, and perhaps I may at times have shown too refractory a disposition to please them. I was compelled, however, to submit to and obey their orders, annoying and vexatious as they often were. I did not show my feelings so much by what I said as by my looks, and I often stopped to consider whether or no I would do as I was told.

We fell in with a few ships—most of them whalers—the captains of which sometimes came on board, and I had hoped that I might be able to get off in one of them. I fancied that it would be impossible to change for the worse, but I in vain watched for an opportunity.

One evening we were becalmed to the southward of Japan, not far off a South Sea whaler. The commander, who was an old acquaintance of Captain Longfleet, came aboard, and spent the evening with him in the cabin. I waited eagerly till it had become dark. The lights of the other ship could be seen in the distance, and I expected every instant that the captain would come on deck ready to take his departure. The boat's crew had come aboard, and were being entertained by our men. I thought if I could manage to slip down I might stow myself away under the foremost thwart, and should not be discovered till I had reached the other ship. I would then tell my story to the commander, who if he would not have compassion on me would probably not think it worth while to send me back that night, and before the morning a breeze might spring up and the ships be separated.

I waited concealed under the long-boat stowed amidships till I fancied that there was no one near the side where the whale-boat lay. I then crept out and got into the main chains. I was just about to lower myself down when a huge hand was placed on my shoulder, and I heard a voice which I knew to be that of old Growles.

“Come inboard, you young rascal!” he said; “you’re not going to get off as easily as you fancy. It’s lucky for you that you didn’t get into the boat, for you would have been found to a certainty, and handed over to our skipper, who would have knocked the life out of you.”

“What’s all this about? How did you know I wanted to get into the boat?” I asked, in a tone of assumed astonishment.

“‘Cos I’ve seen you watching ever since she came alongside,” answered Growles; “so take that—and that,”—and hauling me inboard, he bestowed several blows with the end of a rope on my back.

I ran forward to escape from him, and stowed myself away in my bunk, as it was my watch below.

We at last reached Macao, where our cargo of furs was discharged, and for which I believe a very high price was obtained. I had no wish, from what I had heard of the Chinese, to go and live among them, and I therefore did not attempt to get on shore, although I had reason to believe that I was all the time narrowly watched by old Growles and the boatswain.

Instead of the furs and skins we shipped a cargo of tea in chests, and other Chinese produce. Part of this was to be landed at Sydney, New South Wales, and the rest, if no market could be found there for it, was to be carried on to America. This would greatly prolong the voyage, and consequently my miseries. I had hitherto been supported by the expectation of soon reaching home and being emancipated from my bondage.

I had no dislike to the sea; and had I been well treated even in my subordinate position I should have been contented to remain where I was, and to try and learn as much as I could; but to be kicked and beaten and knocked down every day of my life—to have the dirtiest of work and

the worst of food—to be sworn at and abused at all hours—made me well-nigh weary of my life.

I was one night standing just before the windlass, when I said something which offended Sam Dixon, one of the men. In return he struck me a blow on the head. I must have fallen immediately, and rolled down directly under the windlass. Perhaps fancying that he had killed me, Dixon walked away, without uttering anything to anybody as to what he had done.

I probably lay there for some time in a state of unconsciousness—how long I could not tell. When I came to myself I heard some of my shipmates talking near me. I was about to crawl out when my own name caught my ears.

“We have had enough of that youngster at present,” said one; “he has ’peached once, and will ferret out what we’re about, and ’peach again if he has the chance. I only wish we had dropped him overboard with a shot round his feet long ago.”

It was the boatswain who spoke.

“I didn’t think of the shot, as I suppose that would stop him from coming up again, and haunting the ship,” remarked old Growles; “that’s what I was afeared of.”

“Why, Gregory, you’re always thinking of ghosts and spirits—they wouldn’t do harm to you or any of us,” remarked another fellow who was looked upon as the chief sceptic of the crew, though it is difficult to say what they did or did not believe, for considering their lives it might be supposed that they were all infidels together.

They continued talking in low voices. Though I could not make out all they said, I gathered enough to be convinced that they had some plot or other which they intended soon to put into execution, and fearing lest I should get an inkling of it and inform the captain, they intended to do away with me. It was some satisfaction to discover that they had no immediate intention of executing their plans. I might have time to warn the officers or to make my escape.

I for some time had had an idea in my head. We carried a small boat astern, generally called a dinghy. She could hold two or three people, and was useful for sending away to the shore, or for lowering at sea in calm weather when anything had to be picked up. If I could lower her into the water during the night when off the coast of some island, I might manage to escape to the shore before I was discovered.

What I had heard made me resolve not to delay a moment longer than could be helped. That night nothing could be done, even should I find that the blow had not incapacitated me from exertion. I dare not move from my present uncomfortable position, for should I be discovered the men would not scruple to do away with me. I was thankful that the men at last got up and began to walk about the deck. I was fearful, however, that they might come by the windlass, when I must have been discovered.

At last I heard the second mate, who was the officer of the watch, give the order to shorten sail, and they had to run to their stations; and as they did so, I crawled out and succeeded in reaching my bunk, into which I tumbled unperceived. I was far from comfortable, however, fearing that that very night they might smother me—the mode I fancied they would take to put me out of existence.

I was not missed, I suppose, as no one called me, and when my watch on deck came round I turned out with the rest. My head ached, and I had a big lump on my forehead. In the morning, when the third mate saw me, he asked how I got that. I replied that it was the way I had got many another, that it was only what I expected, and had made up my mind to bear it.

“You’re a rum chap, and a bold one—more than I’d do,” answered the mate, not troubling himself more about the matter.

When I went aft to the cabin at breakfast, I heard one of the mates observe that we should make the coast of Australia that day. Then I thought to myself, “If I can get off I will.” I had no intention of going without provisions. I knew that a good store was kept in the pantry, to which I had access. My intention was to tumble everything I could find into a cloth, to tie it up, and to carry it off, if I could, unperceived to the dinghy.

How to lower that without being heard or seen by the watch on deck was the difficulty. The falls were so fitted that a single person might lower her, but then she would make a splash in the water.

We made the land about four o'clock in the afternoon, but after standing on for some time till it was nearly dark, the captain ordered the ship's head to be put about, as he was not well acquainted with the coast, and there were dangerous reefs which ran off for a considerable distance.

Night came on, and a very dark night it was, but the darkness would favour my design. Instead of being allowed to turn in when it was my watch below, I was sent aft by the cook with a dish of devilled biscuits to the cabin, where the captain and the first and second mates were taking supper, while the third mate had the watch on deck. I intended it to be the last time I would turn into my bunk. I had not been long in the cabin before I observed that the captain and mates had been drinking, and seemed disposed to continue their debauch. The devilled biscuits which I had placed before them still farther incited their thirst, and the captain ordered another bottle of rum. I noticed that the steward, when I told him, got out two bottles, one of which he kept in the pantry while he took the other into the cabin.

"You'll do to attend on the officers, Dick," he said to me; "I'm going to enjoy myself."

I stood ready to obey any orders I should receive. The conversation I heard was far from edifying, but I was too much engaged in thinking of my own project to attend to it.

As I was standing at the far end of the cabin I heard a crash. One of the mates had knocked over a couple of tumblers, and I was sent into the pantry to obtain others. I found the steward fast verging into a state of unconsciousness. He had been pulling away at the rum-bottle at a great rate, for fear he should not have time to finish it.

As I got the tumblers I cast my eyes round the pantry to see what articles of food I could most readily carry off. I saw the best part of a cold ham, an ample supply of biscuits and some pots of Chinese preserves, with several other things of less consequence.

Returning to the cabin I placed the tumblers on the table, and retired beyond the reach of the officers, having been taught by experience that they might at any moment think fit to give me a box on the ear or to knock me down. I watched them with intense interest, lest they should knock off before they were completely drunk. The third mate came into the cabin apparently to report something to the captain, but, seeing the state his commander was in, uttering a loud whew! He turned on his heel, and went out again, seeing the importance of keeping sober himself. I confess that I wished he had sat down with the others, and left the ship to take care of herself.

Soon afterwards, as I knew I should not be missed, I stole out of the cabin, and went into the pantry, where I quickly did up the provisions I intended to take with me. There was a jar of water, evidently quite full, which the steward kept ready for use.

I now went on deck to ascertain what chance I had of carrying out my design. I could discover no one excepting the man at the helm, and the third mate had, I concluded, to take a look-out. I hurried back to get the jar and provisions, and unperceived placed them in the dinghy. I felt about in her, and found two oars and a boat-hook.

The falls were, as I have said, so fitted that one person could lower the boat, but to do so without capsizing her when the ship was moving through the water was almost an impossible undertaking.

The wind had previously been very light, and the vessel had scarcely any steerage way on her. To my intense satisfaction I noticed that it was now almost a stark calm.

Now or never I must carry out my project. I thought not of the dangers to be encountered; the chances of being chased and overtaken; the savages on shore; the risk of starvation; the want of water; the current that might sweep me along; or the chances of a storm arising before I could gain the land. I had not a moment to lose. The mate remained forward; the man at the helm stood motionless, and, I hoped, was asleep. I slipped into the boat, and passing the slack of the falls under two thwarts, gently lowered myself down. I had, the day before, unobserved, thoroughly greased the blocks.

My chief fear now was, that the splash the boat would make on reaching the water would be heard. I therefore eased away with the greatest care, and stood ready in a moment to cast off the aft-most fall. I cleared it in the nick of time, and the boat was towed slowly ahead. I quickly cleared the foremost fall, and was now adrift. I was conscious that a light splash had been made, but I hoped that if the mate heard it he would fancy that it was caused by some monster of the deep rising above the surface. Without waiting to ascertain whether this was the case or not, I seized the oars and pulled rapidly away from the stern of the vessel, the light from the cabin window assisting me to keep the course I desired to make towards the land. I congratulated myself at having accomplished my object before it was too late, for I felt a breeze fanning my ears as I pulled on.

As I looked up at the tall masts, it seemed to me that the sails bulged out, and that the ship was rapidly increasing her distance from me. I was already a considerable way astern when I heard a loud hail. I recognised the voice of the mate, who had probably just discovered that the boat was gone. My fear was, that another would be lowered and sent in chase of me. This made me pull all the harder. My only idea was, to reach shore and escape from my persecutors. I dared not lose time by stopping even for a moment to listen for the sounds of a boat being lowered. I heard several other voices hail, but the ship stood on and gradually faded away in the gloom of night. I knew that being low in the water I could not be seen.

Presently I saw the flash of a musket; then another and another; but no shots came near me, and from this I was convinced that the third mate, or some one else, was firing at random. Had the captain or the other mates been in their right senses the ship would probably have been hove-to and two boats, at least, have been sent in chase of me. The third mate was, I suspect, afraid of heaving to on account of the reefs. He kept the ship, therefore, before the wind. Whatever the cause, I was thankful I was not pursued, and I trusted that the breeze would blow stronger and carry the ship farther and farther away from me.

Although, through there being no moon, the night was dark, and there was a mist which hung over the waters, yet I could observe overhead several stars, and as the lights from the cabin receded, I marked their

position, and was thus able, with tolerable confidence, to continue my way towards the land. I fancied that I should be able to reach it early in the morning or during the next day. I at length began to grow weary, but as long as I could move my arms I determined to row on. The wind being off the land, the sea was perfectly calm. Scarcely a ripple disturbed the surface. I was too anxious to feel hunger or thirst. At the same time, the joy at having escaped kept up my spirits.

Under other circumstances I do not think I could have accomplished what I did. I fancied that I was pulling at the rate of four miles an hour, and that I was nearing the shore. At length, however, my fatigue overcame me, and I felt that I could row no more. The moment I stopped I felt very sleepy, but had sense sufficient to take in my oars and place them by my side. I then lay down in the bottom of the boat, intending to rest for a few minutes, after which, I expected again to be able to pull on.

As may be supposed, I was soon again fast asleep. My slumbers were peaceful and pleasant, rendered so, I presume, by the consciousness that I had escaped from the fate intended for me. I was awakened by a bright light flashing in my eyes. Opening them, I sprang up and found that the sun had just risen above the horizon. I looked eagerly around, dreading lest I should see the ship near me, but to my infinite relief she was not visible, nor was the land I had expected to see and so soon to reach. My little boat was the only object on the waste of waters.

The coast, I knew, was to the westward, and as the rising sun would guide me, I took out my oars and began to row away in that direction. I had not rowed long before I began to feel very hungry. I therefore again laid in my oars and took a hearty meal off the provisions I had brought, washing it down with an ample draught of water. Then I once more turned to, but the heat soon became excessive, and I was streaming at every pore. Still, as long as my strength lasted I determined not to give in. I occasionally stopped to take a pull at my water-bottle. With very little rest beside, I continued to paddle on till it was again dark. This showed me what had not occurred to me before, that I might have been rowing part of the time along the coast, instead of towards it, and I supposed that the ship had been much farther off than I had previously imagined. I had been in a dreamy state all day, and unable to think much. This was produced by the heat which beat down on my head. I felt somewhat

revived as the sun set, but after a time excessive drowsiness came over me, and once more taking in my oars, I lay down to sleep.

I must have slept the whole night, for when I again woke, it was already dawn. I stood up and looked about me, when to my surprise I observed some rocks between myself in the boat and the bright light which heralded the rising sun. I must have been carried by a current inside them. I was about to row away to the westward, when as the light increased I saw what I at first thought was the mast of a small vessel or boat near them. Seizing my oars, I eagerly pulled towards the object. Again looking round I soon discovered it; it was not a mast, but a pole stuck in the rock with a cask or basket fixed on the top of it.

This was a sign that some civilised inhabitants must be on the neighbouring shore, and that they had placed that beacon to warn mariners of the dangers of the rock.

A number of sea-fowl circled over the rock, occasionally dipping their wings in the clear water.

As the sun rose, I made out the land running in a long line to a far distance, as I concluded north and south. It was now time for breakfast.

I had no intention of landing on the rock, for this would only cause delay. I took my ham out from the stern sheets, but as I did so, the horrible odour which saluted my nostrils made me certain that it would be impossible to eat it, and, except the dry biscuits, I had no other food. I managed with the aid of some water to masticate a fair quantity, but it might be a long time even now before I could gain the shore, and even then I might be disappointed in obtaining food. It then occurred to me that perhaps the sea-fowl made their nests on the rock, and that I might get some of their eggs, which would give me an ample supply of provisions for some time to come.

As I had once upon a time lived upon raw rats, I was not very particular; and even should I not obtain any eggs, I might find some young birds, which, though perhaps fishy in taste, would enable me to support existence. I therefore rowed towards the rock which I saw was of considerable extent, although one part only on which the beacon was

placed rose a few feet above the surface.

The clearness of the atmosphere had deceived me as to the distance. I rowed on for some time before I reached it. Possibly also, there was a current against me, although that such was the case did not occur to me at the time.

The sea-fowl shrieked loudly and wildly as I approached, as if to warn me off from their domain. Some sat on the rock, others darted off and circled round and round the boat, but I was not to be deterred from landing by their threatening cries and movements. At last I got close to the rock, and found an indentation or little bay, into which I ran my boat.

Though several birds appeared, I found that they were merely resting on the rock, and that the water was too shallow to allow me to get close enough to step on shore.

In many places the seaweed grew so thickly, and was so slimy, that I was afraid to venture on it, lest it offering a treacherous foothold I should slip back into the water. At last I saw a point some distance from the beacon where I thought I could land, and secure the boat's painter round a rough part of the coral rock. I succeeded in stepping on to it and making the rope fast; and confident that she would be secure, made my way along the rock with the assistance of the boat-hook. I found neither eggs nor young birds; indeed, on examining the rock, I knew that it must be covered occasionally, if not at every tide, by the water. Still I thought that I should find them at the higher part, near the beacon.

I accordingly scrambled on as well as I could, but here and there I came to a lower part of the rock over which the water washed, and I saw that to reach the beacon I must wade through it. I had to proceed very cautiously, for it was full of hollows and slippery in the extreme, and a fall might involve serious consequences.

The shriek of the birds, though it sounded rather pleasant at a distance, became almost deafening as I got nearer to them.

After going some way, I had to stop and rest, supporting myself on the boat-hook. I now saw, on looking round, that the sky which at sunrise had been bright and clear, was becoming fast covered with clouds. The wind,

too, blew with much greater force than before. Still, as it came off the land, I hoped that it might not cause such a sea as would prevent me from continuing my voyage. I was too eager, also, to obtain some eggs or young birds to allow the subject to trouble me. I therefore continued scrambling along over the rocks, hoping to find what I was in search of nearer the beacon. I was by this time nearly wet through up to the middle, but that did not matter, as the hot sun soon dried my clothes. Having got on some distance without an accident, I perhaps became more careless; for when leaping from one rock to another, my foot slipped and I came down with a force which I thought must have broken my arm. I lay clutching the rock with the other hand, unable to move from the pain, while my boat-hook slipped from my grasp, and gliding into the water was borne away from the rock. I now saw that a rapid current was passing the rock, the influence of which I must have felt when approaching it in the boat. Without the boat-hook I should find it still more difficult to get along; but I knew that I must not stay where I was for ever, and as soon therefore as the pain allowed me, I rose to my feet and endeavoured to continue my scramble over the rocks.

I forgot that my return journey would be quite as difficult if not more so, as I should have no boat-hook, and at the same time should be loaded, I hoped, with eggs and birds. I went on and on, of course making very slow progress. At length I got close to the beacon, and great was my disappointment to find neither eggs nor young birds.

I searched round and round the rock in all directions, and I at last came to the conclusion that if the birds lay their eggs there at all the hatching season must have passed, and the young birds grown strong on the wing, and have flown away.

It was a great disappointment. As it was, I had had my difficult and tiring scramble for nothing, and had bruised my arm, though happily I had not broken it. I had also lost my boat-hook. I climbed to the higher part of the rock, and had a look at the land, which I judged was ten or twelve miles off at least. Still I hoped to accomplish that distance long before dark, and to find a harbour, as I supposed there was one, or it was not likely that the beacon could have been placed on the rock. I therefore, without further delay, began my return journey. As I went along, I found that some places where I had crossed had become much deeper. At length it

occurred to me that the tide was rising. I had regained sight of my boat, which at a distance could not be distinguished from the black rocks, when it suddenly appeared to me that she was moving. I rushed on at the risk of breaking my legs. What was my dismay at seeing that she was already at a considerable distance from the rock where I had left her, and there seemed every probability that I should lose her altogether. In my terror I shouted and shrieked to her to stop. I was on the point of rushing into the water to try and overtake her when I saw a black fin glide by, followed by another, and the wicked eye of a shark glanced up at me, daring me to venture on the undertaking. My despair overcoming me, I sank down on the rock.

Chapter Nineteen.

My adventures on the rock—My search for food, and what I found—
The storm—Despite my perilous position, I marvel at the grandeur of
the scene—The storm subsides—My search for clams, and further
explorations on the rock—The darkest night must come to an end—
A welcome wetting—My only refuge—Return of stormy weather—
Perilous moments—I climb the beacon-post.

I had gone through a few misadventures, but this was the most trying of all. After lying on the rock for a few minutes or more, I recovered sufficiently to recollect that the tide was rising, and that unless I could select a higher spot I should be swept off, and become a prey to the monsters I dreaded. I therefore got up, and trying to pull myself together again, endeavoured to reach the beacon, which would at all events afford me temporary shelter. When taking out the biscuits in the morning I had shoved several into my pocket, which would enable me to sustain existence until I could make signals to some passing boat or vessel. Having lost my boat-hook I made slower progress than before, and often with the greatest difficulty avoided falling. Two or three times I had to wade up to my middle, and I dreaded lest one of the sharks should have shoved his nose through the opening, and might snap me up. Still I went on. My anxiety made me forget the pain in my arm. Fortunately I was not indeed deprived of its use, and by degrees the pain went off.

I was so much engaged, that I did not for some time observe how

completely the weather had changed. The beacon on the rock was reached, and I sat down below it to rest myself after my exertions. I now saw that the sea, which had hitherto been so calm, had begun to heave. Sudden gusts blew across it, covering its surface with wavelets, which every moment increased in size. Dark clouds chased each other across the sky, and gathered in thick masses overhead. To my dismay I saw that a storm was rising. It rapidly came on, while the sea getting up with the same speed, completely swept over the lower part of the rock along which I had made my way.

The lightning flashed, the thunder roared, and the seas began to beat with violence against the rock. Some of them came sweeping up to where I sat. I sprang to my feet, and stood gazing with awe and terror at the strife of the elements which raged around me. What hope, I thought, could I have of escaping. My boat gone; so far off from land that it was impossible I could be observed, while I could see no boats or vessels sailing over the whole expanse of ocean. Indeed had there been any coming from the shore, they would have put back into harbour when they saw the storm coming on. Still I was unharmed; I had biscuits enough in my pockets to keep soul and body together for a day or two longer, if I economised them as I intended to do. I might also find some shellfish; they would serve me for food for a much longer time, I therefore did not despair, but I was aware that at any moment the sea might sweep up and carry me off.

With more calmness than I had given myself credit for possessing, I continued to survey the scene. I looked out again for my boat, thinking it possible that the current might drive her back to the rock, but she had been carried far beyond my ken. This made my heart sick. Knowing, however, that my life depended very much on my keeping up my courage, I endeavoured to muster all I possessed. I thought if I could climb up to the top of the rock and make a signal, it might be observed, should any boat when the storm was over come out from the shore, or should any vessel be passing. I could see no other rocks to the eastward; I supposed, therefore that this was the highest part of the reef, and that vessels acquainted with the coast might pass by within sight of it.

I spent several hours, I can scarcely describe how. When my hunger became too ravenous to bear longer, I munched a small quantity of

biscuit. At length, as I watched the seas, I observed that they did not approach so close to me, and I was convinced that the tide was again going down. I calculated, indeed, from the time I had been on the rock, that this must be the case, as it was already rising when I first landed, and I now hoped that I should be able to obtain some shellfish by going down to the lee-side, and cutting them off with my knife.

The idea having once occurred to me, I lost no time in carrying it out. I had to be excessively cautious, for by a false step I might have slipped into the sea, and not have been able to regain my hold on the rock. After searching about for some time, I caught sight of a few clams, but they were not to be obtained without risk, as the sea surged up and recovered them. I fixed my eye on one, then rushing down, I cut it off and threw it up out of the reach of the water. I obtained two more in the same way; and in attempting to secure a fourth, the waves swept round the rock, almost covering me, and I had to cling on for my life, losing my clam and very nearly my life. This taught me to be more cautious than ever; but I managed notwithstanding to obtain three or four more, and as I could see none others above water, I had to content myself with those I had collected. Gathering those I had obtained together, I returned to the higher part of the rock, close under the beacon, where I was sheltered from the wind. I had no means of lighting a fire. There was no fuel on the rock to make one, and so I was compelled to eat the clams raw, with a little biscuit to make them more palatable. The whole day had passed away, and another night was coming on. I dreaded it, for I knew not what might happen during the hours of darkness.

The storm had in no way abated, and I feared that when the tide again rose the sea might get still more over the rock. I had little idea, however, how fiercely it was about to do so. I have often spoken of my sleeping and waking, but thus our lives are spent. In spite of the storm raging around me, the seas thundering on the rock, and the wind whistling through the beacon, a drowsiness overpowered me, and I found myself dropping off to sleep. I was still conscious in some degree how I was situated. I felt all the time an overpowering sense of danger. Sometimes I was in my little boat, gliding calmly over the ocean; now I was suddenly chased by big waves, which threatened every instant to engulf me. Then I found myself cast upon the rock, my boat floating away, and tumbling and tossing till she disappeared. Now I was seated all alone, gazing out

over the ocean, which rose and fell, and tossed before my eyes just as I had seen it in the daytime, only rising to a far greater height, and descending in a more furious fashion. This sort of confused dream continued while I was asleep. Now and then I awoke, only to hear the noises I have before described. The rock itself seemed quaking, as the seas with a thundering roar dashed against it. I could hear, too, the screams of the sea-birds as they swept round and round, disturbed from their usual resting-place, though many of them flew off, I suppose, to the far-away shores, or to other rocks perhaps higher out of the water.

The night I had escaped from the "Emu" was very dark; but this was unfortunately darker, except when a flash of lightning darted from the sky and illumined the white foam which, lashed by the wind into spray, flew in sheets over the rock. I was soon wet to the skin. I felt chilly in the extreme. Even the most terrible night must come to an end.

Morning broke, but cheerless as could well be. The sky was of one leaden hue, broken here and there by the clouds which hung lower down in the strata. The waves, when not covered by foam, were of the same tint. To sit where I was I found was impossible. I got up and walked about and stretched my legs. To my dismay I found that the rocks, which at the same hour the previous day were high out of the water, were now almost covered by the furious seas which rolled over them. I trembled to think what would be the case at high water. I should have liked to have got some more clams for breakfast, but I could see none, even after searching for them, and there was a great risk of being swept away, so I contented myself with taking one of those I had saved from the previous day, with a biscuit, for breakfast. I was already very thirsty, having had nothing to drink since I had left the boat, and would have welcomed a heavy shower from the dark clouds overhead. I continued to walk, or rather to climb about the rock, as there was but a very small level place on which I could walk.

Then I sat down again, and with melancholy gaze watched the foaming seas, which I began to dread, as I saw them more and more frequently covering the rock, would prove my grave. At length I had to seek a higher and more exposed level, and as water occasionally surged up to the place where I had spent the night, and might at any moment sweep me off, I tried to nerve myself up to my fate.

With difficulty I could restrain myself from drinking the sea-water. I was well aware of the danger of doing so, and resisted the temptation. At last, as I was looking up, I felt a drop fall on my face. It was not the spray of the sea. Another and another followed, and down came a copious shower. I opened my mouth, at the same time holding out my cap to the rain, hoping to get a little in it. I got but little, so I placed it on the rock and spread it open. I then took off my jacket, and held it out that it might be well wetted.

I hoped also to find some hollow in the rock that might be rilled with fresh water. The rain came down, as it does in the tropics, in a perfect deluge. My jacket was wet through in a minute, and I was able to wring out of it a sufficient amount of fresh water to quench my burning thirst. After this I was able to eat some biscuits. It should be remembered that the tide reaches its height nearly three-quarters of an hour later every day. I watched with intense anxiety its rising this afternoon. Now it entirely covered the rocks where I had landed, then those over which I had made my way were concealed from view, and now it reached the base of the beacon-rock itself, against which the seas began to break with a fury surpassing that of the previous day.

The spot on which I had been standing one minute was the next covered by the seething waters, when I retired to a higher level. Again and again a wave broke over the rock, and striking one of the almost perpendicular sides flew high into the air above my head. Every moment my hope of escape was becoming less and less. I cried to heaven for mercy. As I saw death drawing near, the desire to live increased. It seemed so terrible to have to die all alone away from friends and country.

At last I was driven to the very foot of the beacon, and I clutched it as if it alone could afford me protection. I knew that I could not for a single moment stand upon the rock with the sea breaking over it, but the beacon itself withstood the furious waves. I had not as yet thought of climbing to it to see how it was fixed, but I now did so with intense anxiety. I found that the staff was of hard oak, and that it had been imbedded in a deep hole formed by art in the rock, and further secured by iron bars driven into it, and fastened round by iron hoops. This gave me some hopes that it would stand the fury of the seas should they rise high enough to strike it. That they would do this seemed every moment

more probable.

On every side around me they tossed and foamed and roared, as if eager to seize me. I frantically clutched the pole, which, from its size, I could with difficulty embrace. Even now, though my chance of escape seemed small indeed, I did not abandon all hope. A small line hung down through the bottom of the cask. I tried its strength. It would enable me, I found, to mount upwards, but I was unwilling to make the attempt, as I could not tell whether the cask was fixed securely enough to bear my weight. There I stood, my arms round the pole, clutching the rope with my hands, and awaiting my fate. That that ere long would come I was fully convinced.

Though sea after sea broke on the rock, none actually touched me, though my feet occasionally were washed by the foam. To my surprise, and contrary to all my expectations, though the seas raged round me as fiercely as ever, the water sank, and as the sea rolled up it struck a lower level of the rock, and I began to hope once more that I should escape. Then I recollected that if the tides had not yet reached their extreme height, or the spring tides had not come on, the next day might prove fatal. Though the water had receded, I dare not leave the beacon-post, and kept clinging to it as my only comfort and friend. At length weary I sank down to rest, still grasping it in my arms. Thus hours passed away, even now too painful to think of. I ate the remainder of the biscuit, and then fell into a heavy slumber, which must have lasted many hours. I awoke to find that it was night, and that the tide was once more rising, as I knew by hearing the seas breaking on the rocks close to me. Already I was covered by the spray, which flew in showers over me. Had I slept on much longer I must have been swept away, and awakened only to find myself in the cruel grasp of the relentless waves. I might, however, now never see another sunrise. I prayed as I had never prayed before, and resolved to struggle to the last for life.

Few have been placed in a more perilous position and escaped. I had the stout beacon to cling to. It had probably stood many a storm, but would it stand fast now? To that I held fast as before, but I feared that my strength would fail me, and that I might be torn away from it. I looked up at the cask above my head, wondering whether that would afford me an asylum I was unwilling, however, to exhaust my strength by attempting to climb the post. With increasing force the waves beat on the rock. Again and

again it trembled from their blows, though I fancied, and almost expected, to find it washed away beneath my feet. I was wet through, and blinded by the spray. As I cleared my eyes, I could discern through the darkness the seas dancing up level with the rock on which I stood. Some appeared, as they rolled on meeting with no impediment, to be much higher. Then I saw one coming roaring and hissing along towards me. It broke with fearful force, and rushed over the rock higher than my knees.

Had I not been firmly grasping the beacon-post, I should have been carried off my legs and washed helplessly away. I shrieked with terror as I saw another coming higher than the last. My cries were echoed by those of the wild sea-birds passing above. The foaming sea broke, and as I drew myself up the post, I found my legs floating behind me. A moment later, and my doom would have been sealed. I got up higher and higher. Now, as I looked down, I saw that I was surrounded by a tumultuous ocean, without a particle of rock on which to place the soles of my feet. I knew that all depended on my strength holding out. The beacon might stand fast, but I might be torn away. Had it been daylight I might better have endured the horrible position in which I was placed, but at night to be thus all alone, with the hungry waves leaping up and striving to snatch me from my holdfast, was truly dreadful.

I wonder my senses did not give way. Sometimes I thought that it was only a dream, but I then knew it to be a fearful reality. With arms and legs clinging round the post, and my hands clutching the rope as I had never clutched rope before, I hung on. I was almost afraid to climb higher, lest my muscles failing me for a moment I should lose my grasp, and yet the cask was only a few feet above me. Suddenly I recollected that on board whalers casks are placed in the same manner as that was at the masthead, in order that the officers, protected in some degree, may in that position obtain a wide extended view in search of whales, and that they enter by a trap-door in the bottom. Should this beacon possess such a trap, I might get through it and obtain shelter and rest. But again a doubt crossed my mind whether I could climb up even thus far, without the risk of sliding down again into the sea.

I looked down to see if the tide was once more receding, but the waves seemed still to be rising higher and higher. Some of their foam even sometimes now touched my feet as they swept over the rock. They might

even cover the beacon itself; and if so, no human power could save me. After remaining quiet for some time, I felt as if I possessed sufficient strength, and resolved to make the attempt. With legs and arms and hands I worked my way up. I would have clung with my teeth to the rope could I have seized it. I was within a foot of the bottom of the cask, when I felt so exhausted that I thought I could get no higher. I looked down on the raging sea and then up at the only place which could afford me shelter. In the darkness I could not see whether or not there was a trap, and if there were one perhaps I might not be able to force it open, and, exhausted by the effort, might drop into the water. I dreaded the risk, but it must be run.

Nerving myself up to the undertaking, I slowly and carefully began to work my way higher up. My head struck the cask. I put up my hand, the bottom yielded, and now exerting all my remaining strength I seized the edges and drew myself up, holding well on with my hands and feet until I had got my head and shoulders into the interior. Throwing myself on my chest, I felt round and discovered some beackets, evidently intended for the purpose of enabling a person situated as I was to draw himself up. I then, grasping the rope which hung from the top of the pole which passed through the cask, dragged myself up and placed my feet at the bottom. I pressed down the trap. I felt more secure than I had been for many hours. Had I not still had a post to cling to after the strain my muscles had so long endured, I could not have stood upright.

Several cross-pieces secured the top of the cask to the post. I shoved my head through them, and could now look down on the wild and raging waters with which I was surrounded. Still I dare not quit my hold of the post, fancying that if I pressed on one side of the cask or the other, it might give way. Not that there was the slightest chance of that in reality. I did not long contemplate the fearful scene, but overcome by what I had gone through, I sank down to the bottom of the cask, and, wet and cold as I was, fell into a troubled slumber.

Chapter Twenty.

In the beacon—The storm continues—The tide turns—I again seek for food—I meet with another accident—Brighter weather—A sail in

sight—My hopes and fears—My signal—My rescue—A voice from the deep—Three old friends meet again—On board the “Falcon”—The good captain—Sydney harbour, and why I did not go ashore there—The homeward voyage—Mark and I learn navigation—My reception at Liverpool—Sad, sad news—My journey to Sandgate—I enter Mr Butterfield’s office, and have had no cause to regret doing so.

I awoke to find the storm still raging around me; but as I opened my eyes I was sensible that a faint light came in from the top of the cask. I was cramped with the uncomfortable position in which I had been sleeping. When I looked out over the edge of the cask, though the seas were tossing as wildly as before, I perceived that the rock below me was once more uncovered, owing, as I knew, to the tide having ebbed. At first I thought of descending; then I recollected that the waters might again rise to their former level, and I feared that I might not have strength to regain my sheltering-place. I therefore remained where I was. I shortly began to feel the pangs of hunger and thirst. I eagerly felt in my pocket for some biscuit, forgetting that I had consumed the last the night before. I found a few crumbs, and with difficulty got them down, having no water to moisten my dry mouth. Still, the wet state of my clothes prevented me from suffering so much from thirst as I should otherwise have done.

The storm, I knew, would not last for ever. Should it continue much longer, however, I might succumb before I could possibly be relieved; but having been hitherto so mercifully preserved, I did not despair. Feeling weary of standing, I again crouched down at the bottom of the cask. I had reason to bless the persons who had placed it there. As I thus sat, half asleep and half awake, it seemed to me that the wind blew with less violence than it had done before. I got up to ascertain if this was the case. On looking round I felt confident that it was so. It appeared to me, also, that the seas were tumbling about with less violence than they had done on the previous day. If so, they might not again cover the rock. I was well accustomed to notice the tides on our own shore, and I remembered that, after the highest of the spring tides, they were said by the fishermen to “take off”—that is, to rise to a less elevation every subsequent day. Thus, even should the storm continue, the rock might not again be covered. This idea brought considerable relief to me.

My hunger made me resolve to descend to search for clams. Perhaps I should find a fish thrown on the rock. The thought of obtaining some food made me get down at once. I opened the trap, and, grasping the rope, slid down with perfect ease. Already the rocks over which I had clambered from the boat were bare, for the tide had fallen rapidly. I knew that it would fall in proportion as it had risen. I went as close to the edge as I could venture without running the risk of being carried off. The rocks, which were washed by the fierce seas, were slippery in the extreme, and I feared that any clams clinging to them must have been washed away. Still, hunger urged me on. I made my way along the top of the coral reef. I observed several small pools ahead. There must be creatures of some sort within, which would enable me to satisfy the cravings of hunger. I had gone some little distance, when I slipped, and came down on the rock. In my weak state I felt unable again to rise for some minutes, though I was not seriously hurt.

The clouds, some time before this, began to break, and suddenly the sun shone forth, his warm rays cheering me up. As I cast my eyes round, something glittered brightly just for a moment in one of the pools. Rising with renewed strength, I scrambled, faster than I had moved before, towards it, and great was my delight to see a good-sized fish floundering in the pool. It attempted to escape me, but I pounced down upon it as a sea-bird would have done, and, giving it a blow on the head, quickly despatched it. I was too hungry to wait even to partially prepare it by hanging it up in the sun, and, taking out my knife, quickly cut some slices from the thickest part of the body. I did not stop to consider whether it was wholesome, but ate it raw as it was. I looked about in the hope of finding another, and was successful; it was of the same species as the first. I could exist now without the clams; and, therefore, thinking it prudent not to run any risk in trying to obtain them, I returned to the beacon.

By this time the wind had fallen to a moderate breeze, though the seas still continued rolling on with foaming crests, but far less wildly than before, and were evidently decreasing in height. The atmosphere having cleared, I was able to distinguish the distant shore, which had the appearance of a blue irregular line to the westward. Again and again I turned my eyes seaward, in hopes of seeing a passing ship, which might stand near enough to observe me. I was disappointed; not a sail came in

sight, and another night approached. The waters covered some of the rocks, but only for a short time, when the tide again ran out. Still I was unwilling to sleep upon the cold rock, and, taking my second fish, having consumed the first to the bones, I climbed up again into the tub. Having coiled myself away round the bottom, I was soon fast asleep. My slumbers were peaceful and quiet. The gentle wind produced no sound round the cask; the roar of the surf on the rocks had ceased. I slept the whole night through, and not till the sun had risen out of the ocean did I wake. I at once stood up and looked round me. A light breeze from the northward sent the wavelets rippling against the rock. The sea was otherwise perfectly calm, and glowed in the rays of the bright orb of day.

I looked landwards, in the expectation of seeing some vessels come out of the harbour, which, I thought, could not be far off, but none appeared. Then I gazed anxiously to the northward, and round the horizon in all directions. Presently I saw a spot appear of snowy whiteness, glittering in the rays of the sun. It rapidly increased in size. "A sail! A sail!" I shouted, though there was no one to hear me. I soon perceived that she was a large ship. First her topgallant sails, then her topsails, rose out of the water. I was so intently watching her that I forgot for a time to take my meal. As may be supposed, I turned many a look towards the ship. She was standing towards me, running before the wind along the coast. At last her courses, and then her hull, appeared, and I fancied that I could almost see the people moving on her deck. I was congratulating myself that I should have a speedy deliverance, when the thought came to me that she might be the "Emu."

If I were discovered I should be worse treated than before. I had not so often seen the ship on which I had spent so many dreary months, to be certain about her appearance at a distance. I trembled lest I should be right, though she had been steering in a different direction. As the stranger approached, I became more and more convinced that she was not the "Emu." Still I felt a feeling of uncertainty on the subject. Should I make a signal, and try to attract the attention of those on board? The beacon would certainly be observed; perhaps they were looking out for it. Had I possessed a supply of water, I might have hesitated longer; but my perilous position determined me at all risks to make a signal. I watched till the ship came nearly abreast of the beacon, when, stripping off my shirt, I climbed as high as I could, until I reached the cask. I waved the shirt

frantically. In my eagerness I shouted also, though I might have known that my puny voice could not be heard. For some time it appeared to me that I was waving in vain; and then, what was my dismay to see the ship's head turned away from the shore. I was deserted.

Presently the sheets were let fly, the main-topsail was backed against the mast. She hove-to. I almost fell from my post with joy as I saw a boat lowered, which came rapidly pulling towards the rock. Putting on my shirt—it was now perfectly dry—I descended from my perch to the rock, and there stood eagerly watching the boat. Again a thought occurred to me, that she might, after all, be the “Emu,” and in another few minutes I might be in the clutches of old Growles and the boatswain, and my other persecutors. But as I strained my eyes to discern their countenances. I became aware that none of the “Emu's” crew were there. As far as I could make out, they were all perfect strangers. The boat steered for the lee-side of the rock. I hurried down to meet them.

“Why, my lad, who are you, and how came you here?” exclaimed one of the strangers. “Has your ship gone to the bottom?”

“That's more than I can say,” I answered; “I came in a boat. The boat floated away, and I have been left here.”

“What ship do you belong to?” asked the stranger.

“The ‘Emu,’” I answered, thinking it was as well to acknowledge this much.

“The ‘Emu!’” he exclaimed. “Why, who are you? Let me let me look at you. Don't you know me, Dick?” and he grasped my hand. I looked at him hard.

“Why, if I didn't think you were at the bottom of the sea, I should have declared that you were Tom Trivett.”

“And so I am,” he said, “though I'm not at the bottom of the sea, and right glad I am to find you, Dick, out of that dreadful ship. Come along, we mustn't stand talking here; we were sent to bring you off, and, judging by your looks, the sooner you're on board the better.”

“Yes, indeed,” I answered, “for I find it a hard matter to speak from the dryness in my throat; I haven’t tasted water for a couple of days, and if you had not come I don’t suppose I should have held out much longer, with the hot sun shining down on my head.”

“Well, I am glad,” cried Tom, as he, with the aid of another hand, who was the third mate of the ship, helped me into the boat. She immediately shoved off, and pulled towards the ship.

“Who would have thought of finding you, Dick, all alone by yourself out on yonder rock?” said Tom, who was pulling stroke oar. “However, wonders never end. There’s another old shipmate of yours on board, whom you’ll be glad to see, I have a notion; and not a little surprised either, if you thought that he was left to perish on the Falkland Islands.”

“What! Do you mean Mark Riddle?” I asked.

“Yes, Mark himself,” he said. “He didn’t die, or he wouldn’t be on board the ‘Falcon.’ We found him about ten days after. He had been pretty well worn out, but still with life enough in him to crawl down to the beach when we put in for water.”

“I am glad, I am glad!” I said, though I could say little more, and was unable to ask Tom how he had escaped.

The mate put questions to me which I was unable to answer; indeed I was almost fainting before I was lifted up the side of the “Falcon.” One of the first persons I set eyes on was Mark Riddle. He was much grown and bronzed. Had I not been aware that he was on board, I should not at first have known him; nor did he guess who I was till Tom told him, when he sprang to my side, and warmly grasped my hand. He forbore asking questions, as he saw that I was not in a state to reply. The first thing Tom did was to bring me a mug of water, which I eagerly drank. After that the captain ordered that I should be carried to a spare berth in the cabin.

“We must have him there, that he may be properly looked after. He’ll be better off than in the forepeak,” he said.

From this I guessed that he was a kind-hearted man, very different to Captain Longfleet. In a short time some broth and a fresh roll baked on

board were brought to me, and I was not so far gone that I was prevented from thankfully swallowing the food. It revived me greatly, and when Captain Mason looked in on me shortly afterwards, I was able to answer all the questions he put to me. I confessed who I was, and how I had come to sea. When he heard that I was the son of a clergyman, and related to Mr Butterfield, he was even kinder than before; though he did not, I suspect, quite believe my account.

"Truth should be adhered to, my lad, under all circumstances," he observed. "Are you quite sure that you did not run away?"

"I thought of doing so, sir; but I was carried off exactly as I have told you, and I was very sorry for it afterwards."

"You have been severely punished for it, and I am afraid have caused great anxiety and grief to your friends. You might have lost your life, though you have been preserved in God's good providence, and when you get home I hope you will make amends for your fault. It is all you can do," he observed.

The state of the ship contrasted greatly with that of the "Emu." After a sound sleep, I was able the next day to get about, though I still remained somewhat sick and weak. Tom told me that the "Falcon" was the happiest ship he had ever been aboard. The crew were generally orderly and well behaved. Mark corroborated what Tom said.

As soon as I was strong enough, I begged that I might be allowed to do duty on board, so that I might not pass my time idly. To this Captain Mason willingly agreed. I was separated more than I liked from Mark, but he told me that he was not jealous.

"But I say, Dick," he said, "if you could teach me, when it's my watch below, some of the navigation and other things you're learning, I should be very much obliged."

I willingly promised to do this; and, as he came down to the spar-deck, we at once set to work, and every day I imparted to him the knowledge I had obtained. One day the first mate, who was a very kind man, found us thus engaged. He said nothing at the time, but afterwards asked me if Riddle was very anxious to learn navigation. I told him that he was. He

reported this to the captain, who told Mark that he could come into the cabin and study with the rest of us.

Our studies were interrupted when the ship entered Sydney harbour. We lay there for some days, discharging our cargo, and taking on board bales of wool, which was now being produced in considerable quantities in that magnificent country, though the shipments of a whole year were not equal to what was afterwards exported in a month.

As I knew that the “Emu” was bound for Sydney, I anxiously inquired whether she was there. She had not come in; but, as I thought she might possibly make her appearance, I was afraid to go on shore, lest I should encounter Captain Longfleet or the mates or the men. I felt sure, should they see me, that I should be captured, carried on board, and punished tremendously for stealing the boat. On returning on board, however, one day, Tom Trivett told me that he had heard a report that the “Emu” had been lost in a gale which had occurred some time before, as part of her stern had been picked up with her name upon it. This account having been confirmed, left no doubt on my mind as to her having been wrecked, and, as none of those on board ever appeared, that all had perished. I had thus still greater reason than ever to be thankful that I had made my escape from her when I did. But Captain Mason blamed me for the way in which I had done so.

“You’ve done many things that were wrong, my lad,” he said, “there’s no doubt about that; but all I can urge you is to be heartily sorry for them.”

I confess I found it very difficult to be sorry that I had run away with the boat, since I had saved my life by so doing. Then I might afterwards have lost it on the rock; and the matter has been a very puzzling one to me ever since.

We sailed with a fair wind, which carried us down the coast of Australia. The wind then shifted to the eastward, and we passed through Bass’s Straits, between the mighty continent and Van Diemen’s Land, as it was at that time called, the captain intending to go home by the Cape of Good Hope instead of across the Pacific and round Cape Horn, as ships of the present day generally do.

I have few incidents to describe during our homeward voyage. I was far happier than I had been on board the "Emu." Somehow or other I had no longer that affection for a sea life which I fancied I possessed. I dreaded, however, the reception I should meet with, on my return home, from Aunt Deb and Mr Butterfield, and from my father and brothers and sisters. The only person who I knew would receive me affectionately was my mother. I was very certain of it. I was half inclined, from fear of the upbraiding that I should get from the rest of my family, to beg Captain Mason to let me remain on board, and to make another voyage with him, expecting that I should regain my love for the ocean. I at last mentioned the subject.

"I would willingly do so, my lad, if your father and friends think it best you should become a sailor, but I cannot consent to act contrary to their wishes. You must at once, on landing, present yourself to Mr Butterfield; and as I am acquainted with him, I will accompany you and state how I have had the satisfaction of rescuing you from the perilous position in which you were placed."

I thanked the captain very much for his offer, as I felt that I should have much more confidence in his presence than if I had gone alone. Still, as we ran up the Irish Channel and sighted the Welsh coast, I felt very nervous, and could scarcely attend to my duties. At length we entered the Mersey and dropped anchor off Liverpool. As soon as the ship had been taken into dock, and the captain was at liberty, he sent for me, and we walked together to Mr Butterfield's office, where we were at once shown into his private room. The old gentleman did not recognise me, I was so grown and altered. When Captain Mason said who I was, he started, and, eyeing me keenly, at last took my hand.

"I'm thankful to see you again, my boy," he said; "but you have caused your aunt and me much anxiety, and trouble and sorrow to others of your family; but I won't say just now what has happened. Your aunt will tell you that, by-and-by. I am unwilling to grieve your heart on first landing on your native shore."

I did not then understand what he meant; but as his manner was kind, I congratulated myself on escaping the upbraiding I expected from him, at all events. Captain Mason having much business to get through, rose to take his leave, when Mr Butterfield expressed his desire to repay him for

the trouble and expense he had been put to on my account.

“Pray don’t speak of it, my kind sir,” answered the worthy captain; “I am amply repaid by the satisfaction I feel at restoring the lad to his friends;” and shaking me warmly by the hand, he left the office.

As it was late in the day, Mr Butterfield having signed a few letters, said he was ready to go home, and desired me to accompany him. As we walked along together, he questioned me about my adventures, seeming rather incredulous when I assured him that I had not intentionally run away to sea.

“Well, well, Dick, we’ll let by-gones be by-gones. I shall be glad to see you act rightly in future.”

I inquired if Aunt Deb was still with him.

“She returned to your father soon after you disappeared, and has only lately come back to pay me another visit,” he answered.

I confess I wished she had stayed at home. However, I had to face her, though I felt very nervous about the interview.

“I don’t think she will recognise you, and I won’t tell her who you are,” he said, as I entered the house.

We went into the drawing-room, where we found Aunt Deb seated in a high-backed chair.

“Here’s a young gentleman come from the sea. He’s come to dine with us,” said Mr Butterfield.

Aunt Deb rose from her seat, gave me a stiff bow, and sank down again on her seat. “I have no affection for the sea, or generally for those whose profession it is to sail upon it,” she said, looking hard at me. “There are exceptions to every rule, and I hope that this young gentleman will show that he doesn’t possess the objectionable manners and customs of sailors.”

“I trust you will not be mistaken in the favourable opinion you form of me,

Madam," I said, as stiffly as I could. "But I venture to think that you are prejudiced against seafaring men. Let me assure you, however, that there are many estimable persons among them, though there are some as bad as any to be found on shore. You once had a nephew who went away to sea. I hope that you don't class him among the bad ones."

"I class him among the very worst," she exclaimed. "He ran off without leave, without wishing me, his kind aunt, farewell, or letting us know where he had gone, or what had become of him. He made us all very miserable, and broke his poor mother's heart."

"My mother dead!" I exclaimed. "Oh, don't say that, don't say that! And I killed her."

"Who are you?" cried Aunt Deb, starting up and looking me in the face.

"Yes; I do believe that you are that graceless young monkey, Dick!"

"I am indeed your nephew, Dick. I am indeed heartily sorry for all I have done, and shall never forgive myself if my conduct was the cause of my mother's death. Did I not mistake what you said? Oh, Aunt Deb, do tell me is she really dead?" and I grasped her hands and burst into tears.

She was moved as I spoke more than I could have expected; and instead of further upbraiding me, tried to soothe the anguish I felt. I was indeed severely punished for my thoughtless conduct, to say the best of it.

Mr Butterfield spoke to me more kindly than I expected or deserved, and when he again offered me a seat in his counting-house, and assured me that he would endeavour to further my interests and raise me according to my deserts, I thankfully accepted his proposal.

Before, however, commencing my career as a merchant, he allowed me to go home and see my father, who, I need not say, received me according to the dictates of his affectionate heart, without uttering a word of blame. My brothers and sisters were never tired of hearing of my adventures while I remained with them. On my mother's grave I promised to do my duty to the best of my power in the new situation of life I was about to occupy.

After my arrival at home I paid a visit to old Roger Riddle, and had the satisfaction of telling him that Mark had become a steady fellow, and as Captain Mason had promised to take him the next voyage in the "Falcon," and to continue his instructions in navigation, he had every prospect of becoming an officer. Tom Trivett entered the navy, and having lost a leg, became an out-pensioner of Greenwich Hospital. He used frequently to come and see me in after years, and nothing pleased him so much as to talk over the adventures of our early days, and to spin long yarns to my children about those he subsequently went through. After a week's stay at Sandgate, I returned to Liverpool, where I at once set to work in Mr Butterfield's office, and have every reason to be thankful that I was enabled to take my place on one of the high stools which I had formerly looked upon with such intense disgust. By diligence and perseverance, and strict attention to my duties, I gained my principal's good opinion, and ultimately, on his death, I became the head of the firm.

The End.



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