Salt Water

The Sea Life and Adventures of Neil D'Arcy the Midshipman

William Henry Giles Kingston

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       The Sea Life and Adventures of Neil D'Arcy the Midshipman

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Chapter One.

Neil D’Arcy’s Life at Sea.

My Ancestors—Larry Harrigan, and my Early Education—Choice of a Profession—First Start in Life.

“The sea, the sea,” if not my mother, has been my nurse (and anything but a dry one) from the earliest days of my recollection. I was born within the sound of old ocean’s surges; I dabbled in salt water before I could run; and I have floated on salt water, and have been well sprinkled with it too, from that time to the present. It never occurred to me, indeed, that I could be anything but a sailor. In my innocence, I pictured a life on the ocean wave as the happiest allowed to mortals; and little did I wot of all the bumpings and thumpings, the blows and the buffetings, I was destined to endure in the course of it. Yet, even had I expected them, I feel very certain they would not have changed my wishes. No, no. I was mightily mistaken with regard to the romance of the thing, I own; but had I to begin life again, with all its dangers and hardships, still I would choose the ocean for my home—the glorious navy of England for my profession.

But now for my antecedents. I will not trouble the reader with many of them. I was born at the family seat in the south of Ireland. My mother died while I was very young, and my father, Colonel D’Arcy, who had seen much service in the army and had been severely wounded, after a lingering illness, followed her to the grave. During this time I was committed to the charge of Larry Harrigan, the butler and family factotum; and, in truth, I desired no better companion, for well did I love the old man. He was a seaman every inch of him, from his cherished pigtail to the end of the timber toe on which he had long stumped through the world. He had been coxswain to my maternal grandfather, a captain in the navy, who was killed in action. Larry had gone to sea with him as a lad, and they had seldom been separated. A few minutes before his

commander, in the moment of victory, lost his life, Larry had his leg shot away; and on being paid off, he repaired to where my mother's family were residing. When my father married, he offered the old seaman an asylum beneath his roof. He certainly did not eat the bread of idleness there, for no one about the place was more generally useful. There was nothing he could not do or make, and in spite of his loss of a limb, he was as active as most people possessed with the usual complement of supporters.

Larry had loved my mother as his own child, and for her sake he loved me more than anything else on earth. As he considered it a part of his duty to instruct me in his own accomplishments, which being chiefly of a professional character, I at a very early age became thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of knotting, bending, and splicing, and similar nautical arts. I could point a rope, work a Turk's-head, or turn in an eye, as well as many an A.B. Not content with this, he built me a model of a ship, with her rigging complete. He then set to work to teach me the names of every rope and spar; and when I knew them and their uses, he unrigged the ship and made me rig her again under his inspection. This I did several times, till he considered I was perfect. He next bought fresh stuff for a new suit of rigging, and made me cut it into proper lengths and turn it all in correctly before I set it up.

"Now you see, Master Neil," said he, "we've just got the lovely *Psyche* out of the hands of the shipwrights, and it's our duty to get the rigging over her mastheads, and fit her for sea as fast as the work can be done; so let's see how soon we can do the job."

Such were our indoor amusements, and thus I rapidly acquired an amount of knowledge which most midshipmen take a long time to get stowed away in their heads. Larry also used to take me out on the waters of the bay, and taught me to row and to manage the sails of a small boat with tolerable dexterity. I learned also to swim; and had it not been for my possession of that art, I should probably long ago have been food for fishes. And here I must endeavour strongly to impress on the minds of my young readers the importance of learning to swim well; for not only may they thus be enabled to save their own lives, but they may have the happiness of preserving those of their fellow-creatures.

While my poor father lived, he attended to the more intellectual branches of my education. My mother taught me to read, and for her sake I loved reading. She also instilled those religious principles into me which have been my support through life. Short and fleeting as was the time she remained on earth, inestimable were the blessings she bestowed on me. Whatever of the milk of human kindness flows round my heart, from her gentle bosom I drew it forth; and surely I do not err when I believe that her earnest prayers before the throne of mercy have caused watchful spirits to shield me from the perils of the stormy ocean, and from still greater dangers, the treacherous quicksands and dark rocks which have laid in my course through life.

I was ten years old before it occurred to any one that a little of the discipline of a school might be beneficial to me, to prepare me somewhat better than I could be prepared at home to rough it in the rude world into which I was ere long to be plunged. To the academy, therefore, of a certain Doctor Studdert, near Cork, I was sent, where I contrived to pick up a few crumbs of knowledge and some experience of life. I had no great dislike to school, but liked home much better; and no one sung—

> “Packing up and going away,
> All for the sake of a holiday,”

more joyously than did I when my first midsummer holiday came round.

Larry was on the watch for me as I jumped out of the carriage which had been sent over to Kerry to meet me. The old seaman had expected me to come back a prodigy of learning; but was horrified to discover that I was puzzled how to make a carrick-bend, and had nearly forgotten the length of the *Psyche’s* main-top bowline.

“And that’s what the Doctor calls schooling, does he, Master Neil?” he exclaimed, indignantly. “Now I’ll make bold to say that among all the bigwigs he has under him, including himself, there isn’t one on ’em knows how to gammon a bowsprit or turn in a dead-eye. Now, to my mind, if they can’t give you more larning than you’ve got since you’ve been away, you’d better stop at home altogether.”

I agreed with Larry, but the higher authorities ruled otherwise; so back to

school I went at the end of the holidays, having regained all the nautical knowledge I before possessed, with a little in addition.

I will pass over the sad time of my brave father's death. I was left to the guardianship of my uncle, Counsellor D'Arcy, the great Dublin barrister, and of Doctor Driscoll. I was removed to the house of the latter, with poor Larry, who threatened to do all sorts of dreadful deeds, if he were not allowed to accompany me. My patrimony, which had become somewhat attenuated, was in the meantime put out to nurse. I was rather surprised at not being sent back to school, when one day the Doctor, as he sat cross-legged before the fire after dinner, rubbing his shins, called me to him.

"Neil, my boy, your uncle, Counsellor D'Arcy, has requested me to speak to you on a very important subject. It is time, he thinks, that your studies should be directed to fit you for the profession you may select. What would you wish to be, now? Have you ever thought on the matter? Would you like to follow his steps, and study the law; or those of your honoured father, and enter the army; or those of your grandfather, and go to sea; or would you like to become a merchant, or a clergyman; or what do you say to the practice of medicine?"

"That I would never take a drop, if I could help it, Doctor; or give it to others either," I answered. "I fear that I should make a bad minister, and a worse merchant; and as for the law, I would not change places with the Counsellor himself, if he were to ask me. I should have no objection to the army; but if I'm to choose my profession, I'll go to sea, by all means. I've no fancy for any but a sea life; but I'll just go and talk the matter over with Larry, and hear what he thinks about it."

The Doctor said nothing. He considered, I conclude, that he had obeyed my uncle's wishes in proposing the matter to me, and his conscience was at rest. I forthwith ran off and broached the subject to Larry; not that I doubted what his advice would be. The old seaman gave a hitch to the waistband of his trousers, as he replied, with no little animation—

"Why, you see, Master Neil, to my mind there's only one calling which a man, who is anything of a man, would wish to follow. The others are all very well in their way: the parsons, and the soldiers, and the big-wigged

lawyers, and the merchants, and the doctors, and the ‘’plomatics’—them who goes abroad to desave the furriners, and takes up so much room and gives themselves such airs aboard ship; but what, just let me ax, is the best on ’em when you puts him alongside a right honest, thorough-bred seaman? What’s the proudest on ’em, when it comes to blow half a capful of wind? What’s the boldest on ’em in a dark night, on a lee shore? Not one on ’em is worth that!” and he snapped his fingers to show his contempt for landsmen of every degree. “On course, Master Neil, dear, you’ll be a seaman. With my will, the navy is the only calling your blessed mother’s son should follow. Your grandfather died in it, and your great-grandfather before him; and I hope to see you in command of one of His Majesty’s ships before I die—that I do. But I was forgetting that you were growing so big, and that you would be going off to sea so soon,” continued the old man, in an altered tone. “You’ll remember, for his sake, all the lessons Larry gave you, Master Neil? And you’ll think of your old friend sometimes in a night watch, won’t you, now?”

I assured him that I would often think of him, and try not to forget any of his lessons. I then went back to the Doctor, to inform him that Larry agreed with me that the navy was the only profession likely to suit me.

My future calling being thus speedily settled, Doctor Driscoll, who was aware that knowledge would not come by intuition, sent me to an old master in the navy, who fortunately resided in the neighbourhood, to be instructed in the rudiments of navigation. As I was as wide awake as most youngsters of my age, I very soon gained a fair insight into its mysteries; and by the time the spring came round, I was pronounced fit for duty.

A brother of my mother’s, who commanded a large revenue cutter on the south coast of England, having been applied to for advice by the Doctor, answered by the following short note:—

“Dear Sir,—I’ll make a seaman of Neil, with all my heart, if you will send him across to Portsmouth. Let him inquire for me at the ‘Star and Garter.’ Should I be away on a cruise, I will leave word with the landlady what is to be done with him. My craft is the *Serpent*.

“I remain, faithfully yours,—

“Terence O’Flaherty.”

“What! send the child all the way over to Portsmouth by himself!” exclaimed good Mrs Driscoll, the Doctor’s wife, on hearing the contents of this epistle. “Why, he might be spirited off to the Plantations or the Black Hole of Calcutta, and we never hear any more about him. What could Mr O’Flaherty be thinking about?”

“That his nephew is about to be an officer in His Majesty’s service, and that the sooner he learns to take care of himself, the better,” replied the Doctor.

“Let him begin, then, by slow degrees, as birds are taught to fly,” urged the kind dame. “He has never been out of the nest yet, except to school, when he was put in charge of the coachman, like a parcel.”

“He will find his way safe enough,” muttered the Doctor. “Won’t you, Neil?”

To speak the truth, I would gladly have undertaken to find my way to Timbuctoo, or the Antipodes, by myself; but I had just formed a plan which I was afraid might be frustrated, had I agreed with the Doctor. I therefore answered, “I’ll go and ask Larry;” and without waiting for any further observations, off I ran, to put it in train. It was, that Larry should accompany me to Portsmouth; and I had also a notion that he might be able to go to sea with me. He was delighted with my plan, and backing Mrs Driscoll’s objections to my being sent alone, it was finally arranged that he should take charge of me till he had handed me over to my uncle. Such parts of my outfit as could be manufactured at home, Mrs Driscoll got ready for me, and Larry was empowered to procure the rest for me at Portsmouth.

I confess that I did not shed a tear or cast a look of regret at my birthplace; but with a heart as light as a skylark taking his morning flight, I mounted alongside Larry on the top of the coach bound for Dublin. While in that city we saw my uncle, the Counsellor. I do not remember profiting much by the visit. He, however, shook me kindly by the hand, and wishing me every success, charged Larry to take care of me.

“Arrah!” muttered the old man as we walked away, “his honour, sure,

would be after telling a hen to take care of her chickens now."

In London we put up at an inn at the west end, near Exeter 'Change; and while dinner was getting ready, we went to see the wild beasts which dwelt there in those days. I thought London a very smoky, dismal city, and that is all I can remember about it.

Larry was rigged for the journey in a suit of black; and though he would have been known, however dressed, by every one for a seaman, he was always taken for an officer of the old school, and was treated accordingly with becoming respect. Indeed, there was an expression of mild firmness and of unassuming self-confidence in his countenance, added to his silvery locks and his handsome though weather-beaten features, which commanded it.

We spent only one night in London; and by five o'clock in the afternoon of the day we left it we were rattling down the High Street of Portsmouth, on the top of the fast coach, while the guard played "See the Conquering Hero Comes"—which I had some notion he did in compliment to me.

I thought Portsmouth a much nicer place than London (in which idea some people, perhaps, will not agree with me); while I looked upon the "Star and Garter," where we stopped, as a very fine hotel, though not equal in dignity to the "George." My chest, made under Larry's superintendence, showed that its owner was destined for the sea. Taking my hand, Larry stumped up the passage, following the said chest and the bag which contained his wardrobe.

"What ship has your son come to join?" asked good Mrs Timmins, the landlady, curtseying, as she encountered us.

"Faith, marm, it's not after being the son of the likes of me is Master D'Arcy here," he answered, pleased at the same time at the dignity thus conferred on him. "This is the nephew, marm, of Lieutenant O'Flaherty of His Majesty's cutter, the *Serpent*; and I'll make bold to ax whether she's in the harbour, and what directions the Lieutenant has left about his nephew?"

"Oh dear, now, the cutter sailed this very morning for the westward," answered the landlady; "that is unfortunate! And so this young gentleman

is Lieutenant O'Flaherty's nephew. Well, then, we must take good care of him, as she won't be back for a week; and you know, mister, you needn't trouble yourself more about him."

"Faith, marm, it's not I will be after leaving the young master till I see him safe in his uncle's hands," answered Larry, with a rap on his thigh. "So I'll just trouble you to give us a room with a couple of beds in it, and we'll take up our quarters here till the cutter comes back."

This arrangement of course pleased the worthy Mrs Timmins, as she got two guests instead of one; and I thus found myself established for a week at Portsmouth. Having selected our chamber, we went into the coffee-room and ordered dinner. There were several youngsters there, and other junior officers of the profession, for the "Star and Garter" was at that time more frequented than the far-famed "Blue Posts." At first some of the younger portion of the guests were a little inclined to look superciliously at Larry and me; but he stuck out his timber toe, and returned their glances with such calm independence, that they soon suspected he was not made of the stuff to laugh at; and they then showed an evident disposition to enter into conversation with him to discover who he could be. This, for my sake, he did not wish them to do; for, as he was to act the part of guardian, he thought it incumbent on him to keep up his dignity.

We passed, to me, a very interesting time at Portsmouth. We constantly visited the dockyard, which was my delight. He took me over the *Victory*, and showed me the spot where Nelson fell; and with old associations many a tale and anecdote which, long since forgotten, now returned to his memory, he poured into my eager ear.

Some people declare, and naval men even do so, that there's no romance in a seafaring life—that it's all hard, dirty, slaving work, without anything to repay one, except prize-money in war time and promotion in peace. Now, to my mind, there's a great deal of romance and chivalry and excitement, and ample recompense in the life itself; and this Larry, who ought to have known, for he had seen plenty of hard service, had himself discovered. It is that some do not know where to look for the romance, and if found, cannot appreciate it. The stern realities of a sea life—its hardships, its dangers, its battles, its fierce contests with the

elements, its triumphs over difficulties—afford to some souls a pleasure which ignobler ones cannot feel: I trust that my adventures will explain what I mean. For my own part, I can say that oftentimes have I enjoyed that intense pleasure, that joyous enthusiasm, that high excitement, which not only recompenses one for the toil and hardships by which it is won, but truly makes them as nothing in comparison to the former. All I can say is, let me go through the world sharing the rough and the smooth alike—the storms and sunshine of life; but save me from the stagnant existence of the man who sleeps on a feather bed and always keeps out of danger.

Chapter Two.

Don the True Blue—Romance of the Sea—Larry and his Wife.

My uniform was to be made at Portsmouth. Of course I felt myself not a little important, and very fine, as I put it on for, the first time, and looked at myself in the glass, with my dirk buckled to my side, and a round hat with a cockade in it on my head. We were sitting in the coffee-room, waiting for dinner, on that eventful day, when a number of youngsters belonging to a line-of-battle ship came into the inn. They had not been there long, when the shiny look of my new clothes, and the way I kept handling my dirk, unable to help looking down at it, attracted the attention of one of them.

“That’s a sucking Nelson,” he exclaimed, “I’ll bet a sixpence!”

“Hillo, youngster! to what ship do you belong?” asked another, looking hard at me.

“To the *Serpent* cutter,” I answered, not quite liking the tone in which he spoke.

“And so you are a cutter’s midshipman, are you?” he asked. “And how is it you are not on board, I should like to know?”

I told him that the cutter was away, and that I was waiting for her return.

“Then I presume that you haven’t been to sea at all yet?” observed the first who had spoken, in a bland tone, winking at his shipmates, with the intention of trotting me out.

I answered simply that I had not. Larry, I must observe, all the time was sitting silent, and pretending not to take any notice of them, so that they did not suspect we belonged to each other.

“Poor boy, I pity you,” observed the young gentleman, gravely, and turning up his eyes. “I’d advise you seriously to go back to your mamma. You’ve no idea of all the difficult things you’ll have to learn; of which, how to hand, reef, and steer isn’t the hundredth part.”

“In the first place, I have not a mamma to go to,” I replied, in an indignant tone; for I did not like his mentioning her, even. “And perhaps I know more about a ship than you think of.”

“You! what should you know about a ship, I should like to know?” exclaimed the midshipman, contemptuously.

“Why, I know how to gammon a bowsprit,” I replied, looking at him very hard. “I can work a Turk’s-head, make a lizard, or mouse a stay—can’t I, Larry?” I asked, turning to the old sailor. “And as for steering, I’ve steered round Kilkee Bay scores of times, before you knew how to handle an oar, I’ll be bound—haven’t I, Larry?”

The old man, thus appealed to, looked up and spoke. “Faith, you may well say that same, Master Neil; and proud am I to have taught you. And I’ll just tell you, young gentlemen, I’ll lay a gold guinea that Master D’Arcy here would get the rigging over the mastheads of a ship, and fit her for sea, while either of you were looking at them, and thinking how you were to sway up the topmasts. No offence, you know; but as for gammoning—I don’t think any one would beat you there.”

Several of the midshipmen muttered murmurs of applause at what Larry and I had said, and in a very short time we were all excellent friends, and as intimate as if we were shipmates together. They at once respected him, for they could not help recognising him as a true sailor; and they also saw that, young and inexperienced as I appeared, I was not quite as green as they had at first supposed. And we all parted excellent friends.

We had been waiting some time at the “Star and Garter,” and there were no signs of the *Serpent*, and from the information Larry gained from those who were likely to know, he was led to believe that several days more might elapse before her return; so he proposed that we should look out for lodgings, as more economical, and altogether pleasanter. I willingly agreed to his plan, so out we set in search of them. We saw several which did not suit us. At last we went to Southsea, which we agreed would be more airy and pleasant; and seeing a bill up at a very neat little house, we knocked at the door, and were admitted. There was a nice sitting-room and bed-room, and a small room which Larry said would do for him. The landlady, who was a pleasant-looking, buxom dame, asked only fifteen shillings a week, including doing for us; so we agreed to take it. By some chance we did not inquire her name.

“Good-bye, Missis,” said Larry. “I’ll send the young gentleman’s traps here in half an hour, and leave him mean time as security. I suppose you’ll have no objection to stay, Master D’Arcy?” he added, turning to me.

I had none, of course, and so it was arranged. While Larry was gone, the good lady took me into the sitting-room, and begging me to make myself at home, was very inquisitive to know all about me. I had no reason for not gratifying her, so I told her how my mother and then my father had died and left me an orphan, and how I had come all the way from Kerry to Portsmouth, and how I belonged to a cutter which I had not yet seen, and how I intended one day to become a Nelson or a Collingwood. Of my resolution the kind lady much approved.

“Ah, my good, dear man, if he had lived, would have become a captain also; but he went to sea and died, and I never from that day to this heard any more of him,” said she, wiping the corner of her eye with her apron, more from old habit than because there were any tears to dry up, for she certainly was not crying. “Those things on the mantel-piece there were some he brought me home years and years ago, when he was a gay young sailor; and I’ve kept them ever since, for his sake, though I’ve been hard pushed at times to find bread to put into my mouth, young gentleman.”

The things she spoke of were such as are to be found in the sitting-rooms of most sailors’ wives. There were elephants’ teeth, with figures of men

and women carved on them, very cleverly copied from very coarse prints; and there were shells of many shapes, and lumps of corals, and bits of seaweed, with the small model of a ship, very much battered, and her yards scandalised, as if to mourn for her builder's loss. She was placed on a stand covered with small shells, and at either end were bunches of shell flowers, doubtlessly very tasteful according to the widow's idea. The room was hung round with coloured prints, which even then I did not think very well executed. One was a sailor returning from a voyage, with bags of gold at his back and sticking out of his pockets. I wondered whether I should come back in that way; but as I did not know the value of money, there was nothing very exciting in it to me. There were two under which was written "The lover's meeting." In both cases the lady was dressed extravagantly fine, with a bonnet and very broad ribbons; and the lover had on the widest trousers I ever saw. Another represented a lady watching for her lover, whose ship was seen in the distance; and one more I remember was a seaman cast upon the shore, with a female bending over him; while there were several pictures of ships, some of which were on the tops of waves running truly mountains high, and curling over in a very terrific way indeed. I had time to inspect all these things while my landlady was getting my bed-room ready. I had not dined; and when Larry, who was rather longer than I had expected, returned, I found that he had purchased all sorts of necessary provisions, and that they only wanted cooking for me to eat them. While he laid the cloth, the landlady performed the office of cook; and in a little time a very nice dinner of veal cutlets, ham, and fried potatoes made its appearance. When Larry had nothing to do but to look about him, I observed him fix his eyes in a strange sort of way on the model of the ship, and then at the shells and the other things in the room. At last he turned to the landlady.

"Please, marm," said he, "where did you get all them things from?"

"Oh, sir," answered the landlady, "they were given to me by my poor dear man, who has been dead and gone this many a long year."

"May I be bold to ask, and no offence, what is your name, marm?" said Larry.

"My husband was an Irishman, like you, and my name is Harrigan," answered the landlady, who held at the moment a jug of beer, from which

she was going to pour me out a tumblerful.

“Faith, you may well say that he was like me, marm, for, curious enough, that’s my name too,” answered Larry.

“Your name!” exclaimed the landlady, standing still and looking doubtfully at him.

“Yes, my name—it is, indeed,” said Larry. “And may I ask what is your Christian name, marm?”

“Jane is my name, and yours is Lawrence!” shrieked Mrs Harrigan, letting fall the jug of beer, which was smashed to pieces, and rushing towards him.

“By the pipers, you’re right now; but if you’re yourself—my own Jane Harrigan, whom I thought dead and buried, or married long ago to another man, it’s the happiest day of my life that I’ve seen for a long time,” cried Larry, throwing his arms round her and giving her a hug which I thought would have squeezed all the breath out of her body.

I looked up at the pictures on the wall, and fancied he was imitating one of the persons there represented; though, to be sure, my friends were rather aged lovers.

“And I thought you were lost at sea long, long ago,” cried Mrs Harrigan, now sobbing in earnest.

“Faith, so I was, Jane, and it’s a long time I’ve been being found again,” said Larry; “and how we’ve both come to life again is more than I can tell.”

“Oh, I never forgot you, and wouldn’t listen to what any other man had to say to me,” said Mrs Harrigan.

“Nor I, faith, what the girls said to me,” returned Larry. “But for the matter of that, my timber toe wasn’t much to their liking.”

“I see, Larry, you’ve lost your leg since I lost you, and it was that puzzled me, or I should have known you at once—that I should,” observed Mrs

Harrigan, giving him an affectionate kiss on his rough cheek.

They did not mind me at all, and went on talking away as if I was not in the room, which was very amusing.

Larry afterwards confessed to me that he should not have recognised his wife, for when he went to sea and left her for the last time, she was a slim, pretty young woman; and though she was certainly not uncomely, no one could accuse her of not having flesh enough. Larry, as many another sailor has done, had married at the end of a very short courtship, his wife, then a nursery-maid in an officer's family at Portsmouth; and a few weeks afterwards he had been pressed and sent out to the East Indies. While there, he had been drafted into another ship, and the ship in which he had left home had been lost with all hands. Of this event his wife became acquainted, and having come from an inland county, and not knowing how to gain further information about him, she had returned to her parents in the country. They died, and she went again into service.

Meantime, Larry, having lost his leg, came home, and notwithstanding all his inquiries, he could gain no tidings of her. At last he came to the conclusion that she must have married again, probably another sailor, and gone away with him—no uncommon occurrence in those days; so he philosophically determined to think no more about her, but to return to the land of his birth to end his days.

She had gone through the usual vicissitudes of an unprotected female, and at last returned to Portsmouth with a family in whose service she acted as nurse. Here, having saved up a little money, she determined to settle as a lodging-house keeper, and she had taken the house in which we found her.

This event, caused me very great satisfaction, for it had occurred to me that Larry would find himself very forlorn going back to Ireland without me to look after, and no one to care about; and now, instead, he would have a good wife, and a comfortable house to live in. She also would be the gainer, for he had saved some money when in our service; and as he was a sober, temperate man, he would be able to assist her very much in her business. On my own account also I was very glad, because I should now have many opportunities of seeing him whenever I returned to

Portsmouth.

Several days passed away after this, during which time I must say no one could have taken better care of me than did good Mrs Harrigan; and I felt convinced that my old friend would likewise be well looked after during my absence.

Chapter Three.

Lieutenant O'Flaherty—My Ship and Shipmates—The Pilot's Boat—Results of Drunkenness—My First Command.

One day, on going with Larry, according to custom, to the "Star and Garter" to learn tidings of the cutter, I saw a fine sailorlike-looking man, with an intelligent and good-humoured expression of countenance, talking to the landlady.

"There's the young gentleman himself," she exclaimed, pointing at me.

"What, my lad, are you indeed my nephew?" said the officer, kindly, putting out his hand and pressing mine warmly. "Faith, I needn't ask that, though; you are the very picture of your poor mother. Well, Neil, the sooner you get on board and begin learning your duty, the better."

I answered that I was perfectly ready, for I at once took a great fancy to him, and thought I should be very happy in the cutter.

He now observed Larry for the first time.

"What! old shipmate," he exclaimed, shaking him warmly by the hand, "are you the trustworthy person Dr Driscoll told me he would send to look after the youngster? I'm delighted to see you again, and wish I could give you a berth on board my craft, but I'm afraid the service won't permit that. You must, however, come and take a cruise with us, and talk over old times."

"Faith, your honour, I'm not much fit for duty, I own, with my timber toe, afloat, and I've just found a snug berth on shore, which I intend to keep

till Master D’Arcy settles down in the halls of his fathers, and wants my services; but I’ll gladly take a cruise with your honour, and just see how he practises all I’ve taught him. You’ll find him in a few days, I’ll warrant, as smart a seaman as many who’ve been two or three years afloat.”

To make a long story short, while Larry remained on shore with his new-found wife, I went on board the cutter; and the following day we ran out of harbour, round by Saint Helen’s, and stood down Channel in search of a smuggling craft, of whose movements the Commander had received notice.

I found my uncle, on further acquaintance, to be what his looks betokened him, a thoroughly honest, hearty sailor. His first officer was a very old mate who had long given up all hopes of promotion in the service. He was married; and his wife and family lived near Portsmouth. His name was John Hanks. There was a second master and a clerk in charge; so that, for a cutter, we made up an unusually large mess. We had no surgeon, as we could always run into harbour if any of us required doctoring.

My uncle, who was a poor man, had taken the command of the cutter for the sake of his wife and family; and when I came to know my sweet young aunt, I felt, with her smiles to welcome him when he got home, Lieutenant O’Flaherty was a happier man far than many who roll in their easy carriages about the streets of smoky London.

Mrs O’Flaherty, with the two children she then had, lived in a pretty little cottage near Ryde, where he was able every now and then to go and see her. Of course he was never wanting in an excuse, when duty would allow him, to be off Ryde; and on one of these occasions he first introduced me to his wife. I loved her at once, for she was a thoroughly genuine, graceful woman, young and pretty, with a kind, warm heart, and a sweet expression of countenance, which her character did not belie. My little cousins and I also became great friends, and I confess that I felt I would much rather stay with her than have to go to sea and knock about in all weathers in the cutter; but duty sent us both on board again, and it was a long time before I had another opportunity of paying a visit to Daisy Cottage.

But I have been going ahead of my narrative.

We were standing down Channel in the *Serpent*. Our cruising ground was chiefly from Saint Helen's to the Start; but we were liable to be sent elsewhere, or might go wherever our Commander had notice there was a chance of catching a smuggler.

We had been out some days, keeping a sharp look-out off Portland Point for a noted fellow, Myers by name, the owner of a fast lugger, the *Kitty*, who was expected to try and run a cargo of tubs in that neighbourhood.

The smugglers played us all sorts of tricks, and I must own we were more than once taken in by them. On one occasion, while it was blowing very fresh, a cutter hailed us and told us that she had just passed over a number of tubs, pointing out the direction where we should find them. While we were engaged in picking them up, she made sail for the shore; and we afterwards learned, to our mortification, that she had run a very large cargo of contraband goods.

Thanks to Larry's instructions, as I was very handy in a boat, and understood the duties of a midshipman tolerably well, I was, to my great delight, soon placed in charge of one of the gigs.

A few days after the occurrence I have described, when we were about mid Channel, we observed a vessel whose appearance was suspicious. It had just gone two bells, in the forenoon watch. It was blowing pretty fresh from the south-west, and there was a lop of a sea, but not enough to endanger a boat. We made sail towards the stranger, and as we neared her we perceived that she was veering about, apparently under no control.

"Her main-boom has gone," observed Hanks, "and there doesn't seem to be a soul on deck; her crew have been knocked or washed overboard, I suspect."

"I am afraid so," said the Commander. "She looks to me like a pilot-boat. She was probably struck by a squall, with only a couple of hands left in her."

"Lubberly work somehow, at all events," remarked Hanks.

In another ten minutes we were close to the pilot-boat, and the cutter being hove-to, a boat was lowered, and Hanks and I were ordered to go in her and see what was the matter. When we gained the deck, we found that the boom had knocked away part of the bulwarks and companion-hatch, and committed other damage. The first thing we did was to lower down the mainsail and to secure the boom, which task, after some difficulty, we accomplished. We next set about searching the vessel, thinking that no one was on board. The main hatch was on, but there was a little cabin aft, with a small stove in it, and six berths, in which the crew lived. There was a table in the cabin, and on it were a couple of tumblers, a thick-necked, square-sided glass bottle, on its side, a broken pipe, and wet marks, and ashes of tobacco, as if people had very lately been drinking there.

“What’s wrong here?” said Hanks. “It could not have been long ago since some one was on board.”

Our eyes soon began to get accustomed to the sombre light of the cabin, which was darkened by the mainsail hanging over it. I happened to stoop down, and my eyes glanced under the table, where we had not before looked.

“Hillo,” I exclaimed, “why here are a man’s legs.”

“There seems to be two brace of them,” said Hanks, laughing. “Come out, my hearties, and give an account of yourselves.”

Saying this, he began to drag towards the companion-ladder one of the men; I following his example with regard to the other.

“Why, Jim, we ain’t got in yet; so let us alone, will ye,” grunted out one, as he turned on his side, without opening his eyes.

The other was too drunk to speak; indeed, had we not loosened his neckcloth, I believe he would have died of apoplexy, for he was already getting black in the face. We placed them near the companion-ladder, where they could obtain some air; and then, getting off the main hatch, we proceeded to search the vessel. In the hold were several casks of French brandy, immensely strong spirit, intended to be diluted before being sold. From one of these the crew had evidently been helping

themselves, and not being accustomed to so potent a liquid, fancying it of the ordinary strength, it had overcome their senses before they were aware of what was happening to them. We found, also, Dutch drops, several bales of tobacco, and sundry other things, amply sufficient to condemn the craft as a smuggler, but which also proved that it was an unusual venture, and that the people were not adepts in the contraband trade. We searched the vessel throughout, but no one else was discovered.

“Who, then, could Jim be?” we asked ourselves.

The drunken men were still too fast locked in a state of stupor to answer. When nothing more could be done, Hanks sent me back to the cutter, to report proceedings, hoping to be ordered to take the prize in himself.

When I had made my report, “Very well,” said the Commander, “I wish to try what amount of discretion you possess, Neil; so you shall take the prize up to Portsmouth, and deliver her and the people over to the proper authorities. Take Thole and four hands with you. Look out that the prisoners do not escape, and I dare say you will do well. I shall be up at Portsmouth in a day or so, to take you off. Now get on board, and assume your command as fast as you like. Send Mr Hanks on board again.”

A change of things was soon put up in a bundle, and I and it bundled on board the prize.

“And so you are to go, youngster, are you?” remarked Hanks, as I got on board. “It’s all my ill luck, for I thought to go myself; but good-bye, youngster, and a pleasant trip to you.”

Saying this, he stepped into the boat alongside, and returned to the cutter, leaving me in possession of my new-fledged honours. The pilot-boat belonged to some place on the Dorsetshire coast, and had drifted up off Saint Alban’s Head, where we found her. The Needles were just in sight ahead, or rather the end of the Isle of Wight, off which they extend, so it seemed an easy matter to run in; but I suspect, without Thole I should have made some slight mistake or other, which might have laid my charge on the rocks. Thole showed me the proper marks, and by

keeping the two lighthouses on Hurst Point in one, we ran in between the Needles and the shoal of the shingles. I felt very grand, as I walked the deck with my spy-glass under my arm, and watched the chalk-white cliffs of Alum Bay rising high above us on the right, and the curiously-coloured strata of sand at the eastern end of it, the wood-covered heights of Freshwater, and the little town of Yarmouth; on the left, the old castle of Hurst, and the long extent of the forest shores of Hampshire, with the picturesque town of Lymington rising among the green trees and green fields. I had, I confess, a feeling—grand as I had to appear—that I knew less than anybody else on board about affairs nautical; but modesty is the frequent companion of merit, and though I was very little, I might have been remarkably good.

By this time one of the prisoners began to come to himself, and his astonishment was only equalled by his alarm when, on sitting up and rubbing his eyes, he found himself surrounded by strange faces, and discovered that the craft was running up the Solent Channel. My uniform at once told him the truth.

“Where’s Jim?” he asked, on seeing only his drunken companion near him.

“Jim—I don’t know who you mean,” answered Thole. “If it was any one you left on deck, master, why, all I can say is, he wasn’t there when we boarded you.”

On hearing this announcement, he started to his feet, instantly throwing off all appearance of drunkenness, except that his eye was haggard and his cheek discoloured. He was a man of about fifty, of a stout build and a weather-beaten, bronzed face, rather full and good-humoured, certainly not giving one the notion that he was an habitual drunkard. His hair was somewhat long, and dishevelled and grizzled, from exposure to the atmosphere.

“What! Jim not on board?” he exclaimed, rushing on deck. “Where is my boy—what has happened to him?”

He stood for a few seconds leaning against the companion-hatch, while his eye scanned the condition of the vessel, and he seemed instinctively

to comprehend what had happened.

“Where is Jim?” he repeated, in a hollow voice.

“I don’t know, master,” answered one of our men, whom he seemed to address. “We only found you two below. If there was another of you, he must have been washed overboard while you lay drunk in the cabin.”

“Drunk!” he ejaculated; “then, my son, I’ve murdered you.” As he uttered these words he sprang to the side, and would have thrown himself overboard, had not Thole, who just then came on deck, caught him by the legs and dragged him forcibly back. The unhappy man struggled violently in his endeavour to perpetrate his intention. “Jim, Jim, my son! you gone—gone for ever; how can I go home and face your mother, my boy?” he cried, his bosom heaving with the passion raging within. Then he turned frantically to us, swearing oaths too frightful to repeat. “You’ve been murdering him, some of you, you bloody-handed king’s officers. I know you of old. It’s little you care for the life of a fellow-creature. Where is he, I say? I left him on deck sound and well, as fine a lad as ever stepped. How could he have gone overboard? He hadn’t touched a drop; he was as sober as any one of you; but I know how it was, you chased him and he wouldn’t give in—he stood at the helm like a man; so you, you cowardly hounds, shot him down as if he were a brute. There’s his blood on the deck—the brave lad’s blood, and you dabbling your feet in it —you, his murderers,—and laughing at me, his father.”

Thus the unhappy man went raving on, conjuring up, in his excited imagination, scenes the most dreadful. Of course we heeded not his raving abuse, for we pitied him most sincerely. There was now no doubt that, while the father and his smuggling companion were drunk below, the son had been knocked overboard. In vain had the voice of the poor lad implored aid from those whose brutal intoxication prevented them even from hearing his death-shriek ere he sunk for ever. It was with the greatest difficulty we could hold the wretched man as we dragged him below and lashed him into one of the standing bed-places. He there still continued raving as before, now calling on his son to come to him, and then accusing us of his murder. His cries and groans at last awoke the other man out of his drunken trance, but it was some time before he could comprehend what had happened. He was not a father, and when at

length he came to his senses, he, with brutal indifference abused his companion for disturbing him. As I stood over the skylight which had been got off to give air to the little stifling cabin, I heard him growl out, “Jim’s gone, has he? his own fault then, not to keep a better look-out. It’s he, then, who’s brought us into this scrape; and I don’t see why you should make such a jaw for what can’t be helped. There now, old man, just belay all that, and let me finish my snooze. We can’t hang for it, you know; there, there, now,”—and he actually turned on his side and went off to sleep again. At length the father of the drowned lad wore himself out and fell off, it seemed, into a sort of stupor.

“I never knew no good come of smuggling,” observed Thole, rather sententiously. “What they makes they spends as fast as they gets, and no one’s the better for it.”

Nobody had a better right than had he to know this, for he had been somewhat addicted to the practice in his youth, and had in consequence been sent on board a man-of-war. The flood and fair wind carried us right into Portsmouth Harbour, where I dropped my anchor and pulled on shore to report my arrival to the custom-house authorities. I was in one respect sorry that my cruise was over, because I was obliged to descend from my rank as commander to that of midshipman; but as I hoped some day to regain it, I did not grieve much about it, especially as I expected to be soon able to set off and pay Larry a visit. The two smugglers were sent to prison; one afterwards entered on board of a man-of-war; the unhappy father died raving mad in the hospital, calling himself the murderer of his son.

Thus ended what I may consider my first cruise.

Chapter Four.

Myers the Smuggler—I Learn to Play the Fiddle—Smell Gunpowder —Action with a Lugger—Left in the Lurch.

The cutter soon after came in, and after seeing my men safe on board her, I got leave for a day to pay a visit to Larry. On ringing, I heard him

stumping downstairs to open the door. When he saw me, he could scarcely contain his delight; and forgetting etiquette and all rules and precedents, he seized me in his arms as if I had been a baby, and almost squeezed the breath out of my body. Though I had not been away six weeks, he vowed that I had grown wonderfully, and looked like a man already. Mrs Harrigan was equally complimentary, and I could not help feeling myself a person of mighty importance. I was very glad to find that my old friend was perfectly contented with his wife, and that he made himself very useful to her, so that there was every prospect of their being comfortable together. The house was full of lodgers; but there was a little room which they insisted on my occupying. They themselves lived in a back parlour, where I spent the evening with them. I slept at their house, and the next morning returned on board the cutter. We were ordered to keep an especial look-out for Myers, whose lugger was reported to have run more cargoes than any free-trader among the vast numbers engaged in the illicit traffic. She belonged to Beere, a small town on the Dorsetshire coast, in West Bay. It is a pretty, quiet little place, and consists of one long, broad street, built in the centre of a valley reaching close down to the water's edge, with white cliffs on either side of it. The lugger was often seen off there; but we could not then touch her, as she was never found with anything in her to enable us to prove that she was engaged in smuggling. Myers, whenever on these occasions we paid him a visit, was always the politest of men; and a stranger might suppose that he had a vast regard for all king's officers, and for us especially; and yet in reality no man hated us more cordially, or would more readily have worked us harm.

Cruising after smugglers is not the noblest work, perhaps, in which one can be engaged; but it is necessary, not altogether unprofitable, and at times highly exciting. In the war time, the smugglers had large armed vessels, which set the king's cruisers at defiance, and seldom failed to show fight. When I was in the *Serpent*, they were frequently armed; but their business was to run, and they never fired unless in hopes of knocking away the spars of a pursuer, or, at the last extremity, to defend themselves.

I should be very ungrateful to old Hanks if I omitted to mention his kindness to me, and the pains he took to give me instruction in my profession. Among other accomplishments, he taught me one of which

he was not himself a little proud.

“D’Arcy,” said he one day to me, “I’ve a regard for you, and I’ll put you in the way, my lad, of gaining your bread, should other trades fail.”

“What is it, Hanks?” I asked. “I am glad to learn anything you will teach me.”

“It is to perform on the violin, my boy,” he answered. “I learned the art for the reason I mention. I have never yet been called upon to gain a livelihood by it; but I do not know how soon I may be, if things don’t mend with me.”

“Is it to learn the fiddle you mean?” said I. “Faith, with all my heart, Hanks; and the sooner I begin then, the better.”

Hanks was delighted at gaining so willing a scholar, though I suspect our shipmates would rather have had us both securely moored at the bottom of Fiddler’s Race, off Yarmouth. Whenever duty permitted us, our fiddles were never idle. My performance was not very scientific, certainly; but I learned to play, after some months’ scraping, many a merry tune, such as would make the men kick up their heels irresistibly when they heard it.

“There, D’Arcy,” said my kind instructor, at the end of the tune; “now, my boy, whatever happens, and wherever you go, provided you can save your arms and your fiddle, you’ll be a welcome guest, and will never want a morsel to put in your mouth.”

I found his words true; and on parting, he gave me one of his two fiddles, which he valued as much as any piece of property he possessed.—But I am forestalling events. We had been cruising about for several days in search of Myers, when one morning at daybreak, we found ourselves in the midst of a dense fog. It was literally so thick that one could not see from one end of the cutter to the other. Just the sort of weather, indeed, when, without unusual care, vessels are apt to run into each other. There was about wind sufficient to send us gliding through the water at the rate of three to four knots an hour; but the sea was perfectly smooth,—kept down, it seemed, by the very weight of the fog. One hand was stationed forward on the look-out, and two others on either quarter, to guard against our being run into, or our running into something else. The wind

was about west, and our whereabouts was as nearly as could be half-way between Portland Bill and Berry Head. We were all on deck in our thick Flushing coats, for the fog in its effects was nearly like a shower-bath in regard to wetting us, and it hung in large drops like heavy dew on many a tarpaulin hat, bushy whisker, and shaggy jacket; while the sails were stiff and wet as if it had been raining hard all night. It was not a pleasant morning, but it might certainly have been very much worse in a hundred ways. We ran on for a couple of hours, with our main-boom over the larboard quarter, the tack triced up, and the peak-halyards eased off, for we had no reason to hurry. It was just about striking five-bells in the morning-watch, when, as I happened to cast my eyes ahead, I thought I saw a dark object looming through the mist. The look-out saw her at the same moment. “A sail on the starboard bow,” he sung out in a low voice —for revenue men learn to be cautious. On hearing this, the Commander stepped forward, and I followed him. We could just distinguish through the mist the three sails of a long, low lugger, standing close-hauled to the northward.

“By Jupiter, there’s the *Kitty* at last!” exclaimed my uncle, rubbing his hands. “We’ll have her this time, however.”

There could be little doubt that if she was the *Kitty*, her people would be keeping too bright a look-out not to have seen us; but probably they fancied we had not observed them, for they did not alter their course, which would have carried them clear across our bows. For another minute we stood on as before, thus rapidly drawing nearer the stranger. During this time, our guns were cast loose, loaded and primed, ready to fire, in case she should prove to be the smuggler, and refuse to heave-to.

“Let the mainsail jibe over; down with the tack; hoist the foresail,” sung out the Commander in a brisk tone. “Be smart, my lads; set the gaff-topsail. Stand by, to haul in the mainsheet.”

These orders were issued just as the lugger was about to cross our bows; but our helm being put down, prevented her from accomplishing this purpose; and a shot, sent skimming along the sea ahead of her, showed her that we were wide awake. All hands who had time to turn their heads in her direction, were peering at her through the fog; and the general opinion was that she was no other than the long-sought-for *Kitty*.

To the shot she paid not the slightest attention, hoping to forereach us, probably, and to get away in the fog. The chances were much in her favour, unless we could wing her, for some little time to come; but after that, we should get her into the bay, and then we might jam her down into the bight, and catch her.

“Give her another shot across her fore-foot, Mr Waddilove,” cried the Commander. “If she does not pay attention to that, fire right into her, and we will try to knock away some of her spars.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered the gunner, right willingly, as he hurried to perform his duty.

She did not seem to regard the second shot with more respect than the first. There was now no doubt that she was a smuggler, and that she knew her to be a royal cruiser, but whether the *Kitty* or not still remained to be discovered. We accordingly, without ceremony, set to work in earnest to make her a target for our shot; but though we believed that we hulled her several times, we could not manage to knock away any of her rigging or spars. Fast as we fancied the *Serpent*, the chase, whatever she was, could, we soon found, show as fleet a pair of heels; and this made us doubly anxious to wing her, lest, by the fog coming down thicker, she might disappear altogether. Not a sound was heard from her except the sharp pat as our shot at intervals struck her; nor did she offer other than the passive resistance of refusing to heave-to. At last, so faint was her outline as she glided onwards on our starboard bow, that I could scarcely help fancying that we were attacking a mere unsubstantial phantom. It was only from the large size she appeared to be, that one could judge of her nearness to us. For some minutes we ran on without a syllable being uttered, except the necessary words of command for loading and firing the guns.

“Now let me see if I can hit the fellow,” exclaimed Hanks, growing impatient at our want of success; and stooping down and taking a steady look along the gun, he fired. A fearful shriek was the answer sent back from the lugger’s deck. She was standing on as before, her rigging untouched, and her hull apparently unharmed. That sound must have been the death-cry of some of her crew. An almost solemn silence followed, and then, as if slumbering hitherto, the fury of the smugglers

burst forth, and a shower of shot from great guns and musketry came flying about us. It was evident that she was prepared to resist to the last. We now found that we had been under-rating her strength. Our two other guns were run over to the starboard side, the small-arms were got up on deck and loaded, and cutlasses were buckled on, and all hands not required to work the guns began blazing away with the muskets.

“How do you like the smell of gunpowder, my boy?” asked Hanks, as he was driving down his ramrod.

“As for the smell, I can’t say that I have any objection to it,” I replied, laughing; “and for the shot, they don’t seem likely to do us much harm.”

“Don’t be too sure of that till the guns of the enemy are silenced,” he replied.

Scarcely had he spoken, when I heard a deep groan; and oh, how my heart turned sick within me, as I saw a poor fellow writhing in agony on the deck. A round-shot had torn away his chest and ribs. He gave a few convulsive struggles, and all was over. It was the first time I had ever seen death in any form, or even blood spilt, and for the moment I felt so faint that I thought I should have fallen; but Hanks roused me by calling for a loaded musket, and in a few moments those dreadful sensations went off, never again to return. Two of his messmates drew the dead body out of the way, and then returned to their gun without apparently taking further notice of the matter. Our Commander was all life and ardour, urging on the men to activity, while he kept a watchful eye on our opponent, to take advantage of any accident which might happen to her, or to follow any change in her course. It is difficult to describe the scene our decks presented. Though our guns were light, the men, from habit, had stripped themselves to the waist, and each one had bound a silk handkerchief round his loins and another round his head; their figures, even at a little distance, being obscured by the thick fog and smoke from their guns and the small-arms. All the guns were over on the starboard side, and those not required to work them or tend to the sails were either loading or taking aim over the bulwarks at our phantom foe. I did not dare to look at the dead body which lay near me, and was praying that no one else might be hit, when I heard a sharp tap, and old Thole, who was standing with his musket at his shoulder by my side, fell to the deck. I

stooped down, shuddering, for I expected to see such another ghastly spectacle as the other poor wretch had presented; but he looked as calm as possible, as if nothing was the matter with him, and I began to wonder why he had fallen. He had not even uttered a cry or groan.

“What is the matter, Thole; are you hit?” I asked.

Hanks heard me speak, and seeing Thole on the deck, he knelt down by his side and took his hand.

“There’s no use, my lad, in talking to the poor fellow, for he’ll never speak another word,” he said, in a calm tone, as if nothing strange or awful had occurred; and rising quickly, he seized a musket and recommenced firing away at the lugger with renewed earnestness.

“Come, my lads, fire away; we must put a stopper on this work as soon as possible,” he exclaimed.

“Hurrah! see, we’ve shot away his mizen-halyards.”

I did not see it, for I could make nothing out through the fog but a dark mass moving along on our beam. The order had been given to keep the helm up and to stand by the mainsheet, in expectation of the lugger’s running off the wind, when, quick almost as thought, the mizen-halyards were spliced, and the sail was again hoisted up.

“Never mind, my lads; try and wing him again,” cried my uncle.

The men answered with a cheer, and several of our shot told. Unhappily, two more of our people were wounded, though not badly; and as yet we were no nearer victory than we had been at the commencement of the fight. I heard my uncle tell Hanks that he had some hopes that the smugglers were not aware how deep we were running into the bay.

“I’m afraid, sir, those fellows are far too wide awake not to know exactly where they are,” answered Hanks.

“I rather am inclined to think that they have some dodge or other they intend to practise if they can; and if we don’t soon manage to stop them, they will be wishing us good morning without our leave.”

For an instant after he spoke there was a cessation of firing, and then came a whole broadside of great guns and small-arms concentrated in one focus, crashing among our rigging. Several of the shot told—the head of the mainsail was riddled, and down came our peak, the halyards shot away in two places. The smugglers were not long in discovering our disaster and the advantage they had gained, and a loud derisive cheer showed us the triumph they felt. Without the loss of a moment, hands were sent aloft to reeve fresh halyards; but before the peak could be got up, the lugger had shot ahead of us, and was rapidly edging up to windward. Every exertion was made again to set the mainsail; but as we were swaying up the peak, another iron shower came rattling among us. One of the hands aloft was hit, and would have fallen on deck, had not another caught him and helped him down the rigging. It was the last broadside the smuggler fired, and the next instant we saw him shoot by our bows, and before we could get a gun over to bear on him, he disappeared in the fog to the northward. Once well to windward he would have a decided advantage over us on a long stretch. Luffing as close to the wind as we could, we stood on for a few minutes in the hope of again seeing him; and then we tacked, on the chance, should he also have tacked, as he probably would do, of overhauling him on the other board. We now more earnestly than ever wished the fog to clear away to give us a wider view; but yet minute after minute passed away, and still it would pertinaciously hang down over us like a thick canopy, shutting out the surrounding world. My uncle and Hanks, who both had seen much of gun-shot wounds, did their best to doctor the poor fellows who had been hit; the bodies of the two men who were killed, were placed side by side abaft the mast, and covered up with a union jack; and we then piped to breakfast. I had not recovered my appetite, which the scenes I had witnessed during the morning had taken away. Hanks rallied me on my sensibility. “Why, my boy, you should get over all those sort of feelings at a leap, or you’ll never be fit for the service. I remember once upon a time having some of the queer sensations you talk of; but now, whatever happens, I never let it interfere with my meals, provided I can get the food to make them of.” Instigated by his example and remarks, I took a little tea, and then a slice of beef and bread; and I confess that in a few minutes I began to experience my usual midshipman-like state of perfect health, with perhaps a little weight about the region of the heart, as if some calamity had happened to me, but that very soon wore off. We were speedily on deck again, looking out for the chase; while in the

meantime the carpenter and most of the crew were busily employed in repairing damages. The sun as he rose higher in the sky, was every instant gaining power, and in almost an hour after we lost sight of the smuggler, he victoriously darted through the mass of vapour which in thick wreaths rolled away before it, our hitherto confined horizon every instant increasing, while the bright beams of the luminary struck down on our blood-stained deck. No vessel, however, appeared in the direction we expected; but as Hanks was glancing round the horizon, his eye fell on a sail, hull down to the eastward. “There she is,” he exclaimed; “I should know her among a hundred other craft. D’Arcy, run below and tell the Commander that to my belief the *Kitty* is in sight down to leeward.”

My uncle had gone to take his breakfast. I descended to the cabin. I found him sitting with his face resting on his hands on the table. He did not notice my entrance. I heard him groan deeply.

“I hope, sir, you are not ill or wounded,” said I; for I thought he must be hurt.

“No, lad, no,” he answered; “but it’s a sad thing to have so many of one’s men killed and hurt by a rascally smuggler. But we must try and catch the fellow, and then get the doctor’s aid as fast as we can for those to whom it may yet be of use. But what do you come for?”

I made my report. In an instant he shook off the feeling which was oppressing him, and springing on deck, he ordered the helm to be kept up and the mainsheet eased off till we were standing after the supposed smuggler. This was our best point of sailing, and probably the lugger’s worst; at all events that rig of vessel has generally the greatest advantage on a wind. Our square-sail, square-topsail, and every sail the cutter could carry was now set, to overtake the chase; and the breeze freshening as the day advanced, we bowled away at a famous rate.

“Do you think, Hanks, we have a chance of catching her?” I asked, as the old mate and I were intently watching her.

“As to catching her, depends upon circumstances. If we get the strength of the breeze before her, and she doesn’t hide away in another fog; but she has a long start, and we are out of luck this time, to my mind.

However, why is it, D’Arcy, you are so anxious to have another brush with the chap? I thought you had had sufficient taste of his quality.”

“To punish him for killing poor Thole there,” answered I, for I felt very bitter against the smugglers for the harm they had done.

“I thought so,” answered Hanks. “It’s the way with most people. Before a blow is struck, they are all peaceable enough; but the moment blood is drawn, they are all as blood-thirsty as a savage.”

“I hope you don’t think me a blood-thirsty savage,” said I.

“I wouldn’t trust you, D’Arcy, my boy,” he replied. “When the blood boils, all the ferocity of the heart bubbles up to the top, and we feel more like wild beasts than men.”

“Are we gaining on the chase, Mr Hanks, think you?” sung out my uncle at this moment.

“A little, sir; but the sky has got so much clearer thereaway in the last half-hour, that perhaps she only appears nearer,” was the answer; and then Hanks went aft, to walk the quarter-deck with his Commander.

There is off Portland Bill a race, or overfall of water, caused by a shallow and rocky bottom, where the sea at times breaks so violently that vessels have been known to be swamped, and to go down amid the turmoil, with scarcely a possibility of any of the hapless crew escaping. During south-westerly gales, and with an ebb tide, the race runs the highest; but sometimes, even in moderate weather, without any apparent cause, there is a strange chopping and leaping of the sea, which makes it dangerous for a small vessel to pass through. The faint outline of the well-known headland was now seen on our larboard bow, and it was pretty evident that the lugger was getting her starboard tacks aboard, to haul off round the outside of the race, if not to stand away towards the French coast. We, accordingly, had to alter our course after her; but I suspected that there was no very great chance of our being able to overtake her. Still we stood on, our main hope being that another cruiser might fall in with her, and turn her again towards us. After the fog had disappeared, the sky overhead became beautifully clear; but, as the day drew on, clouds began to gather, and by the time I went down to dinner they were coming

up pretty thick from the south-west and south, rather an unusual circumstance after the sort of morning we had had. While we were discussing our meal, the cutter heeled over, and nearly sent our scanty dinner-service away to leeward.

“Hillo, what’s the matter now?” I asked.

“Matter! why the breeze is freshening, to be sure,” said old Growl, our acting master. “Look out for your plates, and when you go on deck it will be time enough to learn all about it.”

Old Growl was in many respects not dissimilar to Hanks. He was of the same age, if not older; as fond of spirits, if not fonder; and as addicted, indeed I think more so, to grumbling. He was not a gentleman by birth, education, or manners; but he was kind of heart, and I liked him very well. I think I remarked that all the officers were very old for their standing. Growl’s hair was white, and so was Scriven’s, the clerk in charge. I was young enough to be the son of any of them, in fact, and was treated almost as such. Fortunately, my uncle did his best to throw responsibility on my shoulders, so that, in spite of the pains they took to spoil me, I gradually learned to think and act for myself. Dinner was over, for the best of reasons—that we had eaten up all our boiled beef and potatoes, and the greater portion of our last cheese, and I was thinking how much pleasanter it was to be sitting there quietly, and nibbling biscuit and sipping my glass of grog, than standing up to be shot at, as I had to do all the morning, when Hanks, whose watch it had been on deck, came below. His eye immediately fell on my tumbler of grog, which was, I own, stiffer than usual; and without saying a word, he emptied half the contents into another, and drinking them off, filled my glass with water. I dared not remonstrate, for I had been transgressing his orders in taking more than the quantity he allowed me.

“Neil, my child,” he used to say, “drink is a bad thing; and it grows upon a fellow. If you were to take your full allowance now, by the time you grow up you would be a drunkard, so for your sake I shall swallow your grog; besides, you know, what is bad for a little chap like you, is good for an old worn-out follow like me, who wants something to keep his soul alive in his body.”

I did not exactly understand his reasoning; but as, notwithstanding his peculiarities, I was fond of my old messmate, I was well content to yield him up part of my allowance, for the sake of keeping him alive.

“Well, Hanks, are we gaining on the chase?” I asked.

“No, boy; but our ill-luck has gained upon us,” he replied. “The wind has taken it into its head to veer round to the south-west, and given the rascally lugger an advantage she doesn’t deserve. Boy, bring me dinner.”

The boy who acted as steward brought him in his portion of beef, which had been saved, and I followed Growl, whose watch it was on deck. The sea had got up considerably, and the cutter was heeling over to the rapidly increasing breeze. An exclamation from Growl made me look anxiously ahead for the lugger.

“Where is she?” he asked of the quartermaster, who had charge of the deck.

“Just slipped into that bank of clouds gathering in the southward, sir,” was the answer.

“Can any of you see her,” he inquired of the people on deck.

“No, sir, no; not a sign of her,” said several voices.

“Then we shan’t see her again this cruise,” he exclaimed.

No more we did. We followed her, notwithstanding, for some hours, when darkness approaching and the wind increasing, we were obliged to bear up and run into Weymouth, where we anchored at a late hour in the night. The next day we buried our two shipmates, and a surgeon came off to attend to the wounded ones, whom he took on shore with him. A gale got up, which lasted three days, during which time we remained at anchor, ready, as soon as it should moderate, to put to sea again in quest of Myers. The engagement with the smuggler made a good deal of noise, we heard. Some said that we ought to have taken her; others, that our Commander was not a man to leave undone what could have been done. However, as no one had any doubt that Myers was in command of the lugger, a large reward was offered to whoever would give information that

might lead to his apprehension, and a still larger to the person who should place him, bound, in the hands of justice. One evening, after dark, a small boat came alongside, with a single man in her. I was on deck.

“Is Lieutenant O’Flaherty on board?” asked the man.

I told him he was.

“Then,” said the stranger, springing on board, “take this note to him, young gentleman, and say the bearer waits to see him.”

The stranger was of a strongly-built, stout figure, and had the appearance of a rough seafaring man. I took a paper he handed me into the cabin. My uncle read it attentively two or three times over, as if puzzled to comprehend its meaning.

“I must see the rascal, and hear what he has to say,” he muttered. “But I never like to trust a traitor. Show the man below, D’Arcy.”

I did as I was ordered. The man bowed as he entered, and then I saw him take a chair and seat himself, without being asked to do so. I longed to hear what he had to say, so I lingered in the cabin, as if waiting for orders. The stranger looked at me hard.

“What I have to say is for your ear, Lieutenant; so I can’t speak with another present, though he is but a little one,” he remarked, in a tone I thought remarkably impudent.

“Neil, go on deck,” said my uncle.

In about half an hour the stranger appeared on deck, and without saying a word, jumped into his boat and pulled away. I observed that he did not pull directly for the shore, but that he steered for a considerable distance to the northward before attempting to land, thus not allowing any one who might meet him to suspect that he had visited us. The mysterious stranger afforded considerable matter for surmise among all on board, the general opinion being that he had brought off some important information, which might lead to the capture of Myers or of some of his smuggling confederates.

Chapter Five.

Expedition on Shore—The Informer's Fate—The Smugglers Cave—Jack Stretcher—The Smuggler's Revenge—Our Dreadful Position.

The *Serpent* was again in West Bay, just near enough to Portland Bill to be distinguished by any one looking out for her; and she was standing with a light breeze from the north-east, as if bound across Channel. We stood on till dusk, and then tacked and worked back into the bay, till we got close in with the Dorsetshire coast. The cutter was now hove-to, and the boats were lowered and manned, all hands being well-armed.

"Mr Hanks," said my uncle, as he came on deck, "you will take charge of the ship, and keep her as near as possible to where she now is: I expect to be absent about an hour."

Hanks gave the usual "Ay, ay, sir," and then continued the duty he was about in superintending the lowering the boats. I seized the opportunity, while he was waiting for the final preparations, to go up and speak to my uncle.

"May I go, sir?" I asked. "If there is anything to be done, I should like to see it."

"We shall only find hard knocks and little glory," he replied. "However, a midshipman should see everything. Can you spare Mr D'Arcy, Mr Hanks?"

"Oh yes, sir, if you please," said Hanks, laughing.

I had at first felt very grand at the way my uncle spoke of me; but there was something in Hanks' tone of voice which considerably lowered my pride. However, I gained my object, and jumping into the first gig with my Commander, the order was given to shove off, and away we pulled towards the shore.

There was no moon, but the sky was clear, and the stars overhead shone brightly forth into the calm, silent water beneath them. I never saw the

water smoother; and the little wind there was came off the shore, gently sighing as it passed over the dry grass and low bushes which fringed the edge of the cliffs above our heads. Not a word was spoken, and our oars were muffled, as we pulled along shore, a considerable distance to the westward of where we left the cutter. There were three boats, so we all knew it was possible some considerable opposition might be expected.

After we had pulled about three or four miles, our Commander ordered two of the boats to remain off shore, the crews resting on their oars, till they should see a blue light burned; they were then to give way as fast as they could, and support us if necessary. We then pulled slowly in, our people being told to make as little noise as possible on beaching the boat.

“Neil,” said my uncle, “we have a chance of catching that accomplished rascal, Myers, through the means of another rascal, who has offered to betray him, and who is to meet us off that point yonder, and to conduct us where Myers and his gang are to be found. If we come to blows at any time, just keep behind me, boy, and don’t be after getting yourself killed or hurt, or I’ll never take you to see any more fun, remember that.”

It was clear, by this remark, that my uncle had not forgotten the old country; and I promised to obey his directions.

In a few minutes the bow of the boat touched the shore, and we, by aid of a boat-hook, jumped on the sand. Ordering two of the men to accompany him, and giving directions to the others to keep silence, and on no account to quit the boat, our commander advanced towards the foot of the cliff. We went on some little way without meeting anybody.

“It is very extraordinary,” he observed, in a low voice. “I cannot have mistaken the spot or the hour. It was just here the man Langdon appointed to meet me.” We halted for some minutes and listened attentively, but not a sound was to be heard except the low, soft, and musical lap of the tide as it glided by the shingly beach. Above us was the lofty cliff beetling over our heads, its dark outline well-defined against the brilliant sky.

“Something, I’m afraid, is wrong,” remarked my uncle; “or can the fellow

have been imposing on me?”

Having waited for some time in vain, we again advanced. We had not gone many paces when a figure was seen leaning against the cliffs. The person, apparently, from his not moving at our approach, was fast asleep.

“That must be the fellow Langdon,” said my uncle. “Why, what can he be about?” On this he whistled twice, very softly, but there was no answer. We then hurried up to the spot where the figure was observed. It was no optical illusion; there certainly was a person, but he took no notice of our presence. Our two men then went up to him, thinking to awake him; but as they took him by the arms he slipped from their grasp, and fell to the ground. An exclamation of horror made us hurry up to them. It was a corpse we saw. A dark spot on the forehead, from which a stream of blood, rapidly coagulating, oozed forth. His singed hair, and the black marks on one side of his face, showed how the deed had been done. It was evident that he had been shot by a pistol placed close to his head.

“He hasn’t been dead above a quarter of an hour,” observed Stretcher, one of the men, feeling his heart. “He is still warm, sir.”

“Then his murderers cannot be far off,” said my uncle. “I’ll land our people, and we will hunt them down. The poor wretch could scarcely expect any other fate were he discovered.”

“What—do you know the man, sir?” I asked. “Yes, he is the informer, Langdon; the very man who was to have conducted us to Myers’ retreat,” was the answer.

“Here, sir, is a bit of card tied round the man’s neck, and close to him was this pistol and handkerchief,” said Tomkins, who had placed the body on the sands, bringing him the articles.

“Very well; do you take charge of those things, Tomkins, and on no account lose them. D’Arcy, do you go back with Sims to the boat; burn a blue light close down to the water, shade it by the boat’s side so that it may not be seen from the cliffs above; and then, as soon as the boats come in, order two hands to remain in each, and bring the rest up here.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” I replied with alacrity, for I was always proud of having any

orders given me by my uncle; and away I and Sims hurried towards the boat. We had not got many paces before a shout from Jack Stretcher made us turn back, and at the same moment several men came leaping down by a narrow path in the side of the cliff.

“Run in—they are smugglers—run in!” cried Sims, setting the example, and shouting to our people in the boat. It was the wisest thing he could do to get help, for the man was no coward; but before I had time to think whether or not I could run down to my uncle, I found myself knocked down by one of the foremost of the new comers, with a not very complimentary remark to midshipmen in general, and to me in particular. What became of Sims I could not tell, for the blow on my head made me feel inclined to keep my eyes shut. When, after a moment or so, I attempted to rise, I found myself seized by a couple of men. My arms were lashed behind me in a very uncomfortable way, and which reminded me of the necessity of not tumbling down, if I was anxious to preserve the regular outline of my nose; while a handkerchief was secured tightly over my eyes. Directly afterwards I heard a scuffle, and my uncle’s voice among that of many others; blows were struck, and two or three pistols were fired; and then there appeared more scuffling, and all was quiet except the suppressed murmur of apparently many voices as I was dragged forward by the people who held me. We went along the seashore for some way, and then up the cliffs; and next we descended, and I was led along what seemed a narrow path by the careful way in which my conductors stepped. We went over certainly more than a mile of ground, and then we halted till other parties came up, and I was led down a gentle declivity on a soft, sandy soil; but I no longer felt the light cool wind blowing on my cheek, from which I conjectured we were leaving the open air.

Scarcely a word had been spoken to me the whole of this time by any one of the party. I once ventured to ask my conductors where they were going to take me; but the answer I got in a low growl—“Hold your tongue, you young whelp!” and the click of a pistol lock—made me unwilling to enter on another question. I was more seriously alarmed about my uncle. For myself I feared nothing, as I did not think that the smugglers would hurt a young boy like me; but from the manner of their proceeding, and the few words they let fall of concentrated hate and anger, I was afraid that, supposing they were the crew of the *Kitty*, they might wreck their

vengeance on his head and murder him. I had become deeply attached to him. I felt miserable at the thought of his danger, and I earnestly, though silently, prayed for his preservation. After we had gone a little way, I was almost convinced, from the damp, stagnant feel of the atmosphere, that we were in a cavern or a large vault of some sort or other. I was confirmed in this opinion by hearing a voice before me say, “Stoop down your head or you will hit the rock.”

I thought he addressed me, so I bent down as if I were passing under a very low archway, when my conductors laughed, and one observed to the other, “The youngster thinks himself a giant; howsomever, he won’t ever be much bigger than he now is, will he, Jim?”

“No; he’s nibbled his last biscuit,” growled out his companion. “Come, heave ahead, master.”

On hearing these last observations I had stopped, scarcely able to make my feet move on; for I thought the villains were going to treat me as they had treated the poor wretch we had just found, for I had no doubt they were his murderers. They again urged me forward, and I presently found myself in a place surrounded by a number of people—at least so I judged by the suppressed hum of voices which I heard.

“Cast off the handkerchiefs from the prisoners’ eyes,” said a voice in an authoritative tone.

I felt a fellow fumbling at the handkerchief round my head; but pretending, I suspect, that he could not undo it, he forced it down over my face, to the considerable damage of my nose, and then, giving his knuckles a turn with the dexterity of a Thug, very nearly throttled me. When I had somewhat recovered, and the stars had done flying about before my eyes, I perceived that I was in a large cave, standing at the foot of a rude table, at the further end of which sat a powerfully-built, bold-looking man, dressed in a nautical costume, while a number of other men, mostly seamen, sat on either side of him.

I looked anxiously round for my uncle, and my mind was much relieved to see him standing, unhurt apparently, a few paces from me. However, my satisfaction was much mitigated when, being able to distinguish objects

more clearly, I perceived that there were two men standing on either side of him, with pistols in their hands; and it instantly occurred to me that they were there to act the part of executioners, and to blow his brains out, at the command of the ruffian I saw sitting as judge in this lawless court. We recognised each other at the same moment; and if I could judge by the expression of his countenance, he had more compassion for me than fear for himself. He made no attempt to speak to me, but instantly resumed his former undaunted attitude, with his arms folded on his bosom, and his eye resting on the leader of the smugglers.

But there was another object which was, indeed, well calculated to fill me with horror. It was the corpse of the murdered man, stretched out on some rough planks, resting on four casks placed on end; the face uncovered and bloody; the eyes staring wide open, for no one had taken the trouble to close them; and the features distorted by the wound or, perhaps, by fear of the fate which he saw prepared for him when his murderers appeared. The corpse was close to me, and I could not keep my eyes from it, dreadful as it was. It seemed to possess a terrible fascination; and every time I turned my eyes away, it attracted them back again; so that, wild and remarkable as was the whole scene, that horrible object is to this day the most prominent to my mental vision, and all the rest is but an indistinct background to the picture.

I found that Jack Stretcher was close to me, on my left side, also in custody of two smugglers. The cave itself was a complete storehouse of goods of every description. There were arms—swords, pistols, and muskets; and bales of silks, boxes of laces and ribbons, and casks of spirits: indeed, everything with a high duty on it was here collected, ready to be sent up to London or through the country, to the *highly respectable* shops which dealt in such things. I had not time, however, to make many observations, when the fierce ruffian at the head of the table commenced the proceedings by inquiring who we were and what was our object in coming on shore that night.

“You know perfectly well who we are, and with regard to our object on shore, you certainly are not qualified to question me,” answered my uncle, with a firm voice.

“Then I must answer for you,” replied the smuggler. “You came, instigated

by a wretch whose body lies there, under the hopes of taking me and my men in our nest. He has received his reward. The very moment he was thinking he had got us secure, a pistol bullet went through his head. What do you think you deserve?”

My uncle did not answer.

“Speak, and answer me!” exclaimed the ruffian, levelling a pistol at him.

I tried to spring forward to throw myself before him, but the smugglers held me back, though the action, instead of making them angry, seemed to gain we more respect from them, as they held me less rudely than before, and no longer amused themselves by twisting the handkerchief, Thug fashion, round my gullet.

My uncle looked calmly at the smuggler and answered, “I came on shore in pursuit of my lawful duty, to apprehend you, or any others, breaking the revenue laws. Further than that, I have no feeling of ill-will against you, or any of those connected with you.”

“Very fine talking, Mr Lieutenant; but that won’t do here. You came to injure us; there’s no doubt about that, from what you own yourself; and you must take the consequences.”

“You will suffer for it, if you injure me or any of my people!” exclaimed my uncle, indignantly.

“We don’t want to hurt any of your people; but you and that young cub of an officer must be prepared to die this very night. Your man there we don’t intend to hurt; and he may, if he likes, join us, which he probably will be glad enough to do; if not, we carry him away over the water, far enough from this.”

“No, that I won’t, you cold-hearted scoundrels, you!” exclaimed Jack Stretcher, vehemently. “My Commander there, I tell you, is a truer and braver man than any one of you; and you to think of murdering him because he is doing his duty, and that young innocent boy, his nephew—a mere baby to any of you,—it just shows what a white-livered crew you smugglers are; but, howsomdever, if you’ll let them go without harm, you may make a shot fast to my feet and heave me over the cliffs outside

here, or do what you like with me; you can but kill me, and I don’t fear you—so heave ahead, my hearties.”

This address of Jack Stretcher created some considerable sensation among the smugglers; but their chief seemed immovable. What surprised me most was, that they were not in the slightest degree enraged at the abuse showered so liberally on their heads; but, on the contrary, they infinitely admired him for his fearlessness and fidelity to his superior.

“What you say, my man, can’t be done; those two die, for conspiring with a traitor to betray us. We shall keep you shut up for some time, and then carry you over to America, perhaps, or some distant part; but we shan’t take your life; so now you know what you have to expect. Take those two off, and heave them over High-Peak Cliff. Be sharp about it, now.”

Before my uncle could speak a word or attempt to free himself, he was dragged back and pinioned, and I was treated in the same way; our eyes were tightly bandaged, as before; and we were forced out of the cavern by a large body of the smugglers.

“Never fear, sir,” shouted Stretcher. “They’ll hang for it yet, and I shall live to see you revenged.”

Extraordinary as it may appear, I had no particular dread of the fate which was awaiting me. Perhaps it was a presentiment that I should escape. I cannot now explain the cause of the feeling; indeed, at the time, I could not probably have done so. I thought much more of my brave uncle being thus brought to an untimely end, and of the grief of my sweet young aunt at Ryde, when she should hear of his barbarous murder. The atrocity of the deed was increased by the cold-blooded manner in which the wretches proceeded, by dragging us to their pretended court, and then condemning us, with scarcely even the mockery of a trial. Indeed the affair seemed so unusual, that I could hardly believe in the reality. My most absorbing feeling was bitter indignation, and a burning desire to break from my guards, and to rescue my uncle. However, as I wriggled about helplessly in their grasp, I must own that I was very like an unhappy cockchafer stuck through with a pin by a cruel schoolboy, without the remotest chance of escaping. My uncle was dragged away first, and I followed him closely, as I judged by the voices of the villains

who had him in charge. What became of Stretcher I could not learn, though I supposed that he was detained in the cavern. Even now, I could scarcely have believed that the smugglers were going really to put their threat into execution, had it not been for their acknowledgment of the murder they had committed, and the perfect confidence with which they exhibited their cavern, and the smuggled goods it contained; for, though taken blindfold to the place, we could, of course, have little difficulty in finding it again; and they must have been well aware that, if we escaped, we should do our best to discover them and bring them to justice. They appeared to me to be dragging us for a very long distance. We went up and down hill, and along the seashore, and then we again mounted, it seemed, to the top of the cliffs, and went over several miles of ground. I thought we should never get to High-Peak Cliff. I cannot say that I was in any hurry to get there, which is not surprising, considering the pleasant prospect which I had before me. At length we ascended a considerable height, it seemed; and I concluded, from what I heard some of the smugglers remark, that we had reached the place of the intended murder. I shuddered as I felt that I was standing at the edge of the precipice from which I was in a few minutes to be hurled; a cold perspiration burst out over me, and I felt an awful horror, such as I had never before experienced. I was aware that any instant, without a moment's preparation, a shove might send me rolling over and over down to the rocks below, where I must instantly be dashed to pieces, as I judged that I was standing close to the very edge of the precipice; and I even fancied that I could hear the sound of the water breaking on the sands, many hundred feet beneath, borne upward on the calm night air. Still, there I stood, as yet unharmed, and I found the delay was caused by some of the party, whose voices I could hear at a little distance, holding a consultation in a whisper. I was hoping that they, more merciful than their leader, were proposing not to execute his directions, when I was undeceived by their return. One of them then addressed us.

"We give you and the youngster, Lieutenant, three minutes more to prepare for death," said the villain, in a diabolically cold tone; "after that, we intend to hang you over the cliff by your hands, and when you can't gripe on any longer, you may let go. Just understand, now, we do this in mercy to you, that you may not say we sent you out of the world without warning. Youngster, you hear what is said, so just make ready, for you haven't many moments of life in you."

To appeal to the mercy of the wretches was, I knew, hopeless; so I did my best to prepare for the fate awaiting me.

“The time’s up,” said a voice, and I found myself urged back a few paces, and my feet lifted over the edge of the cliff. It is impossible to describe my sensations of horror at this moment. I was then lowered down, every instant expecting to be let drop, till I found my hands clutching the grass, and my nails digging into the uncertain soil which fringed it. I judged that my uncle had been treated in the same way, from what the smugglers said. They then left us, satisfied that we could not release ourselves. Bad as they were, perhaps they did not wish to witness our death, though I could hear their mocking laughter as they quitted the spot. I was light, and I held on for dear life.

“Uncle, are you there?” I exclaimed.

“Yes, Neil, I am,” he answered; “but I am afraid of using any exertion to lift myself up, lest the earth should give way. You are light, though; so try to drag yourself slowly up by your arms, then get your elbows on the turf, and tear the bandage from your eyes, and come to my assistance.”

“Oh, I cannot, uncle, I cannot!” I cried, in an agony of fear; for I found it impossible to move without almost a certainty of missing my hold altogether. Again I tried all I could to lift myself up, but it would not do. I shouted at the top of my voice. Every instant my strength was failing me.

“I must let go, uncle, indeed I must,” I exclaimed. “Good-bye, uncle.”

“So must I, my boy,” he answered. “Good-bye, if we do not succeed; but make a final effort, and spring up. So now—”

I tried to spring up, and so did he, I conclude. Alas! the earth crumbled beneath his hands; a deep groan escaped his bosom—not for himself, but for his wife and children, and all he held dear in the world. He could hold on no longer. I also failed in my attempt to spring up. Down I went; but what was my surprise, instead of being dashed to pieces, to find that I had reached a bottom of some sort, rather splashy certainly, only a few feet below where I had been hanging. An exclamation at the same moment from my uncle reached my ears. I tore off the bandage from my eyes, and looking round, I saw him but a short distance from me, and

discovered that we were at the bottom of a chalk-pit, with all our limbs safe and sound, instead of being both of us mangled corpses at the foot of High-Peak Cliff. Our position was not dignified; and certainly, though it was much less romantic and full of horror than it would have been had the catastrophe we expected really occurred, and had we figured in the newspapers as the subjects of a dreadful accident, it was, I must own, far more agreeable to my feelings.

“Uncle,” I sung out, “are you hurt?”

“No, Neil, my boy; but rather wet, from a puddle I’ve fallen into,” he answered. “So those confounded rascals have been playing us a trick all the time. However, it’s better thus than we expected, and it proves that they are not as bad as we thought them.”

“So I was thinking,” I replied, moving up to him. “But, I say, uncle, how are we to get out of this?”

He was sitting down on a ledge of the chalk rock, endeavouring to recover from the shock which his nervous system had received.

“Why, as I have not a notion where we are, we had better wait till daylight, or we shall run a great chance of going over the cliffs in reality,” said he. “The sun will rise in little more than an hour hence, I hope, and then we shall be able to ascertain whereabouts we are.”

In accordance with his advice, I sat myself down by his side, and remained silent for some time, while I watched the stars glittering overhead. At length I remarked, “It is very odd, uncle, that Myers did not murder us, as he did the poor wretch we found under the cliff.”

“I fully expected he would; but, after all, there are several reasons against such an act,” he answered.

“He put the spy to death, both for the sake of vengeance and that he might not betray any more of his secrets, or show us the smugglers’ hides. Myers, however, knew that if he murdered a king’s officer, the Government authorities would not rest till they had brought him to punishment. There is also a wild notion of justice among these outlaws; and as they know we are but doing our duty in pursuing them, they have

not the same bitter feeling towards us as they have towards any of their companions who turn traitors. Myers, perhaps, might have wished to secure a friend, in case of need. The fellows who had charge of us, however, could not resist the temptation of playing us a trick, and trying to frighten us out of our wits. Some years ago, also, Myers was in my custody, and I treated him, as I should any fellow-creature, with some kindness and consideration. I spoke to him seriously, and endeavoured to win him from his evil courses. I did not consider myself either as his judge or executioner. Perhaps, therefore, gratitude may have induced him to spare our lives."

"I have no doubt of it," said I. "I have to thank you, therefore, uncle, for my life."

"I don't suppose they would have hurt you, Neil, had you been alone," he observed, laughing.

"Do you think that we shall be able to discover the cavern?" I asked.

"I fear not," he replied. "Even if we did, it would be emptied of its contents. Depend on it, the smugglers were prepared to carry off everything into the interior, and all the valuable goods are by this time a long way on their road to London. At all events, whatever were the motives of the smugglers, let us offer our thanks to God for the preservation of our lives, for they have been in great peril."

We knelt and prayed. I hope I did so sincerely. What other remarks he made I do not remember, for I soon after this felt very drowsy, and quickly fell asleep. I dreamed all the time that I was tumbling head over heels down precipices, but never reached the ground. So I shall end this chapter at the bottom of a chalk-pit.

Chapter Six.

We get out of the Pit—Jack Stretcher's Adventure—Search for Myers—Hanks' Advice—Lose our Ship in a Fog—Minute-Guns Heard.

I was awoke by my uncle, and looking up, I saw that the stars had grown dim, and that the rosy dawn was rapidly spreading over the sky. When there was sufficient light to enable us to see distinctly, we discovered that we were in an unusually large and deep chalk-pit. We had, however, but little difficulty in climbing out of it, and in reaching the top of the down in which it was situated. What was our surprise, on looking seaward, to discover the cutter riding at anchor below us, and the boats just going off to her! We therefore went to the most conspicuous height, and waved our caps and handkerchiefs, in the hopes that some one might by chance be on the look-out with a telescope, and perceive us. We waited for some time, and were just giving up the case in despair, when one of the boats put off from the cutter, and pulled directly for the beach, above which we were standing; so we hurried down by a rough zigzag path cut in the cliff, and were ready on the shore to receive her when she pulled in. Who should we see in the boat but Stretcher, whom we fancied all the time held in durance vile by the smugglers. The honest fellow's satisfaction at seeing us was even greater than our surprise; for he had fully believed that we had been murdered, and had reported our death on board. The boat's crew gave three cheers as they ran up on the beach; and in their delight they almost lifted my uncle and me into the boat. We were not long in getting on board again, when the cheers were repeated by all hands; and I must do honest old Hanks the justice to say, that, though he had doubtless begun to indulge in dreams of getting his promotion and the death vacancy, his pleasure was as genuine as that of the rest. He had, we found, been already arranging a plan to search for us, and to discover and capture the smugglers. The latter part of it, our Commander determined forthwith to execute. Before we went to breakfast, Stretcher was sent for to make his report—a proceeding of which I did not approve, for I was very sharp-set; but midshipmen's appetites are seldom much thought of on such occasions. Jack soon made his appearance, with his hat in one hand, while he smoothed down his hair most pertinaciously with the other.

"Well, Stretcher, my man; I wish to know how you managed to escape so well out of the fangs of those rascals," said my uncle.

"Why, your honour," he answered, "I scarcely know how it all happened myself, for after the blackguards dragged off you and Mr D'Arcy, I was in such a taking, thinking that they were going to heave you over the cliff,

that I didn’t seem to know where I was or what I was doing. At last they made the handkerchief fast round my eyes again, so that I couldn’t see a wink; and they began to haul me along, till I found that I was out of the cave and in the open air. On I went, up and down hill, some way inland, it seemed; and then back again through a chine down to the seashore. After a bit they led me up hill, and making me sit down on a rock, they told me that if I stirred an inch before daylight, I should meet with the same fate my master had done.

“‘How am I to tell when daylight comes, you lubbers, if you leave me with my eyes blinded,’ said I.

“No one answered, but I fancied I heard some one laugh close to me. They then lashed my arms behind me, so that I could not cast off the bandage from my eyes.

“‘So you are not going to carry me to foreign parts,’ said I, for I thought, as they didn’t mind killing my officer, they would think nothing of sending me over the cliffs also.

“‘We’ve changed our minds,’ said they, ‘and can’t be troubled with you; so ask no questions.’

“I didn’t like the answer at all, for I made sure they was going to do away with me somehow; but, as I couldn’t help myself, I was not going to show them what a funk I was in; so I pretended to whistle, quite happy like. I had been whistling away some time, when I thought I heard their footsteps moving off; and so it proved; for when I next sung out to them, no one answered. I called them all manner of names, and blackguarded them like fun; but it didn’t make them angry, because, you see, there was no one there to hear me. At last, when I’d grown hoarse with hallooing after them, I thought I might as well go to sleep a bit, seeing as how I couldn’t manage to move, or to cast off the lashings round my arms. How long I slept I don’t know; but I was woke up by hearing some one hail me, and I soon knew that they were some of the cutter’s people. When they got up to me, and cast off the handkerchief from my eyes, then I found I had been sitting not ten feet above the beach, and directly opposite where the cutter is brought up. That, your honour, is all I know about it; but who the people are who played us the trick, or whereabouts the cave

is, is more than I can say."

"Do not you think that we might manage to discover the cave, though?" asked the Commander.

"No, sir, certainly not," answered Stretcher, positively. "It may be close to us, or it may be five miles off. To my mind, it's some very clever hide; and those who took us there knew very well we should never find it again."

"We must see about that," observed my uncle. "By-the-bye, Stretcher, I gave you some things to take charge of; where are they?"

"Here, sir; they never overhauled my pockets, which shows that they have some manners, at all events," said Jack, producing a pistol, a handkerchief, and a card. My uncle took the card, and on it were written the words, "This is the way we punish informers and traitors."

"Perhaps, sir, you don't know who the man was who took the lead of the rest in the cave," said Stretcher.

"Who was he?" asked the Commander.

"No other than Bill Myers himself," answered Jack. I knew him directly, and several of those with him; but I thought it better to keep a silent tongue in my head, so they didn't suspect me. To my mind, Myers murdered the man as a warning to others not to attempt to play a like trick upon him. From what I happened to hear, I suspect the lugger has run her cargo, and is by this time off again; for I am certain some of the people we saw belonged to her, and they wouldn't be likely to stay in this place after the work which has been done.

Nothing more of importance being elicited from Jack, he was dismissed; and my uncle arranged with Hanks that all the boats should visit the shore, and that a strict search should be made to discover the cave; while we should communicate with the authorities, and state what had occurred. The mist of the morning having cleared off, a look-out was kept at the masthead for the lugger, should she be in sight, but not a sign of her appeared; and as soon as breakfast was over, a large party of officers and seamen went on shore to hunt for the cave. My uncle, Stretcher, and I, meantime, went off to the nearest magistrate, to make

our depositions. Mr Gibson, the magistrate, received us very politely, and expressed his anxiety to sift the affair to the bottom, and to bring the offenders to justice. He took charge of the things we had found; and while he entertained us at luncheon, he sent about to make inquiries on the subject. The man, whose corpse we believed we had seen, was found to be missing, and we learned that he was well-known to be connected with the smugglers; but of the cave, and the cargo which we suspected to have been run, no one could, or rather would, afford any information. When, however, it was known that murder had been committed, several persons, who had no objection to assist in simple smuggling, but had a prejudice against murdering people, came voluntarily forward to state all they knew and suspected about the matter. By several, Myers had been seen on shore during the previous day; and, what is extraordinary, one of the witnesses, an alehouse-keeper, swore that he had seen him use the very handkerchief we had found to sweep the crumbs off a table at which he had been eating bread and cheese, in order to have it clean for writing. He had also given him a letter to post, which he had forgotten to do. The handwriting was exactly like that on the card. Another witness said that he knew Myers by sight perfectly; that later in the day, as he was taking a cut across some fields near the cliffs, he had seen him seated under a tree, and that he was either loading or cleaning a pistol of the size and shape of the one now produced. Indeed there was ample circumstantial evidence to enable Mr Gibson to issue a warrant for the apprehension of Myers on a charge of murder, whenever and wherever he could be found. A reward was afterwards offered to whoever should capture him. It is very extraordinary that the cave could not be discovered, nor could we gain any information about the goods which had been seen. Of Myers himself no tidings could be obtained. There was no doubt that he had committed the murder, and he must have been aware that many of his old friends might be tempted by the prospect of the reward to deliver him up, should he venture again among them. The general opinion was, therefore, that we should hear nothing more of him. We, however, continued cruising in search of his lugger; but, though we chased at different times several craft which we thought might be his, we never got them within range of our guns. We, however, captured several other smuggling vessels, and made prize of a considerable number of tubs. The latter we picked up, either floating out at sea, or we got them by groping after they had been sunk. Smuggling vessels carry a considerable portion of their cargo lashed along outside, just above the

water. When hard pressed these are cut away, and the rest are thrown overboard, so that when overhauled, nothing contraband may be found on board. When within a short distance of land, so that marks on the shore can be seen, weights are attached to the tubs, which are all fastened together; and the marks being observed, so that the spot should be known again, they are sunk. Sometimes we saw them being hove overboard and sunk; and then, of course, we did our best to get them again. We at length took a longer cruise than usual, and were for some time knocking about in the longitude of Plymouth, and that turbulent portion of the aqueous world—the Chops of the Channel. There was a light wind and a smooth sea, and we were dodging along under easy sail, being in no hurry to get anywhere. I was walking the deck with Hanks, talking on matters doubtless very erudite and abstruse; but I now forget what they were. Scriven was casting up his accounts—literally, not metaphorically, be it understood; Growl was endeavouring to forget his cares, with eyes fast closed, on two chairs in the gun-room; and our Commander was below, reading.

“D’Arcy, I have taken a fancy to you, and I want to give you some good advice,” remarked my companion, after some time. “Just remember what I say, and it will be useful to you in elbowing your way, as you must, through this crowded world. First, then, keep that potato-trap of yours shut, except when you want to catch potatoes in it; and your eyes and ears open on all occasions. There is little harm in knowing a thing, but there is a very great deal in repeating it; and much harm often in letting others be aware that you do know it. Then, my boy, always remember to look before you leap, and not to let go one rope before you have a firm gripe of another. You pretty boys from green Erin’s Isle are too apt to do things in a hurry—to knock a fellow down, and then to ask his pardon, on finding that he wasn’t the man you intended to floor; like the Irish soldier officer who declared that anchovies grew on the walls of Gibraltar, and when he had shot his friend for doubting his statement, recollected that it was capers he meant.”

I laughed at Hanks’ old story, though it was a hit against my countrymen; for I have always found it far better to laugh off anything said against one’s self, than to put on the dignities and to look grand. Laughter and good humour are like polished shields, which make the shafts of satire glance off on either side; but sulkiness and dignity are sure to bring them

thick around them.

Our conversation was interrupted by the cry of “A sail on the weather bow!” The wind was about south-east, and the cutter’s head was up Channel. I went to report her to the Commander, who immediately came on deck, and, looking at her attentively through his glass, ordered a boat to be lowered. He then returned below, and brought up a package.

“Mr D’Arcy,” said he—and I felt very grand to be so called,—“take this parcel on board yonder ship. I think I know her. If she is bound to —, leave it with the master, to be delivered immediately on his arrival; if not, bring it back.” I forget now the name of the place he mentioned.

“Ay, ay, sir,” I answered; and jumping into the boat, shoved off. Jack Stretcher, who, in consequence of his behaviour with the smugglers, had gained the estimation of all on board, was with me in the boat. Away we pulled towards the ship with rapid strokes, for we knew that the faster we pulled the less distance we should have to go. We were about half-way between the cutter and the ship, when a bank of mist came rolling slowly along from the southern horizon, the opposite extremities seeming to close in, till a circle was formed around us, still, however, having the cutter and the ship within its confines. On we rowed, the circle growing smaller and smaller, till, by the time we reached the ship, our own vessel was completely shrouded from view. As I knew exactly where she was, that did not trouble me. The ship proved to be the one I was sent to board —the *Ajax*, I think, was her name.

I delivered my despatches. The master asked me down into the cabin to take a glass of wine, which it would have been against the principles of a midshipman to refuse. I took two or three, and ate some cold chicken and ham into the bargain. There were, I remember, a number of passengers, who were very civil, and some gave me letters to take on shore; indeed it is just possible that one of the reasons why I was so hospitably entertained was that time might be obtained to finish and close the said letters. At last the package of farewells, last words, and before-forgotten directions, being ready, I tumbled with it into the boat, and shoved off to return to the cutter.

I calculated that she bore about north-north-west from the ship; and not

having a compass, the last thing I did was to take a careful glance at the one on board. I then pulled away, thinking that I should not lose sight of the merchantman before we got hold of our own craft. In about ten minutes I found that I was not a little mistaken. I had told Stretcher, who was pulling stroke-oar, to keep his eye on the ship, while I, meantime, was looking out for the cutter. Every moment I expected to see her; but, as we advanced, the fog appeared to rise up with redoubled thickness around us; and my difficulty was still further increased when Jack Stretcher exclaimed—

“I can’t see the ship nowhere, sir! She was there not a moment ago, and just as I passed my hand over my brow, she was gone.”

“Well, we must pull on,” I exclaimed. “If we keep the breeze on the starboard quarter, we cannot be far wrong.”

However, not many minutes afterwards, the wind, true to its proverbial character of fickleness, died away, and we were left without any guide by which to steer our course across the trackless deep. Still we pulled on, I fancied, in the direction of the coast. We should have been wise had we laid on our oars, and gone to sleep. As I could not see ahead, I steered by the wake astern, and was under the impression that I was keeping a wonderfully straight line. How long we had gone on I can scarcely tell, when we heard the sound of a gun booming along the water; but, instead of coming from the direction in which we were steering, it seemed to be astern of us. Still we thought it must be the cutter firing. The men even declared that they knew the sound of the gun. The probability was, certainly, that it was her gun, as she would be sure to fire to show her whereabouts to us; and it was not likely that any other vessel near us would be firing for a similar purpose. Although I was very confident, from the straight wake I fancied I had kept, that Jack was mistaken, and that the sound of the gun had come from some other vessel, yet I yielded to his opinion, and pulled in the direction whence we thought it proceeded. We had not made good a quarter of a mile when we again heard the sound; but still, to our surprise and vexation, it was indubitably right astern.

“That gun’s from the cutter, sir,” said Jack; “but I can’t make it out how it comes from away there.”

No more could I; but determined this time, at all events, not to miss our vessel, we pulled away directly towards the spot whence we were certain the sound proceeded.

“Give way, my lads, we shall soon be up with her,” I shouted; and the crew sent the boat flying through the smooth water. I kept looking out on either bow for the cutter, expecting every instant to see her looming through the fog; when, for the third time, a gun was heard, but in spite of all our hopes and expectations, and almost against our belief, it also sounded right astern, and further away than any of the others. I was ready to cry with vexation. It seemed like the work of magic, and as if a set of mischievous imps or spirits, like those on Prospero’s island, were employed in trying our tempers and patience. There seemed no use in going on thus, to be constantly baulked; so I ordered the men to lay on their oars, resolved to wait either till the mist cleared off, or till we could devise some better means of finding our way to the shore than we now possessed. Thus for an hour or more we floated listlessly on the water.

Chapter Seven.

Fall in with a Wreck—Dreadful Scene on Board—Mr Marlow and his Daughter—Alice Marlow’s Account of the Voyage—Bring the Ship into Harbour.

“Hillo! where does that come from?” I exclaimed, as the low deep boom of a gun came rolling over the calm water.

Another and another report followed, and then, as if affected by the concussion, the mist on a sudden lifted a few feet from the surface, and revealed, about three miles off, the hull of a large ship on which the rays of the now setting sun glittered brightly for an instant, ere she sank beneath the wave. It was sufficient to show us our position, and we might easily have found our way towards the shore; but, as I was about putting the boat’s head in that direction, Jack observed—

“There’s something wrong with that ship yonder, sir, or she wouldn’t be firing in the way she does.”

I listened attentively. There could be no doubt—those were minute-guns, the well-known signal of distress at sea. We could do but little good, probably; but what good we could do I determined to attempt. My men needed no encouragement. The fact that fellow-creatures wanted help was sufficient to nerve their arms. Had an enemy been in sight, and had there been heads to be cracked, it would have been much the same. Round spun the boat, and away they pulled as hard as they could lay their backs to the oars. The breeze which had cleared off the mist, had likewise got up the sea a little, and the spray flew over our bows as we dashed through the dancing waves. Away we went; the big sea-serpent could not have beaten us. Every minute the low, dull sound of the gun reached our ears, growing louder and louder as we drew nearer the ship. Her distress was evidently great. From the somewhat irregular way the gun was fired, and from its tone, Jack pronounced the ship to be a merchantman, as he remarked that minute-guns from a man-of-war would have been far louder and more regular. The mist, fortunately, did not again settle down thickly over the ship, so that, although twilight was coming on, we could still distinguish her whereabouts. As we drew near, we saw that she was of considerable size, and that all her masts had gone by the board. We were evidently not perceived, even though we had got close up to her, for she continued firing as before.

“Now, my lads, we’ll let the poor fellows know that we are at hand to help them,” I exclaimed; and on this my men joined me in raising a right hearty cheer, which must have given the people on board no unpleasing notice of our approach. There was a pause, as if they were recovering from their surprise; and then it was answered by a shout so feeble, that it sounded more like the sighing of the wind among the crumbling walls of some old building, than a cheer of welcome. It was now too dark to distinguish any one, but I fancied that I saw the heads of several people over the taffrail, as if eagerly watching us. We were soon alongside, when some one attempted to heave us a rope, but it fell short of the boat. We, however, hooked on to the main-chains, and, followed by Jack, I was not long in scrambling on board. A seaman stood there, holding a ship’s lantern, which shed a feeble light around, where all was wreck and confusion; and it besides exhibited more strongly his own countenance, which looked haggard and emaciated in the extreme. The greater part of the bulwarks, the spare spars, the caboose, and the boats had been carried away,—indeed, the sea must have made a clean sweep over her; and it

seemed not a little surprising, from the appearance of the deck, that any human beings should have remained, and that the ship herself should have escaped foundering. Besides the man who held the lantern, three equally wretched-looking beings came to meet us. I observed that some others were lying on the deck, round one of the chain-pumps, as if they had sunk down with fatigue; while two more were stretched out alongside the only remaining gun, the report of which we had heard. I thought to myself, Can those poor fellows be dead? but I dared not ask the question.

“You seem in a bad plight,” I observed, as I looked round.

“Bad enough,” answered one of the seaman; “and if you don’t bear a hand, we shall have the ship sinking under us.”

“We’ll do our best for you; but how can our boat carry all your ship’s company?” I asked, for I thought I saw other people moving aft, and fancied that some must be below.

“Oh, she’ll carry all of us that’s alive,” returned the same rough-spoken seaman. “But, sir,” he continued, “we have two aboard here whom we must get out of harm’s way before we look after ourselves.”

“Where are they?” I asked.

“Right aft, sir,” he answered, leading the way along the deck.

As I followed him, I passed two bodies stretched out at full length.

“They’ll never break biscuit again,” observed one of the men. “We were near thirty souls in all, and this night there only remain six of us alive.”

There was no time just then to ask questions. The companion-hatch had not been washed away, and as the seaman held up the lantern, its light fell on the figure of a man kneeling on the deck, bending over the fair face of a young girl, who reclined on a seat by the side of it.

“Rouse up a bit, sir; there’s help come when we didn’t expect it,” said the seaman.

The gentleman, for such I saw that he was, had not his voice proved it, rose from his knees. “Heaven be praised, my child may yet be saved!” he exclaimed, clasping his daughter in his arms, and scarcely appearing to notice my presence. “Alice, dearest, bear up but a little longer; we may once more hope to reach the shore.”

The young girl endeavoured, to raise herself, and feebly returned his embrace.

Then turning to me, he said, “You have arrived most opportunely. We had well nigh abandoned all hope of escaping death. What do you propose we should do?”

“As the people on board seem to say that the ship may go down any moment with slight warning,” I replied, “I think, sir, the sooner you and the young lady get into the boat, the better. We will follow you when it becomes absolutely necessary. Meantime we must see what can be done on board.”

I then told him that I belonged to a cutter, which could not be far off, and that I hoped by daylight we should see her, and that she would come to our assistance.

The gentleman, on this, took his daughter in his arms and carried her to the gangway.

“How are the poor men who were so ill?” I heard her ask.

“They are free from all pain,” was the evasive answer; but it seemed to satisfy her.

We soon got them safely placed in the boat, in which I left two boat-keepers, with orders to be ready to shove off at a moment’s notice. The rest of the boat’s crew came on board to lend a hand to what might be required.

I then set to work to see what was best to be done. There was no time to ask questions as to how the ship had got into her present condition. My first care was to attend to the wants of the sick. The seaman who had received us and my own people went round with me. Unhappily, we

found that most of the other poor fellows were beyond human aid. Three only were still alive, verging on the portals of death. We fortunately had a flask of spirits, a keg of water, and some biscuits in the boat; of these I served out sparingly among the crew. The food had the effect of speedily reviving them. I next took a lantern, and, accompanied by Jack, went below to discover, if I could, how much water the ship had in her. I was not quite comfortable during the time, for I thought she might take it into her head to go down before we could regain the deck. The water we found was over the cabin floors; but, as far as we could judge, it was not gaining on her. Half of it might have got in while the sea broke over the ship. The contents of the cabin, bedding, and tables, and chairs, and crockery, and books, and clothing, were washing about together. Returning on deck, we went forward. The forepeak was much in the same condition.

“She’ll not sink yet awhile, sir,” said Jack. “Hark, now! don’t you hear a bubbling sound right forward, there? Now, to my mind, if we were to get a sail thrummed and brought across her bows, we might carry her into harbour yet.”

“If you think so, we’ll try it, by all means,” I answered, feeling no little pride at the prospect of saving the ship.

No time was to be lost in setting about the work, if it was to be done. I had only three men; and the four we found able to move about on board were still too weak to be of much use. Officers there were none. I shall have to tell a sad tale on that subject, by-and-by. We had no little difficulty in getting at the sail-room; but, after much rummaging about, we discovered a spare topsail, with which we set to work as we proposed. What with searching for the ropes and getting the sail ready, it took us an hour before it was brought under the ship’s bows. Meantime the water gained very slowly on us. It was nervous work, for we could not tell at what moment the last bucketful might come in which would send her to the bottom.

“That will do, sir, I think,” said Jack Stretcher, who, I must own, was the prime mover. “The leak seems to suck in the sail, and we may now try to clear her of the water.”

With a will we manned the chain-pumps, and after an hour's hard work it became evident that we had materially lessened its depth. In the meantime the little girl and her father, with the weakest of those we found on board, had remained in the boat.

"You may come on board again, sir; I don't think the ship is going to sink this time," I sung out, as I looked down on them.

At first the gentleman would not venture to quit the boat, for he could not believe that the ship was not on the point of sinking. After some persuasion, however, I got him and his daughter on deck, and we wrapped her up comfortably, and placed her on the seat by the companion-hatch, for the cabin was too damp for her to occupy. The sick men we placed on the poop, with a sail stretched over them, to shelter them somewhat from the night air. The dead were carried forward. We had no time, however, to spare from the pumps; but, with the aid of the fresh hands, we again set to for a spell, the gentleman helping, as far as his strength would allow him. As may be supposed, I was curious to know who he was; and while we were pumping away, I bethought me I would ask him his name.

"You may call me Marlow," he answered. "I ought to have mentioned that before."

The reply made me fancy that there was some mystery or other, and my imagination conjured up all sorts of romantic stories. "And that young lady," thought I, "is Miss Alice Marlow." "Alice Marlow—Alice Marlow; what a very pretty name," I kept repeating to myself, while my arms were aching with the exertion of pumping. Fortunately it remained very calm, or I suspect we should not have gained on the leak. Mr Marlow was anxious to get on shore for the sake of his daughter, and would willingly have abandoned the ship; but at the same time he was glad to save some valuable property he had on board. All hands worked with a will, spelling each other, till we were almost knocked up. I thought the night the longest I had ever spent. We had no time for conversation, so I was still ignorant of how the ship had been brought into her present condition. At last the cold grey light of the coming day appeared. I looked out in the hope of discovering the blue line of the land on the northern board; but the dull, leaden sea surrounded us on every side, fortunately, unruffled as a

looking-glass. Neither the cutter nor any other sail was in sight. We had given our own provisions to the half-famished crew, and were becoming very sharp-set ourselves. Some nutritious food had, I found—much to the credit of those on board,—been reserved for the exclusive use of the little girl, and this had been the means of preserving her life, notwithstanding all the hardships she had undergone. Mr Marlow, overcome with fatigue, had wrapped himself in a cloak, and lay asleep at his daughter's feet. Two of the ship's crew had fairly given in, and dropped off also; but my own fellows, urged on by Jack, worked away like Trojans at the pump.

"Do ye see, lads, if we get this here craft into harbour, we shall make a better job of it than of any prize we are ever likely to pick up in the whole course of our lives; but if she sinks, why, do ye see, we shall get nothing," he remarked, whenever he saw them inclined to flag in their exertions; and each time he spoke, the water always seemed to flow faster than before out of the scuppers.

Our prospect was not a very pleasant one. We had a boat certainly; but with any sea running she would scarcely carry the remnant of the crew and passengers; and while the ship floated I would on no account desert her.

The beams of the sun, as he rose out of the ocean, fell on the little girl's face. I had fancied her rather pretty at night, but I now thought her very lovely. While my arms were resting I stood watching her, when the dazzling light of the sun aroused her from her sleep, and opening a very bright pair of blue eyes, she fixed them on me with a look of extreme surprise. It may be laid down as a general rule that a midshipman, especially an Irish one, does not take a long time to fall in love, nor, it must be confessed, to fall out again—which latter, taking all things into consideration, will be considered a very fortunate circumstance. I, accordingly, instantly conceived a very ardent affection for Miss Alice Marlow, and felt ready to go right round the world, and to perform all sorts of prodigies for her sake. She looked at me, and then around her, as if trying to collect her scattered senses.

"Where are we—where are we going?" she asked, in a very sweet and musical voice.

“We are in the Chops of the Channel; and we are going nowhere at present, but we hope soon to be,” I answered. “We must try to rig a sort of a jury-mast, and if we get a little breeze from the southward, we may hope to fetch Plymouth.”

The idea of getting up a jury-mast had only just occurred to me.

Her voice aroused Mr Marlow. It was pleasant to see the way in which the father and daughter greeted each other. I left them together, offering up their thanks to Heaven for having preserved them to see another day, while I went forward to propound my idea to Jack. He was about to propose the same to me, the only want being the spars with which to make the mast. A few remained, certainly, on deck, but they were short and broken. On putting them, however, together, we found that we might splice them so as to form a mast and a yard of sufficient length to answer our purpose. All hands set to with a will, in the hopes that a breeze might spring up from the southward or westward, and blow us on to the English coast. The ebb, I found, had drifted us down Channel, and the flood, now again making strong, sent us the way we wished to go. As the sun also rose, and the mist which had so long hung over the sea cleared off somewhat, we at length made out the land to the northward, which we had no doubt was the coast of Cornwall.

Things now began to wear a much more cheering aspect. We had to knock off mast building, however, every now and then, to take a spell at the pumps. Mr Marlow assisted us at either work to the best of his power; and even little Miss Alice seemed very anxious to lend a hand, and, though I own she could have been but of slight use, her presence encouraged us to perseverance. It did me at all events. I have all my life felt doubly energetic in the presence of a lady, and fancy, at all events, that there is not a deed which I would not dare for the sake of winning the smile of an amiable girl.

At last we got something like a mast built, and lashed to the stump of the foremast. We stayed it up, got a yard across it, and bent a topsail to it, which we fortunately found below. This was but very little sail: but it was all we could hope to be able to set, and without a wind even that was of no use to us.

The pumps, in the meantime, kept us fully occupied; clang—clang—clang they went, till I thought I never should get the sound out of my ears. Jack every now and then turned his eye over the smooth, glassy sea to the northward, as if he observed some sign which I did not. Before long he gladdened our ears by exclaiming, “Here it comes! We’ll stand by, sir, if you please, to hoist the sail.” I went aft to the helm. A nice fresh, laughing breeze came rippling and curling up briskly the hitherto sullen waters. It struck us abeam on the larboard side. The sail was hoisted, the ship answered her helm, and I steered her in the direction in which I believed that Plymouth was to be found.

As the binnacle had been swept off the deck, and the only compass I could find in the cabin had been so damaged by water as to be of no use, I had only the distant blue land to steer by.

Our sail, fortunately, required but little attention, so that my whole ship’s company were at liberty to work at the pumps, which was very necessary, as, whenever they relaxed in their efforts, the water again rapidly gained on us.

Miss Alice, being of no assistance to them, came and stood by me to help me to steer the ship, which, I assured her, was very kind of her.

As all danger appeared past, and the sun shone forth bright and warm, her spirits revived. Her voice was very sweet and low, and I thought that I had never heard anything more musical.

“What is your name, little officer?” she asked, putting her hands on the spokes of the wheel, and imitating my attitude as I stood on the other side of it.

“Neil D’Arcy, little lady,” I answered, not quite liking the epithet she bestowed on me.

“Oh, I so much wished to know it; for papa and I are so very, very grateful to you for coming to save our lives, and we can never thank you enough,” said she.

“Oh, I have done nothing at all to be thanked for; I wish that I had,” I replied. “I wouldn’t mind any trouble or danger to serve you; and I would

go right round the world for your sake, that I would."

"It's very kind of you to say so," said Miss Alice. "And I know that I shall like you some day very much—indeed I do so now—for the service you have been to us; but tell me, Mr Neil D'Arcy, are you a captain of a ship?"

"No, I am a midshipman," I replied, modestly.

"Is a midshipman higher than a captain?" she inquired, innocently.

"Sometimes; when he's mast-headed," I answered. This seemed to satisfy her; and I, not wishing to be lowered in her estimation, was anxious to change the subject. I therefore said, "It seems very odd that though I've been on board so many hours, and seem to be so well acquainted with you, I do not know where you have come from, or how you got into this terrible plight."

"Oh, I will tell you all about it, then," she replied. "You must know that papa has been a great merchant in the Brazils, where we have lived almost since I can remember. Dear mamma died there; and if it had not been for my sake, I believe papa would have died too. You cannot tell how fond he is of me, for I have no brothers or sisters, and there was no one else in that country for him to love. At last the doctor told him he must come to England, so he took a passage in this ship, which is called the *Poictiers*. There were some other passengers, and I had an old black nurse to take care of me. At first we had fine weather, and things seemed to go pretty well; but, sad to say, the captain was a very tipsy man, and we, I believe, lost our way, and the wind blew against us and kept us back a long time."

"Oh, I see! the master got out of his reckoning, and met with a succession of foul winds," I remarked.

"I don't know, but I know we were very uncomfortable, and had very little to eat, and what we had was very bad," she continued. "It was very horrid, was it not? A fever also, which one of the passengers had brought from Rio, spread among the people on board. Several of the other passengers and many of the crew died of it, and among others, my poor nurse Josefa. God was very kind, and saved dear papa and me. I do not think the captain caught it; but he was always very tipsy, and now was

worse than ever. One night he fell into the sea and was drowned."

"Drinking brought on *delirium tremens*, and in his madness he jumped overboard probably," I remarked. "No wonder his ship was in so bad a condition; but go on."

"Both the mates died, and we were left without any officers. Fortunately the crew were very steady, and behaved well; and at last the fever went away, and those who were sick recovered. The carpenter was the only person on board who had any idea how we should steer, so the rest made him act as captain."

"It was a mercy, under such circumstances, that you found your way into the Chops of the Channel."

"Where is that?" asked Miss Alice, naïvely.

"Where we now are," said I; and I should probably have gone on to explain the reason of the name, but that I was very anxious to hear more of her account. As far as I could make out, three very anxious weeks passed by while the ship remained in this condition, when, as they were getting near soundings, a gale sprang up and drove her furiously before it. "One evening," continued the little girl, "papa and I were in our cabins, when suddenly the ship rolled over dreadfully on her side, and—most horrible!—the water came rushing down into them. At the same time there was a frightful crash, and we heard sad shrieks and cries. Poor papa flew into my cabin, and seized me in his arms, for he thought the ship was sinking, so did I, and we wished to die together."

"The ship had broached to, and had been thrown on her beam-ends, and the masts had gone by the board," I remarked. "It was fortunate they did so, or she would have been sent to the bottom to a certainty. When the masts went the ship righted, and you saw there was a chance of escape."

"I was too frightened to think anything just then," said she. "All I know is, that papa, carrying me in his arms, found his way in the darkness to the companion-ladder, and then up on deck. When we got there, I wished that we were in our cabin again. We were in the midst of high, black, foaming waves and bright flashes of lightning; and when I looked up, there were no masts and no sails, but the deck was covered with their

broken remains. It was so very dreadful, I cannot talk more about it now. I did not cry or faint, but I felt my heart beat very quick as I clung to papa, while he held tight to the companion-hatches, which, as you see, still remain firm."

"But where have you lived all the time you have been on the wreck?" I asked.

"Oh, I remained where you first found me," she answered. "At night they covered me up with cloaks and a sail, and in the daytime I was able to walk about, for the sea, fortunately, was tolerably smooth. The kind sailors also, though suffering much from hunger, I heard papa say, brought me all I required to eat, which was not much, you may suppose."

This was all about the shipwreck I heard from Miss Alice at the time. It appeared that when the masts had been carried away, the mizen-mast had hung on by some of the rigging, and by dragging astern had assisted in making the head of the ship pay off. This caused her to drive before the gale, and saved the decks from being swept by the seas, which would otherwise have cleared them of every human being. As soon as all the damage had been committed, the wind and sea began to go down, and by the morning there was only a moderate breeze. The carpenter, however, discovered that the ship had sprung a leak, and all hands were now summoned to work the pumps; but weakened by disease and famine, and overcome with fatigue, they were soon obliged to give up the almost hopeless task. Three days of horror passed away without any ship coming near them, while several of them died from sheer starvation. Fortunately, at last they discovered some gunpowder which, being in tin cases, was not spoilt, and with it they managed to fire the guns which had attracted our attention.

Miss Alice told me many more incidents, which I now forget. Our conversation was interrupted by Jack Stretcher, who came aft.

"Sir," said he, touching his hat, "I'm afraid we shall have to take to the boat, for the people are almost all knocked up; and, do all we can, the ship won't float much longer."

"I'm sorry to hear that, for I should have liked to have got her safe into

harbour," I answered. "But I suppose there is no help for it."

"We'll take another spell at the pumps before we give in," he replied. "But I wanted to tell you, sir, that to my mind that poor gentleman will be killing himself if he works away as he does; and as he is of no great use to us, it would be better if he sat down and rested himself."

On hearing this, Miss Marlow darted forward to her father, and seizing him by the arm, tried to force him away from the pumps. He soon yielded to her entreaties, and almost fainting with fatigue, came and sat down aft.

"Now, my lads," cried Jack to the men, who, one after the other, had thrown themselves down on the deck, "we'll see if we can't keep the old craft afloat till we get her into harbour."

But no one responded to his summons. Just then my eye fell on the white sail of a vessel appearing above the dark horizon right ahead of us. I pointed it out to Jack.

"It's the cutter, sir, to a certainty," he exclaimed, after scrutinising it attentively. "Huzza! my lads, there's help at hand, if you will but hold out an hour longer."

The men, encouraged by his words and example, resumed their labours, and again sent the water gushing through the scuppers. It was an anxious time; for after all I felt that the sail in sight might not prove to be the cutter, or she might be crossing our course and not see us. Our last remnant of food and water had been served out, with the exception of a biscuit, which I had kept for the little girl and her father; so that all hands were very hungry as well as fatigued. I had tightened my belt round my waist to serve me for my breakfast. I watched the vessel as she rose higher and higher above the horizon; and, to my great joy, I at length saw that she was, at all events, a large cutter, beating up towards us. I called Jack to look at her again.

"She's the *Serpent*, and no mistake," he exclaimed. "She'll be down to us in another hour, if the wind holds. My doubt is if the ship will swim as long," he added in a whisper to me; "but we'll do our best, sir."

"Let me know in time if the water gains much on us, that we may get the

young lady and the gentleman into the boat," said I.

"Ay, ay, sir," he answered, as he went forward, and with a loud cheer, resumed his labours.

The minutes dragged slowly on; for, though I had no fear for our lives, I was anxious to get fresh hands to keep the ship afloat.

"Is that little vessel yours?" asked Miss Marlow, pointing to the cutter as she approached.

"Yes," said I. "I hope before long to take you on board her."

"That will be very nice; for dear papa and I want to leave this dreadful ship. You will carry us home to Old England, will you!" she said.

"If the cutter makes us out, I hope to get you on shore this evening or to-morrow," I replied. "But I am not quite certain that she sees us."

She had just then tacked, and was apparently standing away from us. I watched her eagerly. Again she tacked, and I was certain she saw us. I steered towards her, and now, the breeze freshening, we rapidly neared each other. She stood on, and passing under our stern, kept alongside of us.

"Hillo, D'Arcy, my boy, how did you get there?" hailed my uncle, as he recognised me at the helm.

"Fell in with her, sir. Pray send some fresh hands, for we are sinking; and some prog, for we are starving," I shouted, in return.

The cutter flew by us, and hove-to a short distance ahead. A boat was lowered, and as we came up, she hooked on to our main-chains, and my uncle stepped on board. I was thus speedily shorn of the honour of command. As soon as I had introduced Mr Marlow and his daughter to him, and given him a brief account of what had occurred, he invited them on board the cutter, ordering me to take charge of them, and to send Hanks with another boat's crew to assist in working the ship. He had brought some provisions, which very soon restored my hungry people, and enabled them to pull me and my charges on board the cutter, while

the fresh hands took their places at the pumps. Even when Miss Alice discovered my unexalted position, she did not seem to esteem me the less, for I had already, I rather fancy, established myself in her good graces. I did my best to make her and her father comfortable in my uncle's cabin; and Flitch, his steward, soon placed before them such a breakfast as they had not seen for many a long day, to which I, at all events, did not fail to do ample justice. The young lady appeared to think that naval officers were very hungry mortals, as she saw numberless slices of bacon and eggs disappear down my throat.

"We have no lady's maid on board to attend on you, Miss Marlow," said I, as I got up to leave the cabin; "but Flitch will put your berth to rights; and if you'll follow my advice, you'll turn in and take a good snooze, for you want it, I think."

The poor little girl was almost falling asleep at table. Mr Marlow thanked me for my good advice, which he said he and his daughter would follow.

When I went on deck I found that the cutter had taken the ship in tow, and that we were running up Channel. My uncle soon came on board, and praising me for my behaviour, said he should try and carry our prize into Portsmouth. He was in high spirits, for he expected to get a good round sum for salvage. The breeze held favourable, and in two days we were steering safely through the Needles passage.

Chapter Eight.

Alice at Daisy Cottage—A Boat's Crew Capsized—Pick up Dicky Sharpe—Our Friendship Commenced.

I may as well say that my uncle got a fair round sum for the salvage of the good ship the *Poictiers*, and a very welcome addition to his year's pay. Our passengers went on shore at Portsmouth, and as soon as we arrived there, I thought I was to see no more of them, when, having accompanied them to the door of the George Hotel, I was about to bid them farewell.

"What! we are not going to part yet," said Mr Marlow. "Come in, young gentleman—come in."

There was the usual bustle consequent on the arrival of a party at an inn. It soon subsided. Rooms were selected, and we found ourselves seated in a parlour, which looked doubly comfortable after the deck of the dismasted ship and the small cabin of the cutter.

"You will come and dine with us to-day, Mr D'Arcy; and I must beg you to convey an invitation to your uncle," said Mr Marlow.

As midshipmen are not always their own masters, I had to explain that I would, if I could; though I did not think my uncle would refuse me leave. I was not disappointed; and at six o'clock I found myself seated at Mr Marlow's dinner-table, and opposite my Commander. I thought the little lady, Miss Alice, still looked very much fatigued.

"She is scarcely yet fit to perform the journey to London," observed her father. "Still I am anxious to be there, and must also visit Liverpool in the course of a few days."

"If you will allow her to remain with Mrs O'Flaherty, I can answer for my wife being most happy to receive her," said my uncle.

To my great joy, though I was afraid of showing if, Mr Marlow at once acceded to the proposal.

“I will, then, bring Mrs O’Flaherty over to fetch her,” added my uncle. “You will, I suspect, agree very well, Miss Alice.”

“Indeed, my dear sir, you are laying me under a tenfold obligation,” said Mr Marlow. “All our connections are, I believe, in the North, and in dreary London there is no one with whom I could leave the dear child.”

I don’t remember the rest of our conversation. I know that I discussed a very good dinner; and that same evening we got under weigh and ran over to Ryde, and my uncle went up to Daisy Cottage. The next morning my aunt accompanied him on board, and we returned to Portsmouth. She received little Alice, as I knew she would, most kindly, and before many hours had passed they became great friends; and, to make a long story short, Miss Marlow became an inmate for several weeks of Daisy Cottage.

We were lying one day soon after this in Portsmouth Harbour, off Haslar Creek, ready to start for the westward. It was Sunday. My uncle had gone over to Ryde, and I was in hopes of getting across in the afternoon to visit my aunt and her guest. I had turned out in full fig; and while all the people were below dressing for muster, I walked the deck as officer of the watch, with my spy-glass under my arm, looking out for the signal from the flag-ship to make it eight-bells. I felt very important, but I have reasons to doubt whether I looked proportionably consequential. All the ships in the harbour and at Spithead ran up their bunting at the same moment; and I had just belayed our signal halliards when I saw a boat, crowded with seamen and marines, putting off from a frigate lying right ahead of us. The tide was running strong out of the harbour. A young midshipman was at the helm, and he did not seem to have made due allowance for the strength of the current. The consequence was that the boat drifted down some way below the intended place of landing, and while he was putting her head up the harbour to regain his lost ground, her keel struck the mast of a barge which had sunk the day before, and which scarcely showed above the water. In an instant over she went, and the people in her were spilt out into the eddying, rushing tide-way. Some struck out for the shore, a few clung on the boat, and others came drifting down helplessly with the current.

So suddenly had the accident occurred, that I had not a moment to

consider what was best to be done, nor to call any one from below. Fortunately we had a punt alongside. Casting off the painter, I jumped into her, and shoved off to where three men were struggling, close ahead of the cutter. I caught hold of one who was just sinking, and hauled him over the bows, while the other two got in without my help. I looked round to see what had become of the rest of the people. Two marines were clinging to the keel of the boat, and she was on the point of striking our stern, by which she would have been carried under our bottom, when I sculled alongside and got the two jollies on board. By the glance I had had at her just before, I observed that another person had been with them, while, as I was getting in the three first men, a cry for help had reached my ears.

“Oh! sir, there’s Mr — gone, poor fellow!” exclaimed one of the marines saved. “There he is, though!”

Directly under the water, where he pointed, I saw a head of hair or a bunch of seaweed, I could not tell which; but, on the chance of its being the former, I sculled up to it. The sun shone forth brightly, and I caught a glimpse of a human face convulsed with agony beneath the tide. Twice it eluded me; but stretching out my arm, and almost going overboard and capsizing our already over-crowded boat, I got firm hold of a person by the hair, who, I saw, had a midshipman’s patch on the collar of his jacket. I had some difficulty in getting the seemingly lifeless body of my brother officer into the boat.

Seeing that there was no one else to be saved—for several boats had shoved off from the shore and vessels at anchor near at hand to pick up the rest of the people—I paddled my nearly sinking boat alongside the cutter. Hearing my hail as I jumped into the punt, the crew had rushed on deck, and were standing ready to hand on board the half-drowned midshipman and the men I had been the means of saving. The latter were none the worse for their ducking, except that their clothes were wettish.

“You’ll want a clean shirt, mate,” said one of our people to a Patlander from the frigate.

“Arrah! now didn’t I put a dry one in my pocket this blessed morning; so it

will be all handy for me," he exclaimed, diving into the recesses of his dripping peacoat.

The midshipman, who was still insensible, was, by Hanks' advice, carried down into the gun-room. We were unwilling to run the risk of the delay which must have occurred had he been conveyed on board his own ship.

"Bring a glass of hot grog; and let it be pretty stiff, steward!" said Hanks, as we were engaged in stripping our patient and putting him into my berth between the blankets.

We then set to work to rub his body with a coarse worsted sock, the first suitable thing which came to hand. Having got some of the salt water he had swallowed out of his mouth, Hanks poured a little warm grog into it instead. This, with the rubbing, had the effect of speedily restoring animation. In a few minutes he opened his eyes, and tried to sit up and look about him.

"Hillo! where am I? I say, are the poor fellows all picked up?" he asked, in a weak tone.

I liked him at once for thinking of his men.

"All right, mate," I answered; "no harm has come of the capsize, except a few wet jackets."

Just then, on looking round, I saw a man, who by his uniform I knew to be a naval surgeon, standing near me. "So I see you've saved me my work, gentlemen," he said, smiling. "You could not have acted better than you appear to have done; and, thanks to you, we shall soon have him all right again."

"Thank'ee, Doctor, I've come round pretty well already," sung out the midshipman. "But, I say, mate, I just want another glass of your stuff. It's prime physic."

The medico smelt the tumbler, which stood on the table full of grog, and then felt the youngster's pulse and looked at his tongue.

"You may take half a glass—it's quite enough for you, and then we'll have

you wrapped up in blankets, and carried on board," he answered.

"Oh, thank'ee, Doctor, I'm very comfortable where I am, and my clothes ain't dried yet; so if you'll let me stay here, I think it would be the better for me," said the midshipman.

The Doctor's objections, if he had any, were soon overruled; and, telling the midshipman to return on board the frigate as soon as his clothes were dry, he quitted the cutter.

"What's your name, mate?" asked my new friend, as he was sipping his glass of grog.

I told him.

"Mine's Richard Sharpe; but I'm mostly called Dicky Sharpe," he answered. "Some of my messmates give me all sorts of names; but I don't mind them. As long as they don't cob me, it's all very well. I'm a happy fellow, and ready for all the ups and downs of life. I'm pretty well wide awake, and know my duty, so I don't often get mast-headed. If I happen to get a fall, I generally manage to pitch on my feet; and as I'm some day or other to come into a fortune, I'm not troubled about the future. If the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty give me my promotion, it will be all very well; if not, why they'll have to dispense with my valuable services, and the country will be the loser."

I was highly edified by Master Dicky's philosophy, and I at once conceived a great regard and respect for him.

"Now, D'Arcy, my boy," he continued, in his free and easy tone, "it's stupid work lying here between the blankets; so if you'll just give me the loan of some of your toggery till mine are dry, I'll sit up at table and crack a bottle of wine with you."

I had to remind him of the early hour, and to confess that wine our mess did not possess, but that he should have some breakfast and hot tea, which would be better for him, and that he should be welcome to my clothes.

While he was seated at table, Hanks, who had gone on deck to see the

medico off, returned. “Well, D’Arcy, I told him how you had saved the youngster and the other men,” he said. “It will be a feather in your cap, my lad, and you deserve to wear it.”

“What!” exclaimed my volatile young friend, grasping my hand, while the tears came into his eyes, “you saved me from drowning. On my word, I’m very much obliged to you. I shouldn’t like to have become food for fishes just yet. I’d rather eat a few dinners off them first.”

“Oh, faith, I could not have done less if you’d been only a sheep or a pig,” I answered, laughing; “so you’ve little to thank me for.”

“I suppose, though, even a sheep or a pig would have tried to show their gratitude, unless you had intended to turn them into mutton and pork directly afterwards,” replied Dicky Sharpe. “So, D’Arcy, I must look upon you as my friend and preserver; and I just wish, when you can get leave, that you would come down and see my governor and mother and sisters. They won’t make much of you, won’t they, that’s all.”

I told him that I should be very glad to accept his invitation if I could; but at the time I was thinking that my aunt and Miss Alice would admire the feather Hanks said I might wear in my cap more than anybody else. I never met a merrier or more contented fellow than Dicky Sharpe. I was quite sorry to lose him when his clothes were dry and a boat came alongside to take him on board his ship, the *Cynthia*, What was my surprise to receive by her, at the same time, a note from the captain of the frigate, inviting me to dine with him on the following day, stating that he wished to thank me for the presence of mind I had displayed in saving the lives of one of his midshipmen and several of his people.

“I’m glad to hear it,” exclaimed Hanks. “It shows your talents are not hid under a bushel; and now get away over to Ryde with that note in your pocket, and explain its meaning in the best way you can.”

I jumped into a wherry just then passing, and in less than an hour landed at Ryde Pier, whence I found my way up to Daisy Cottage. My aunt was delighted to hear my story, which, I flatter myself, I told with all the innate modesty of an Irishman. Alice, I thought, blushed her approval most sweetly; and my uncle congratulated me warmly. I spent a very pleasant

evening, some of the time walking with Alice on the shore, and resting under the trees, which come almost close down to the water's edge. I found that I could not dine with Captain Bruff, as we were to sail next morning for the westward; so I was obliged to be content with the empty honour of the invitation; and, I dare say, my absence did not break his heart. I was more sorry to miss seeing Dicky Sharpe again, as I should have liked to have had another palaver with him; and before our return the *Cynthia* would probably have sailed.

Chapter Nine.

A Chase—A Prize—Capture a French Smuggler—Our Prisoner's Politeness—Do not Trust a Greek, even when Polite.

At the hour I was asked to dine with Captain Bruff we were running out at the Needles, with a fresh breeze and a thick, drizzling rain, which called pea-coats and sou'westers into requisition. We cruised about for three or four days without seeing anything suspicious; not a tub afloat, nor a craft with a smuggling look about her. At last we found something to give us employment. One evening a mist settled down over the water, which, though there was a good breeze, was perfectly calm. Although the night was in no ways dark, yet the density of the fog prevented our seeing beyond the bowsprit end, or even so far. It was just such a night as a smuggler delights in. The cutter was on her old ground, off Portland Bill. We were slipping through the water at the rate of some five or six knots an hour, when Stretcher, who was standing close to me, exclaimed, "Ah! see there, sir; there's a craft of some sort right away to leeward, trying to steal off from us." I looked, and could just distinguish the shadowy form of a sail through the mist. The Commander was called, and the cutter was instantly kept away in chase. Jack pronounced her to be a wherry; but I thought her something much larger. The wind was from the southward, and she, choosing what was probably her best point of sailing, made for the English coast. She sailed well; but we kept her in sight, for daylight had just broke, and the mist had partially cleared away. As soon as my uncle came on deck he ordered a shot to be fired wide of her, to make her heave-to. She paid no attention to it.

“Fire another, Stretcher, right into her this time, and we will make her show her quality,” said he.

The mists had now cleared off sufficiently to show that she was a wherry, though rather a small one. The shot went through her foresail, but still she held on. She was heavily laden, and her crew must have seen that her chance of escape was small, if not impossible. To render this still more difficult, it was every instant growing lighter and lighter. There were numerous sharp eyes on board the cutter fixed on her, and we now perceived her crew heaving the tubs overboard as fast as they could. They fancied, probably, that we could not see them. There were no weights attached to them, so they floated; but as we had no time to stop and pick them up, we noted carefully our course as we passed them, so as to be able to find them again.

“Fire away at her, my lads, till she heaves-to,” cried my uncle, seeing that she still held on.

“Surely she’ll not get away from us,” I remarked to Jack.

“Not so sure of that, Mr D’Arcy,” he answered. “Now she’s got her cargo out of her, should the wind fall on a sudden, and the fog come on thicker, she may contrive to hide herself away in it before we can get our boats out.”

The fog deceived us as to her true distance from us, for after the first, none of our shot struck her, though that mattered nothing, for the breeze freshening, we were now coming up with her hand over hand.

“Lower your canvas!” shouted my uncle, as we got near.

Her people thought it wise to obey, to avoid the shot, which could not now well miss its aim. She was next ordered to pull alongside, which she immediately did; but there was not a symptom of a cask or keg of spirits in her. She had five hands in her. They were desired to come on board. One of them acknowledged himself the skipper.

“We want to know why you chased and fired at us, sir,” he said, in the most innocent manner possible, addressing my uncle.

“For having contraband goods on board,” he answered.

“Lord love ye, sir—we have contraband goods aboard, sir!” replied the skipper, with a feigned look of surprise. “We was just taking our pleasuring, and didn’t know but what you was an enemy, or a pirate, or some chap of that sort, so we runned away, sir, do ye see.”

“Very well; you’ll remain on board the cutter for the present, and perhaps I may prove to the contrary,” said my uncle.

The smugglers were compelled, with a very bad grace, to go below; the wherry was dropped astern, and the cutter stood back over the ground we had before crossed. Before eight-bells we had picked up fifty tubs of brandy. As plenty of our people could swear that they saw a number of tubs thrown overboard from the wherry, there was no doubt of her being condemned. When our prisoners perceived that their escape was impossible, they seemed to screw themselves up to bear their reverses like brave men. Though somewhat down in the mouth, they apparently felt no ill-will, but were obedient and respectful. Luck was against them. They had tried to smuggle, and we, as in duty bound, had stopped them. The worst they had to expect was a few months’ residence in Winchester gaol. My uncle had each of them down separately in his cabin, to try and obtain any information they might be inclined to give, especially about Myers, whom he was most anxious to get hold of. From one of them he learned that a large lugger was to run across the following night but one, from Cherbourg; and he resolved to intercept her. A course was immediately shaped for that port. He had explained his plan to Hanks, who was to take the wherry with four hands and to keep a bright look-out for the lugger, and to board her if he met her, as soon as she was half-way across Channel. I obtained leave to accompany him, for though I could not be expected to do much while blows were being given and taken, I was considered a good hand at steering; and my uncle was glad to let me see as much service as possible, holding the opinion that in that way only could I become a good practical officer.

When we had got about mid Channel between Saint Catharine’s and Cherbourg, the cutter was hove-to and the wherry hauled up alongside.

“Success attend you,” said my uncle, as Hanks and I stepped into the

wherry. “Mind, Mr Hanks, keep a sharp look-out for the lugger; but do not let anything else with a smuggling air about her escape unexamined.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered Hanks, as we shored off. “I hope to get hold of the lugger, and Myers in her.”

We had in the boat provisions for four or five days; cloaks, blankets, a compass, and lantern; with three muskets, and pistols and cutlasses for each person. Our directions were to cruise about for three days, should the weather remain moderate, and then to rejoin the cutter off the Needles. We started away with a light breeze and a smooth sea, and stood for a short way towards Cherbourg, while the cutter returned over part of the course she had come. The weather was very pleasant, and the sunbeams sparkled cheerily on the rippling wavelets caused by the meeting of the tide and wind, as we ran through the water at the rate of some five or six knots an hour. Hanks lighted his favourite short black pipe, such as in Ireland we should call a “dodeen.” He never indulged in a cigar, except one was given him. While he leaned back, with his legs stretched along the seats, I steered. I used to think it very hard that he would never let me smoke, but I have since been much obliged to him.

“This is what I call comfort, Neil,” said he. “One of the smooths of life; but it won’t last, so let us enjoy it while we can. Before long we may be getting broken heads, with a gale of wind into the bargain.”

So he smoked his pipe, took ever and anon a sip from the rum-bottle, sang a snatch from a song, and joked and talked away till the sun began to hasten his descent into the ocean. We were all the time keeping a look-out for any suspicious craft.

At last the sails of a lugger appeared against the evening sky as she got clear of the land. We made sure it was the vessel we were in search of, and prepared for action.

“D’Arcy, do you stay at the helm, and keep the wherry alongside, while the rest of us jump aboard,” said Hanks. “Stretcher, you must knock down the fellow at the helm; I’ll grapple with the skipper, if they show fight.”

On came the lugger. I thought it very unlikely if Myers was on board, from his well-known character, that he would fail to show fight; indeed, it

seemed much more probable that he would do his best to knock us all on the head, and heave us overboard again, should we manage to set foot on his deck. However, I said nothing, and felt just as eager for the fray as if such an idea had not crossed my mind.

Hanks had been taking a steady look at the lugger through his spy-glass. “Well!” he exclaimed, “hang me if I don’t think, after all, that she’s one of those French *chasse marées*. Our lugger hasn’t yet come out.”

“D’ye think, sir, that they chaps was deceiving of us?” said Jack. “They be up to all sorts of dodges.”

“Oh, hang it, no; I hope not,” answered Hanks, with considerable doubt, notwithstanding, in his tone. “The Commander cross-questioned them a great deal too close for them to deceive us. We shall see the right craft by-and-by.”

We were soon convinced, however, that the lugger in sight was a *chasse marée*. She hauled her wind, and stood along shore. Had she observed us she would probably have had no little suspicion of our business out there.

After watching for the lugger to no purpose for three hours or more, the moon rose out of the dark water, and gave us a wider range of vision. Hour after hour passed away, and still she did not appear. We began at last to be afraid either that the smugglers had deceived us, or that she had slipped out and passed us unobserved. As our blockade might be somewhat long, Hanks divided the crew into watches; he taking command of one, and I of the other. When it was my turn to sleep, I rested as soundly as I usually did in my own berth, though I dreamed that I had caught sight of Myers, and that I was chasing him round and round the world with a pair of ten-league boots on my legs. How he kept ahead of me I could not tell. Hanks awoke me to take some breakfast, and then let me go to sleep again, for I was so drowsy that I could not keep my eyes open. While I was still more asleep than awake, I heard Jack’s voice exclaim—

“That’s her, sir, I’ll take my davy.”

“Yes, that’s her, and no mistake, this time,” added Hanks.

I was on my feet in a moment, and looking towards the French coast, I saw a lugger about two miles off, running down to us. All hands were on the alert, and every preparation was made to ensure the success of our enterprise. We hauled our wind, and steered a course so as to intercept her, without, if possible, exciting the suspicion of the smugglers till we were alongside. As the sea was perfectly smooth and the wind light, we should have no difficulty in getting on board. Hanks, Jack, and I alone showed ourselves; the rest were ordered to lie down in the bottom of the boat. The lugger, we could see, was heavily laden, and her general appearance betokened her to be French.

“Remember, my lads, we shall have to give and take some hard blows; but sharp’s the word, and she’ll be ours before her people know what we are after,” exclaimed Hanks, in an inspiriting tone. It was an exciting moment. As we drew near, we could count some twelve men or more on her deck. We were by this time well over on the British half of the Channel.

“Keep her away a little, D’Arcy,” said Hanks. The smugglers had been watching us without apparently suspecting our intentions. “Now, hard up!—ease off the mainsheet!—hook on!—follow me, my lads!”

As Hanks uttered the last words we had run alongside. The next moment he leaped over the bulwarks of the lugger on to her deck, and grappling with her captain, a Frenchman, tripped him up. Jack at the same time knocked down the man at the helm with a boat’s stretcher. There was a mighty deal of jabbering and swearing in French, and some round oaths uttered in English, when, as Hanks was working his way forward, some of the crew, plucking courage, made a rush, and, seizing him, bore him overboard, fortunately on the larboard side, on the same which the wherry was: small thanks to the smugglers on that account. We were going through the water, it must be remembered, though not very quick. Hanks made a desperate attempt to clamber on board again by the lugger’s forechains, but missed his aim; then, giving a glance of defiance at the rascals, he kept himself afloat while he sung out, “Hillo, D’Arcy, lend me a hand here!”

Directly I saw what had happened I seized an oar, and thrust it out towards him. He grasped it as we passed by, and quickly clambered into

the wherry. The moment after, with the stretcher, which he had never let out of his grasp, he was again on the lugger's deck, belabouring both right and left those of the crew who still resisted. As none of the smugglers had seen him get out of the water, they were completely taken by surprise, and without striking another blow, sung out for quarter.

"You don't deserve it, you blackguards, for daring to resist a king's officer in the execution of his duty," cried Hanks, flourishing his stretcher. "But, forward with you, there, and don't move till I give you leave." The Frenchmen did not understand him, but the English smugglers did, and his action showed what he desired. The crew were soon penned up in the fore part of the vessel, with the exception of the captain and the man Jack had knocked down, who were sitting on deck rubbing their eyes, hardly yet recovered. Scarcely three minutes had passed since we ran alongside, and the lugger was ours. I was still in the boat, waiting for orders.

"Come on board, D'Arcy," said Hanks at length, looking over the side. "We'll lower the wherry's sails, and tow her astern."

I gladly jumped out of her when we had stowed her canvas and made fast the painter. Our prize turned out to be a valuable one, for she had not only spirits, but silk and lace on board. Her papers clearly proved also that these goods were intended to be smuggled, so I remember Hanks saying; but how that was I did not trouble myself, nor do I to this day know. The smugglers, as well as they might, were certainly sulky; and Hanks, as a gentle hint for them to behave themselves, stationed a man with a double-barrelled pistol in his hand close to them, while they stood huddled together on the little forecastle. I took the helm, while the sails were trimmed and a course shaped for the Needles. In a short time a breeze sprang up, and we spanked along at a furious rate. The French skipper had now recovered, and getting on his legs, with a polite bow, expressed a hope, in tolerable English, that we would make ourselves at home on board his vessel.

"No fear of that, monsieur," answered Hanks. "Cool, is he not, D'Arcy?"

"You no have taken dinner, sare," continued the skipper. "I will tell de cook to make dinner ready."

“Not a bad idea, monsieur,” said Hanks. “Which of you chaps is cook?”

The Frenchman pointed to the fellow whose head Jack had nearly broken. He spoke a few words to him, and the man—having got up and stretched himself to ascertain, I suppose, that no bones were broken—dived below, and presently returned with a white cap and apron, and several pans and dishes, and began busying himself in the mysteries of his art. Again he dived, the fire in the forepeak burned up brightly, and savory smells began to ascend therefrom. In about an hour the skipper, with another bow, invited us into his little well-like cabin aft, where a collation, such as an epicure might envy, was placed before us. What were its component parts I did not inquire. They may have been cats and frogs, but neither Hanks nor I were in any way particular, and no dreadful surmises crossed my mind. An Englishman would have broached a keg of brandy, but our friend, Monsieur Didot, placed a bottle of fine-flavoured claret and a variety of first-rate liqueurs before us, not that either Hanks or I was well able to appreciate the former.

“Come, monsieur, hand us out a bottle of some real stuff or other; I’m not fond of your pink vinegars,” exclaimed Hanks, as he tossed off a tumbler of the claret. “This isn’t bad for washing the dust out of a fellow’s throat on a hot day, but there’s no life-blood in it.”

The skipper, with a twinkle of his eyes which betokened mischief, though unfortunately Hanks did not perceive it, produced a large square bottle, thick at the top, from which he poured out a glass of first-rate Scheidam. Hanks smacked his lips as he tasted it.

“Take care, Neil, my child,” said he, “you don’t swallow much of that stuff; it’s too good. I’ll just smack at another glass, and then we’ll go on deck out of the way of temptation.”

The Frenchman looked mightily disappointed when he saw that Hanks was not so easily taken in as he doubtless expected he would be. I happened to look round as we left the cabin, and saw him shrugging his shoulders and making hideous grimaces, and no very complimentary gestures at us. Before this little incident I had thought him the pink of politeness. He wore love-locks and rings in his ears, and was dressed with the most accurate French nautical precision; in fact he looked

thoroughly unlike an English seaman. In his manners he was a very mild man, and certainly he had nothing of the ruffian about him. I cannot say as much for his crew, some of whom were very ill-looking dogs. It would have been wiser in Hanks to have handcuffed them all, including the skipper and cook (though we should thereby have gone without a good dinner), and stationed a sentry with a loaded musket over them, with orders to shoot the first who should attempt to escape.

The French skipper, when he found that his plan to obfuscate the brains of the knowing old Hanks had totally failed, went and sat himself down forward among his people, apparently in a fit of the sulks.

Hanks, who was in high spirits at the success of our enterprise, walked the deck with me, looking out for the high land of the Isle of Wight above the Needle rocks, which we were approaching. The breeze had increased and kicked up a little sea, and we were running fast through the water.

“D’Arcy, my boy, this is a fine haul, isn’t it?” exclaimed my superior, rubbing his hands. “Credit and prize-money together. Both good things. When I was a youngster I thought something about the first; but now, do you see, Mrs Hanks and I have a fancy for t’other. It keeps the pot boiling, do ye see? I should think your uncle, by this time, was much of my way of thinking, though he’s a round number of years younger than I am.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said I. “My uncle thinks a good deal of gaining honour, and I believe he’d rather take an enemy’s frigate after a hard-fought action, than capture a Spanish galleon without a blow.”

“Well, it’s the proper spirit,” said Hanks, with a sigh. “The revenue service don’t nourish it much, though. Take my advice; get out of it as soon as you can; or,” he continued with much feeling, “it will spoil you otherwise, depend on it.”

We continued walking the deck for some time longer. We then sat down to rest, watching the coast, from which we were about three miles distant.

Jack was at the helm, and the rest of our people were giving a hand to the sheets, as the wind had veered a little to the westward.

The smugglers were seemingly fast asleep, with the exception of the skipper, who had lighted a cigar to console himself under his mishap.

Chapter Ten.

The Tables Turned—Console Myself with the Fiddle—Set the Frenchmen Dancing—Captain Didot—My Place of Imprisonment—Escape—Greater Danger—Frighten my Friends.

Everything was going on as tranquilly as possible. Hanks was sweeping the horizon with his glass, looking out for the cutter, when suddenly, without the slightest warning, I saw the sentry's pistol knocked out of his fist, and he himself hove headlong into the sea. Away flew the skipper's cigar, and up he jumped as lively as a cricket, and, with two of his men, threw himself upon Hanks, who, taken unawares (his eyes engaged in his telescope), was bundled overboard. I tried to catch him by the leg, but his old blue trousers tore in my grasp, and a big Frenchman dealt me such a blow on the head that I was for an instant stunned.

When I came to my senses, I saw the wherry dropping astern, and the Frenchmen, with pump-handles and boat-hooks, striking at the poor fellows they had hove overboard, with the foul intent of drowning them. I observed that somebody was in the wherry, for her sails were being hoisted, and I was bolting aft for the purpose of jumping into the water and swimming to her, when the skipper caught me by the arm. "Stay, my little fellow," he exclaimed; "we don't want to hurt you, and don't want witnesses to this work. You must go with us."

While he was speaking, some of the smugglers had got hold of the muskets which our people had brought on board, and presenting them at the wherry, snapped the locks. Fortunately they were not loaded, or the priming had fallen out, and the villains were saved from the perpetration of further crimes.

The men in the water swam towards the wherry, and I judged from her movements that those in her were engaged in picking them up. I sang out and struggled in vain; but the Frenchman held me fast, and finally, to

save himself further trouble, lifted me up by the collar and shoved me down the companion-hatch into the cabin, closing the slide over me. There was I, like a mouse caught in a trap. At first I burst into a fit of tears, more from rage and indignation at being outwitted and surprised by the Frenchman than from the prospect in store for me, which was not, however, very pleasant. I might expect to be kept a prisoner in some out-of-the-way place in France, or perhaps, to be shipped to the other side of the globe and to be unable to return home for years to come. I made ineffectual attempts to get on deck to see what had become of Hanks and our men; but as I could not move the slide, I was obliged to sit down quietly in the cabin. My melting mood was soon over. “Better now,” thought I to myself. “I won’t let these big blackguards of Frenchmen see me down-hearted, any how. For the honour of old Ireland and the name of D’Arcy, I’ll put a bold face on the matter,” and I began to sing.

There was a row on deck, and a great deal of jabbering; and the little vessel heeled over to the breeze; but I had no means of discovering what was taking place, nor where we were going.

The only light let into the vessel was through a bulls-eye in the deck, so that at first I thought I was shut up in darkness. As, however, my sight got accustomed to the glimmer, I discovered a fiddle and bow hung up against the bulkhead.

“Come,” thought I, “I’ll show the froggies that, though they may shut me up, they can’t damp my spirits in a hurry,” and seizing the instrument, I struck up an Irish jig. It was the most jolly tune I could recollect, and seldom failed to move the heels of all who heard it. I played away for some time without any notice being taken of my music; then I heard one fellow begin to shuffle away overhead, and then another, and presently it appeared as if the whole crew were toeing and heeling it in fine style. Then there were loud fits of laughter; and afterwards the slide was withdrawn and the skipper descended into the cabin.

“Vell, you are, *bon garçon*, one merry fellow,” he said, laughing. “You make good use of my violin.”

“I am fond of music, and play when I can,” I answered in an indifferent tone; “but I’m tired now, and intend to go to sleep.”

“Well, but I have come to take you on deck to play to my people,” said he. “They are pleased with you, and it will be better for you if you do.”

“What! you ask me to play for the amusement of the men who have been ill-treating my shipmates, and murdering them, for what I know to the contrary,” I answered, indignantly. “No! I played for my own amusement, and do not intend to play any more.”

“Your shipmates attacked us first; and besides, my little man, we have not murdered them, or done them much harm either, except depriving them of your company, and of a few muskets and pistols,” he answered. “Take my advice: be as obliging as you can; they will be civil to you in return.”

“Well, monsieur, I believe you are right,” I replied. “If they really have not hurt my brother officer and our men, I will fiddle for them as long as they like.”

Saying this, I followed him on deck, where I seated myself on the companion-hatch; and as I played away, in spite of the tumbling of the little vessel in the heavy sea running, all the Frenchmen, including Monsieur Didot, kept skipping, and jumping, and whirling about, hugging each other like bears, and shouting with glee at having saved their cargo from the clutches of the revenue people. We were standing, close-hauled, towards the French coast. I looked anxiously for the wherry, for I thought Hanks would have followed; but she was nowhere in sight. One of the Englishmen was at the helm, and the other two were forward. They were sulky brutes, and seemed much more bitter against me than were the Frenchmen. Whenever I ceased playing, the skipper gave me a hint to go on again; and there sat I, one of His Majesty’s officers, scraping away on an old Cremona for the amusement of a set of smugglers and outlaws. The scene struck me as so ludicrous that I burst into a loud fit of laughter till the tears began to stream down my cheeks. I fiddled all the faster, till the delight of the Frenchmen knew no bounds; and as a proof of their regard, some of them came up and actually almost hugged the breath out of my body, calling me a brave *garçon*, a jolly *garçon* and an ornament to my country. This fun continued till we made the land, about dark. Some time afterwards, I found that we were running into a small harbour, with a pier on one side and a lighthouse on it. Its name I could

not learn; but I supposed it was somewhere to the eastward of Cherbourg. I was trying to make out the look of the place, when the captain, touching me on the shoulder, said, “Go down below, *my boy*; when I want you I will come for you.” There was that in his tone which showed me that it would be useless to dispute his orders; so I returned to the cabin. Finding a berth with some bed-clothes in it, I crept in, and coiling myself away, was soon, fast asleep. I was awoke after some time by the skipper’s voice. He was holding up a lantern, and looking round, seemingly much surprised at not seeing me. He laughed as I poked my head out of my crib.

“Ah, *mon petit*, you make yourself at home wherever you go,” he exclaimed. “But get up; you must come with me, and I will find a worthy lady who will take good care of you for some time to come.”

I answered that I was very much obliged to him, but that I wanted to return home as soon as possible.

“Ah, that cannot be,” said he, in a quiet tone. “I am sorry to inconvenience you; but you will allow that it is better to be kept a prisoner than to have been thrown overboard as food for the fish.”

“Much obliged to you, monsieur,” I replied. “I cannot dispute your reasoning; so just be good enough to tell me what you want me to do.”

“To get up and come with me,” said he; “and listen, my young friend,—if you attempt to run away, I will simply blow your brains out. I don’t wish you any harm, as I have proved; but necessity compels me to be explicit.”

I did not know whether or not he was in earnest; but as it is dangerous to trifle with a man who has the power to put so unpleasant a threat in execution, I thought it wisest to obey him. I accordingly followed him on deck, when he took my hand and led me along a plank which was thrown from the vessel to the shore. We walked through the narrow street of a village odoriferous of fish, and then out into the country, which in agreeable contrast smelt of fresh grass and flowers. Proceeding along a road which, by looking at the stars overhead, I judged ran inland, we reached a farm-house, standing a little back from the road. The smuggler knocked with his fist at the floor, but no one answered, nor was any light

seen through the windows. We waited some further time without receiving any answer to our summons.

“*Morbleu*! I forgot the hour; they have all gone to bed. I must knock again,” said he, giving several thundering blows on the door.

At length a female voice asked who was there.

“It is Captain Didot and a friend; open quick, good Madeleine,” he said in French. “We are tired and hungry and sleepy, and wish to be inside instead of outside your door.”

“Ah! it is you, Monsieur Didot, I know full well,” answered the voice. “I will let you in.”

We were, however, kept some time longer, and at last the door opened, and a young woman made her appearance, dressed in a high white cap and short petticoats, dark woollen stockings, and wooden shoes, but very neat and trim. I had never before seen a woman in so odd a rig. She smiled a welcome to my companion, and shutting the door behind us, a good deal of talking took place; but though I could manage to make out Captain Didot’s French, I did not understand a word she said. We then went into a nice clean parlour, with a red-brick floor, and sat down and talked again. Suddenly, up jumped the lady in the high cap, and after an absence of ten minutes or so, returned with a tray covered with eatables and drinkables. I instinctively drew my chair to the table at the sight without waiting to be bid, whereat our hostess smiled, and observed that the *pauvre enfant* was hungry. Captain Didot took the hint and helped me; nor did he forget himself; and setting to work, we made a very capital supper.

“I must now be off,” observed Monsieur Didot, as he came to an anchor; “but before I go, I must give you a caution, Monsieur Englishman. You are not to make your appearance outside these garden walls for the next fortnight. If you attempt to get away, ill-will come of it. Remember that madame here will take care of you, and you may have as much fruit to eat and wine to drink as you like; and now, good night, my friend. You hear, do you not?”

I did hear; but I was so very sleepy that I could not recollect enough

French to answer him. While he continued talking to madame, I dropped off asleep in my chair, and for long in my dreams I heard the buzz of their voices. When I was at last awoke, by feeling a hand placed on my shoulder, the smuggling captain was gone.

“Come,” said the good-natured woman; “you want rest, my boy;” and taking a candle, she led me into a neat little room with a comfortable bed in it, where I very soon forgot myself in slumber.

The next morning, when I turned out, I found that I was an occupant of a comfortable farm-house, with a garden attached, full of fruit-trees and vegetables. An old man and his wife made their appearance, and I discovered that the young woman who had received us the previous night was their daughter. While we were at breakfast, I heard the old couple complaining of Captain Didot for having brought me there. They evidently fancied that I did not understand French.

“He will be getting us into trouble with his tricks, one of these days,” remarked the old lady. “Ah! Madeleine, my daughter, it would be much wiser in you to have nothing more to say to him.”

Mademoiselle looked very glum, as if she did not like the counsel. I pretended to be deeply absorbed, discussing the fresh eggs and other eatables placed before me.

“Ha, ha!” thought I to myself; “I see how the wind blows. They will not dare, then, to keep me a prisoner longer than I like to stay. Well, I’m very comfortable here at present; so I will spend a day or so with the good people.”

I saw that I was narrowly watched wherever I went; but I did not forget the French skipper’s advice to take advantage of the fine fruit with which the garden abounded. When Madeleine saw that I was apparently contented, we became very good friends; and I must own that I spent the day not unpleasantly. I began, however, to reflect that I had no business to remain where I was if I had the power of getting away; so I turned in my mind how I could best make my escape. I guessed that to do so would not be quite so easy as at first appeared; for I had observed a labourer continually near me, and I remarked that whenever I went to a

distant part of the garden his occupation invariably took him in the same direction.

“Somehow or other I must manage to make a run for it,” thought I to myself; but when I came to examine the locality, I found that the garden was surrounded with fields and ditches; and though I might swim across the latter, I should certainly have been caught and made very uncomfortable and dirty into the bargain. I therefore gave up that idea, and amused myself in the best way I could. I helped Mademoiselle Madeleine in her poultry-yard and dairy, looked in on the old lady employed in her culinary affairs, walked over the farm with the old man, and chatted in my somewhat unintelligible French, with every one I met. Happening to go into my own room in the evening, I found the window open, and looking out, I saw that the height from the sill to the ground was not more than from twelve to fifteen feet.

“Ho, ho!” thought I; “it will be a foolish bird which can’t get out of a cage like this; but I will bide my time.” I hurried away, and ran downstairs, where I was soon after summoned to supper. I made myself quite at home, and did not fail to do justice to the meal. The household went to rest early, and as soon as I fancied every one was asleep I got up from my bed, where I had thrown myself, and reconnoitred the ground. To avoid the risk of laming myself by a jump, I tied my sheets together, and secured them to the leg of a table, which I managed to jam between the shutter and the wall so as to prevent its slipping; and placing my hat tightly on my head, and buttoning up my coat, I let myself quietly down to the ground. I was afraid of awakening some one in the house should I run, as I felt inclined to do; so I crept softly away, till I had got to some distance, and then took to my heels, as fast as I could go, in the direction of the town or fishing village where I had landed. After going for some distance, I thought that I must have missed my way; but the murmur of the water on the beach assured me that I had taken the right direction. At last I found myself among some straggling cottages, my nose helping me to find the locality I was in search of. My first care was to look out for the lugger, to avoid her. Much to my satisfaction, she was not there, neither was any one moving on the quay; so I walked about till I found a shed somewhat less odorous than its neighbours, where I determined to take up my abode till daylight. Here I quickly made myself a nest with some ropes and spars—albeit not a very soft one,—and fell fast asleep. Having

the necessity of being alert on my mind, I awoke just as dawn was breaking, and, jumping up, I ran down to the quay. The flapping of a sail told me that some one was astir, and, looking round, I saw at the end of the quay a cutter preparing to get under weigh.

“Cutter ahoy!” I sung out, running the chance of anybody understanding me. “Where are you bound for?”

“Hillo; who are you?” asked a voice in English.

“I want a cast across the Channel,” I answered.

“Well, come aboard, and we’ll see what we can do for you,” said the same speaker.

I accordingly ran along the quay, and jumped on the cutter’s deck just as her last warp was cast off. I had a rough Flushing coat buttoned up close round me; and as I had on also a low tarpaulin hat, I thought I looked the character I wished to assume. The people on board were likewise too busy to afford me more than a passing glance as I sprung on deck. A rough, weather-beaten old fellow, with one eye, who, from the orders he issued, I knew to be the master, stood at the helm. His crew consisted of seven hands—strong, active-looking fellows,—many more than the craft required to work her. This circumstance at once made me suspect that she was not over honest.

“Faith,” thought I to myself, “this isn’t the best place in the world for a revenue officer to find himself in.”

But it was now too late to get oh shore again. The headsheets were let draw, the main eased off a little, the peak hoisted up, and, with a fair breeze, the cutter glided out of the harbour.

“Well, youngster, you were not long in making up your mind about coming,” said the old skipper, scrutinising me, I thought, pretty narrowly from head to foot. “What place are you bound for, eh?”

I told him Ryde, in the Isle of Wight.

“Well, we’ll put you ashore at the back of the Wight; I suppose that will do

for you?” he answered, in a good-natured tone.

I thanked him for his offer; and we went on talking very amicably for some time, till we had run some fifteen miles from the coast. I think, from the first, the old man had some suspicions of me; but I had acted my part well, and I fancied that I had succeeded in lulling them.

Just as I thought all was right, as ill-luck would have it, I happened to want to use my pocket-handkerchief, and in searching for it I incautiously threw open my jacket and exposed my uniform buttons to view.

In the first place, the sort of boy I pretended to be would not have possessed such an article as a pocket-handkerchief; and I ought to have remembered that the sight of the crown and anchor would not be acceptable to persons of my friends’ vocation.

“Why—hullo, youngster! who are you, I should like to know?” exclaimed the old skipper, seizing me by the arm, and giving me no gentle shake.

“He’s a spy, surely, and no mistake,” cried several of the crew. “Heave the young shrimp overboard.”

“Overboard with him!” exclaimed the rest in chorus. “We’ll teach the Government to send their whelps to hunt us out in this fashion.”

I own that I began to feel very uncomfortable; for the threatening looks of the fellows were in no way calculated to lessen my apprehensions. Now my feelings always prompt me to try and escape from a dilemma by at once candidly confessing the truth. I therefore acknowledged that I belonged to a revenue cutter, and explained what had occurred.

“I only obeyed the orders of my superior officers in attacking the lugger,” I observed, in as bold a tone as I could manage to muster. “Her people carried me off against my will; and, as I wanted to get home, I came aboard you; but I never thought of doing you or any of your friends harm, if I could help it. How am I to blame, then?”

“Never listen to his chaff; heave him overboard, I say,” growled out one of the men.

“Thank you all the same, master,” said I, looking him as boldly as I could in the face; “but I’d rather stay aboard till I can get put decently on shore, and not have to swim there, as you would have me do.”

“Swim! By God, you wouldn’t swim long, I expect,” said the ruffian.

“Faith, I’ve no fancy for trying, either,” I answered. “If I intended treachery, do you think, masters, I should have put myself in your power as I have done? just answer me that.”

“Well, now, I don’t think as how you would,” exclaimed the old skipper. “You’re a brave lad anyhow, and deserve a better calling than trying to injure poor fellows who are just doing their best to make a honest livelihood for their families.”

“Well,” said I, seeing the favourable impression I was making, “I’m going soon to be appointed to a frigate on a foreign station, so there’s little chance of my falling in with you again. If you kill me you will be hung, that’s certain, for murder is always out some day or other.”

“Don’t be coming any of your Irish blarney over us,” growled out a sour-looking ruffian. “If you’re a spy, overboard you go, that’s all.”

“I’m no spy,” I answered in an indignant tone. “All I ask of you is to put me on shore anywhere at the back of the Wight, and I’ll give you my word none of you will be the worse for my being here.”

The skipper gave an approving nod as I pleaded for my life. Some of the ruffians seemed to give way.

“Just tell me, then, what harm can a small chap like me do you?” I continued. “How do I know what you’ve got on board, or what you’re going to do with it. Be good-natured fellows now, and if I can ever do you a good turn, I will.”

“Oh, come, let the little chap alone; there’s no harm in him, I’m sure!” exclaimed one of the smugglers, slapping me on the shoulder. “Cheer up, my lad; we’ll do you no harm.”

The others soon came round, and shaking me by the hand, declared that

I was a brave little cock, and they only wished I was one of them.

A coarse but plentiful dinner was soon afterwards placed on the deck, the chief part of it appearing in a square iron pot, round which we sat as merry as crickets; and there was I hob-nobbing with a band of smugglers as if we were the best friends in the world.

Towards evening we made the land, no cutter being in sight. I had a sovereign and a few shillings in my pocket, which I offered the old skipper, but he would receive nothing; and, as good as his word, as soon as it was dark, he ran in and put me on shore not far from Shanklin. As there was some sea on the beach, all hands got not a little wet, but they took it in good part, and wished me a hearty good-bye as I set off to clamber up the cliffs. I at length found a path which took me into the high road; as soon as I reached it I began to make the best of my way towards Ryde. My legs ached, but I ran and walked as fast as I could. I had not proceeded far when I heard the sound of wheels coming along the road. A cart soon overtook me.

“Is this the road to Ryde?” I asked.

“Yes, it be,” said the driver. “Be you going there?”

“If I can manage to get as far,” I answered.

“Well, if you be tired, jump in, and I’ll gie ye a lift; I be going most of the way,” replied the good Samaritan. I obeyed with alacrity, and took my seat by his side. He was one of the substantial farmers who abound in the island. I gave him an account of my adventures, at which he was much amused; nor did he seem to have any very great antipathy to my smuggling friends.

“Lord bless ’e! they wouldn’t have hurt your little fingers,” he remarked, when I told him how the crew of the cutter had threatened my life. He would not part from me till he had deposited me at the gates of Daisy Cottage. The lights were shining through the drawing-room windows. My aunt was sitting working, and sweet Alice Marlow had a book before her. They both looked very sad, I thought. I tapped at the window, which opened to the ground, to call their attention, and grinned a “How-d’ye-do” through the glass. No sooner did Alice see my face, than letting her book

fall, she gave a loud scream, as if she had seen a spectre.

“Hillo! what’s the matter?” I exclaimed, shaking the handle of the window. “Let me in, aunt, please; I’m not a thief or a ghost, on my word.” My aunt, more courageous than the little girl, had risen from her seat, and my voice assuring her of my identity, she opened the door, and I very soon convinced her and Alice that I was a living being by kissing them both, and then devouring every scrap of supper she set before me. I found that, from Hanks’ report, they had been led to believe that the Frenchmen had knocked me on the head; and were mourning for me accordingly. My aunt was, I verily believe, employed in making a black gown to put on for my sake. My uncle had sailed again to look after the lugger, so that I was able to enjoy the height of a midshipman’s felicity, a holiday on shore. Three days afterwards the *Serpent* came back, having re-captured the lugger and two hundred tubs. I saw Captain Didot, who was very angry at finding that I had escaped, and vowed he would pay me off in a different coin, if he ever caught me again. I told him he might, if he ever did.

Chapter Eleven.

Hanks and my Ghost—Hanks' Learning—Myers again—Escapes once more—Appointed to a Frigate—Prepare for Sea—My Shipmates—Sail from England—Messrs Trundle and Chissel—Dicky Sharpe and a Tale of a Beef-Bone.

On reaching Portsmouth, I took a boat and pulled off to the cutter, which was lying out in the middle of the harbour. Hanks was walking the deck as I came alongside, but something having attracted his attention in the direction of Gosport, he did not observe me. Handing the boatman a shilling, I jumped on board unnoticed, and just as Hanks turned round, I stood before him, with my hand out ready to grasp his. For an instant the colour forsook his cheeks, and he stared at me without speaking, rolling his eyes round as if he saw my wraith.

"Why, Hanks, old fellow! don't you know me?" I exclaimed, bursting into a loud laugh at his extraordinary way of receiving me. My voice convinced him that it was not my ghost which was offering to shake hands with him.

"What, D'Arcy, my boy! is it you, indeed, come back to us after all?" he cried, seizing both my hands in his own well-hardened paws. "I'm glad to see you, that I am, lad; we thought those scoundrel smugglers had done for you. It would have been just like them, to kill the smallest of the lot. But how did you escape? Come, tell us all about it. We've had another brush with that rascal Myers: we are certain it was him. He had the daring to fire into us; killed one of our people, poor Tom Darling, and wounded two, getting off into the bargain. But we will be even with him before long, and when we do catch him, we'll pay him off, that's all. Well I'm glad you escaped, that I am; but come below, and let us hear the whole story."

In this way the kind-hearted fellow ran on. Having been welcomed by Growl, Scriven, and the rest of my shipmates, I went to report myself to my uncle, who was in his cabin. He seemed truly glad to find that I had not become food for fishes, though he did not exhibit his pleasure exactly in the same way Hanks had done. When I was dismissed by him, I dived down into our berth, and there, over a glass of his too-favourite beverage,

old Hanks listened to an account of my adventures. “It was the Cremona did it, after all!” he exclaimed, slapping my shoulder. “I told you it would stand you in good stead. Stick to it, my lad, and you’ll become as great a man as that old chap Orpheus, I’ve heard tell of, who made the beasts jig when he fiddled. Who the gentleman was, I can’t say, except that he was one of Julius Caesar’s generals, wasn’t he?”

I must observe that Hanks’ knowledge of history, both ancient and modern, was somewhat limited and confused; indeed he was impressed with a notion that Julius Caesar, for whom he had a high respect, came over to England somewhere in the last century, and having taken possession of the country, was in his turn thrashed by William the Conqueror. Of all subsequent events till the time of Nelson, he professed total ignorance.

“Ah, Nelson was the chap who made the English!” he used to exclaim in triumph; “and as for Nap, whom they talk so much about, what was he to him, I should like to know. Why, the little Frenchman couldn’t put a ship about in a steady breeze, I’ll warrant; and as for handling her in a gale, I doubt if he could have done it even if his crown depended on it.”

Hanks had no very great respect for science either.

“What do I care for your algebra and your trigonometry?” he one day observed. “I take my John Norie and my Gunter’s Scale, and I work out my day’s work as well as any man; and what more should I want to know, tell me? Your mathematicians are all humbugs in my opinion, and that’s a fact.”

I mention these little traits in Hanks’ character, because I shall now have to bid him farewell for a season. He was a worthy fellow, nevertheless; not without sense of a practical sort; a curious specimen of a school now rapidly becoming obsolete.

Soon after this we were once more on our old cruising ground, to the westward. We had been a week or more knocking about, when it came on to blow very hard from the south-west. My uncle was not a man to be frightened by a capful of wind; so, getting our storm-sails, we stood off shore, and faced the gale like men; for this was just the weather

smugglers would choose to run across Channel, when they think no one will be on the look-out for them. Towards evening, however, it came on to blow harder than before; so that at last we were obliged to up-helm and run for shelter into harbour; but just as we were bearing up, a sea struck the cutter, carried away our stern-boat, and stove in one of those on our quarter. In this squall the wind seemed to have worn itself out; for before we had made the land it suddenly fell, and by daylight a dead calm came on, followed by a dense fog. When it cleared somewhat, we found close to us another revenue cutter. Her commander, Lieutenant Simmons, came on board and told my uncle that he had been directed to cruise in search of the *Kitty* lugger, commanded by the notorious smuggler Bill Myers. “He has been adding wholesale murder to his other performances,” observed the lieutenant. Two weeks ago, a boat from the *Hawk* cutter fell in with him at night. He gave her the stem and cut her in two. Three of her crew climbed up the lugger’s bows, but were instantly knocked on the head and hove overboard. The rest were drowned, with the exception of one who clung to the wreck and was picked up by the cutter the next morning. This account made us more eager than ever to catch Myers. Another cruiser was sent down to assist us in our search; but, though for several weeks we kept a sharp look-out after him, he managed to escape us; and neither he nor the *Kitty* was again heard of on that coast. I was destined, however, to fall in with him again in another clime.

We were not sorry to get back to Portsmouth after all this knocking about. The first person I met on going on shore was Larry Harrigan. He had seen the cutter coming in, and had hurried down to the Point to meet me.

“Oh, Master Neil, I’ve good news for you,” he exclaimed, as I jumped out of the boat and found myself in his arms, for he still looked on me as the baby he had so carefully watched over. “You are no longer to be kept in that tub-hunting service, saving his honour your uncle’s pardon; but you are to go to sea in reality, in a fine, smart frigate, which won’t be letting the grass grow under her keel, I’ll warrant.”

“That’s good news, indeed, Larry; where did you learn it?” I asked.

“From no less a man than the Captain himself, and that’s good authority, you’ll allow,” he answered, in a tone of no little satisfaction. “He’s a friend

of your honoured grandfather's, and was a midshipman and lieutenant on board two ships I served in. He has been lodging in my house for some months back; and when he heard who you were and who had brought you up and given you your sea-learning, says he, 'Larry, you've made a seaman of him, that I'll answer for. The lad shall go along with me when I get a ship, for his grandfather's sake and yours too, old friend.' Those were his last words, Master Neil, they were indeed; and he's kept his promise, as I knew he would."

This very satisfactory information Larry communicated on our way to Southsea. It was confirmed soon afterwards by my uncle, who followed me up to Larry's house. He, as I suspected, had also made an application in my favour, and had just received a letter from Captain Poynder—which was, I found, my future commander's name,—desiring me forthwith to join his ship, the *Harold*, which was, however, still in the hands of the dockyard people. Though I would rather have gone afloat at once, this was, I found, a great advantage, as I had thus an opportunity of seeing her masted, rigged, and fitted for sea. Officers are often glad to shirk this, for it is far from pleasant work, and Portsmouth is not the most delectable of residences. I should advise all midshipmen not to miss an opportunity of seeing a ship fitted out, if they possibly can. They will find it will save them an immense deal of after trouble, and prove the quickest way of gaining a knowledge of their future home. Meantime Larry was as busy as a bee in getting my kit in order, aided by his better half; and few midshipmen ever obtained so good an insight at so cheap a rate. I got leave to run over to Ryde for a couple of days to wish my aunt and young cousins good-bye. I asked after Alice Marlow. I was in hopes of hearing that she was coming back to Ryde, that I might see her before I sailed. I blushed as I mentioned her name, and had a curious palpitation about the region of the heart. My aunt smiled as she replied, "I am afraid, Neil, that I shall not be able to get my young friend to come here again for a long time. Mr Marlow writes me word that he proposes going abroad and taking her with him. But cheer up; she will return here some day, I hope; and when you came back from one of your voyages, you will find her with us, perhaps. I should be, indeed, very sorry if I did not expect to see the dear little girl again."

My aunt was the kindest creature alive; and I was very certain that she regretted that Alice was not there to bid me farewell. I wished her and my

cousins good-bye. They all cried a little, and so, in truth, did I; for they were the only creatures I had to love in the world. I, however, quite recovered my spirits before I got half-way across to Portsmouth. My uncle came several times on board the frigate, and, had I been his own son, he could not have taken more interest in me than he did. As for Larry Harrigan, he was on board every day, and all day long, following me about to show me how everything was done, and why it was done. The first-lieutenant was a very worthy, kind man; and as soon as he had heard Larry's history, he used to talk to him and encourage him to come on board. Greatly to Larry's delight, he gave me leave to spend an evening sometimes at his house, and very pleasant evenings they were. The officers now began to join fast. Lieutenants, mates, and midshipmen were every day arriving. We soon had our full complement of men, and having got clear of the dockyard people, were ready to go out to Spithead.

I was now to turn over a new page in the history of my career. Although I had gained a considerable amount of nautical knowledge, my experience of life was somewhat limited; but henceforth it was to be enlarged and extended, I trusted, over the greater part of the surface of the globe. For the present, the lands of the myrtle and vine were to be our destination—the shores of the Mediterranean; and the man must indeed be difficult to satisfy who is not pleased with their varied and glowing beauties. Our gallant ship; our berth, so long our home; my messmates, as well as our superior officers and men, merit description. I will touch on each of them in their turn. First I will speak of our berth, which was in truth somewhat different to the abodes of the naval heroes of Great Britain of the rank of midshipmen, with which the public are familiar. Few, perhaps, are like it, though after we had been a year or two at sea it had sadly been shorn of its glory. Its brilliancy had departed, and its polish was no more. We happened to have a caterer, who liked to have everything very natty about him, and who had accordingly taken on himself to spend a few pounds in having our berth neatly done up. The bulkheads were painted of a salmon colour; there was a gilt and blue moulding; a neat oilcloth over the table and lockers; and at one end a buffet filled with plated dish-covers and dishes, tumblers and wine-glasses, forks and spoons, and China teacups; while two swing-lamps hung from the deck above. It afforded a contrast, certainly, to the times of the old school, when a purser's dip was stuck in a black bottle, and battered tin cups served

alternately for grog and tea and soup; but though the language of the occupants of our berth was somewhat more refined, and our opinions more liberal, I will venture to say that the spirit to will and to do deeds of daring burnt not the less brightly in our bosoms than in those of midshipmen of former times. While I was at Ryde the ship's company moved out of the old *Topaze*, alongside of which we were lashed, into the frigate; and the day after several mates and midshipmen, with somewhat aristocratic pretensions, joined us. I got a hint, when I came back from Ryde, that they were rather inclined to look down upon me as having been a cutter's midshipman.

"They shan't cut me, at all events," said I to myself. So as soon as I got on board I went below, and taking the fiddle old Hanks had given me, I sat myself down on my chest, and began playing away with all my might a merry Irish jig.

"Hillo; who is the jolly fellow out there?" asked one of the new mates from the berth.

"Oh, that's the Irish midshipman, D'Arcy," answered Onslow, a mate who had sometime joined. "Give us another tune, Paddy, that's a good boy."

On this I forthwith struck up "Saint Patrick's Day in the Morning," and half a dozen other Irish airs.

"If no one objects, I'll sing, too, mates," said I, when I had played out my tunes.

Without waiting for an answer, I locked up my fiddle, and taking my seat at one end of the berth, I trolled out, with a very fair voice, several songs which used to delight old Hanks and my other shipmates in the cutter. The effect was evidently good. I showed my wish to please; and though afterwards a few attempts were made to snub me, I took them all in good humour, as if they were intended as jokes, and finally established myself as a favourite with the mess, and I may, I believe, honestly say, with nearly everybody on board.

As soon as possible we went out to Spithead, and joined a large squadron under command of Sir Peppery Portfire. We mustered altogether some eighteen sail of vessels or more, and a very warlike

appearance we made. We were bound, we knew, for the Mediterranean; and we all looked forward with no little satisfaction to our visit to that most favourite of stations.

Our powder was next taken on board, with a further supply of stores, and more midshipmen. Among the latter, who should climb up the side but my quondam friend Dicky Sharpe. He did not see me, as I was aloft at the time, and before I came on deck, he and his traps had gone below. When my watch on deck was over, I descended to our berth, where I found him busily employed in cramming his new messmates, and endeavouring to raise himself to a high position in their estimation.

“You see, my good fellows, it isn’t everybody has got a Minister for a cousin, and a Lord of the Admiralty for an uncle,” he remarked in a consequential tone, as I got to the door of the berth.

“And I don’t think you have either, Dicky, my boy,” said I, laughing. “But I am very glad to see you, notwithstanding; but don’t be after bamboozling us jolly greens now.”

At first he attempted to look very indignant at the attack made on his veracity; but no sooner did he recognise me than his good feelings got the better of his love of trying to make himself of importance; and jumping up, he seized my hand and wrung it warmly.

“Why, D’Arcy, is it you yourself, indeed?” he exclaimed. “I am delighted to find you here, I am indeed. Why, messmates, if it hadn’t been for D’Arcy I should have been food for fishes; I should, on my word. Think what a loss the service would have had.”

A loud laugh from all hands followed this remark, though I verily believe Dicky spoke in all gravity; but the fact that I had been the means of saving his life thus came out. It raised me, I had afterwards reason to know, in the good opinion of all on board; and Dicky himself gained many friends by the feeling way in which he spoke of it. I was very soon seated alongside him in the berth, and our tongues were rattling away as fast as they could wag.

Dicky’s propensity to brag, amusing as it was to others, was continually getting him into scrapes. We had an old mate, Adam Stallman by name,

who was proportionably as tall, grave, and silent, as Dicky was little, merry, and loquacious.

One day Dicky having thrown a biscuit at me, which, unfortunately, hit Adam's nose, the latter looked at him sternly.

"Sharpe, you are small," he exclaimed; "but cobbing was invented to make midshipmen grow, and I intend to make you grow."

"Then, faith, Stallman, I suspect your mother began cobbing you as soon as you were born," answered the undaunted Dicky.

Adam's hands had been busy under the table with his handkerchief; now, suddenly leaning forward, he grasped Dicky by the crop of the neck, and before he had time to expostulate, he had him in such a position that he could apply with the greatest effect the instrument of torture he had manufactured. As all the oldsters sided with Adam, the youngsters dared not interfere; and poor Dicky was held in that undignified position while other handkerchiefs were knotted, and before he was cast loose he received a cobbing which made him treat ever afterwards all the oldsters with abundant respect. But Dicky, if he did not forget, did what was as wise, he forgave; and I do not think he nourished the slightest ill-will against his cobbers.

Of Captain Poynder I have spoken. He was a worthy man and a good officer; and if he had a fault, it was not being sufficiently strict.

Then comes Johnny Du Pre, our gallant First. I have still an affectionate regard for Johnny, though many an hour have I spent at our masthead at his instigation; while Dicky, promoted by the like authority, was taking sights at me from another. We were sent there not without cause, I own, and still the amount of moral turpitude which gained us that elevated distinction was not such as to make me blush as I think of it, or to make me anxious to conceal it from the public. Neither as a first-lieutenant nor as a man was Lieutenant Du Pre perfect; but who is there with whom one cannot find a fault. He was kind-hearted, a fair seaman, and anxious to do his duty.

But our second lieutenant, Basil Vernon, was still more worthy of notice. Refined and elegant both in person and manners, he appeared, at first

sight, to be what is called a fine gentleman; but kind-hearted, brave, and generous almost to a fault, a first-rate seaman and officer, a better fellow never stepped, nor one more beloved by all classes afloat, as well as by all who knew him on shore. I soon became very much attached to him, and would have gone round the world to do him a service. Many times did he save me from punishment when I specially deserved it. He was indeed very far from being one of those fine fellows whom no ordinary mortals can approach; for he had a heart tender as a woman's, and he would as readily sympathise with the grief of the smallest middy, as with the sorrow or suffering of the roughest tar on board. He was a sincere Christian too, and, what was more, was not ashamed of his Christianity. He exhibited his principles in his practice—in the daily duties of life,—till he taught the most profane and profligate to respect him, if not to adopt them. I wish there were more Basil Vernons in the service. Thank Heaven! there are some shining lights to lighten us in our darkness—leaven, which gradually, though slowly, may, by God's providence, leaven the whole mass.

Our third lieutenant, Hugh Summers, wrote poetry, talked sentiment, and dreamed dreams, and required a flapper to remind him when to put the ship about at times; but when once aroused into action, he was as energetic as any one, and had plenty of resources on an emergency.

The master, surgeon, and purser, were also very good fellows in their way, and if not shining ornaments, were no disgrace to His Majesty's service.

At last the pay-clerks came on board, and paid the ship's company. A fine bright morning saw the signal flying from the admiral's ship for the fleet to weigh and work out to Saint Helen's. There was a nice working breeze, a blue sky, and the water just rippled enough to reflect with more dazzling splendour the rays of the glorious sun, as he shed them almost along the path we were to pursue. It was, in truth, a beautiful sight; and considering the number of ships—some eighteen sail or more, all beating out together within so narrow a channel,—it was surprising that much damage was not done, especially when it is remembered that the crews of half the ships had never been to sea before, and that the ropes were stiff and new, and did not work well. One ship, I believe, carried away her flying jib-boom against the stern of another; and with that slight loss, and

a small expenditure of abuse from the respective crews, who thought each other to blame, we reached Saint Helen's. The next day we were fairly off to sea; the fleet formed in two lines, the White and the Blue Squadrons, which Sir Peppery manoeuvred with much skill, to the no small trouble of the signal midshipmen. The second day, Ned Lenny, the young gentleman on board the *Harold* who held that office, vowed he must leave the service and go into the Dragoons, if it was to be carried on in that way; though the following morning he thought better of it. He gained, however, the *sobriquet* of the Heavy, which, as he was a cocksparrow of a fellow, he retained ever afterwards. Captain Poynder was not inclined to save either officers or crew till we got into good order, which we accordingly did our best to accomplish.

After cruising for six weeks, we were ordered to Spithead to complete our provisions, water, and stores; and then, having taken some passengers on board, made all sail for our station in Mediterranean.

We had not been long at sea when Dicky and I, wearying of the daily routine of duty, began to play pranks which were calculated to bring us into trouble. The boatswain, who rejoiced in the name of Timotheus Trundle, was one of the most extraordinary of his class, though not a bad boatswain for all that. His appearance in foul weather was that of a short lump of big coats and trousers, with a small red pumpkin growing out of them. On a nearer approach, one discovered in the said pumpkin a pair of red, ferrety eyes, an excrescence for a nose, and a hole into which his whistle fitted for a mouth, and on either side of it, on a Sunday morning, two very high shirt-collars, they towards the end of the week gaining a darker hue and an outward curve. On the top of the pumpkin was a round Spanish hat, the fluff of the catskin which composed it being long enough to make a dozen beavers. He wore, with considerable pride, round his neck a handsome silver call and chain. But with all his oddities, his enemies—and he had a few—were obliged to confess that he knew and did his duty as well as any man in the ship. Among his other qualifications, he was a bit of a sea-lawyer; not of the cantankerous sort, however, for it might be more justly said that he preferred sitting on the judicial bench, and he was ever ready to settle all disputes either by arbitration or the rope's-end; indeed, in most cases he had recourse to the latter, as being the most summary mode of proceeding. When his duty did not require his presence on his own territory, the forecastle, he

was fond of taking a walk on the main-deck, alongside the carpenter's bench, for he was of a social disposition, and delighted in what he called 'rasheral' conversation.

Now, Ichabod Chissel, our carpenter, was another of those heroes of the tongue, who pretend to know everything, and never fail in a story for want of a little invention. By his own crew, who looked up to him and esteemed him for his sterling qualities, he was considered a first-rate politician. The two officers were tolerably good friends in general; but a very slight thing would make them fall out, though they as speedily patched up their quarrels again.

One day there was a light breeze and a smooth sea, and Trundle, not expecting to be wanted, had repaired to the main-deck, where Chissel was superintending his crew at work. Dicky Sharpe and I happened to be near, and observing that they were both more than usually excited, we drew closer to see the fun going forward.

"Well, that was a storm as fierce as ever I did see," remarked Chissel. "Why, there was a thunderbolt as big as six of my fists put together, fell right through the decks, and out through the ship's bottom; and if I hadn't been there to plug the hole, we should all have gone to Davy Jones' locker, as sure as fate. You was there, Trundle, and you know, old ship, that I speak true."

"I was there! Yes; but I know you speak a hanged lie, if you say that," exclaimed Trundle.

"What's that you say?" shouted Chissel, highly indignant at being told he lied before all his crew, though he doubtless would have cared very little about the matter, had the polite remark been made when the two were alone.

Just then Mr Summers, who was the officer of the watch, sung out, "Hands about ship! Where's the boatswain?"

"Never in his station," observed Chissel, as Trundle, call in mouth, was making his way forward. "And very little use when he is there," he added, either thinking the boatswain would not hear him, or caring very little if he did.

Trundle caught the words just as he was going up the fore-ladder, and though he could not just then take his pipe from his mouth to utter a retort, he gave a fierce look with one of his ferrety eyes, which showed that he acknowledged himself deeply in his messmate's debt. His pipe sounded more shrill than usual, as he could not give any other vent to his feelings.

"There'll be a row before long between those two heroes, just you mark that," said I to Dicky, as we both hurried off to our stations.

"Ay," said he, giving me a wink; "and I think I can put a spoke in their wheel to help them along."

It was near twelve o'clock, the ship being put about, the decks cleared up, and grog served out preparatory to dinner, when the boatswain made his appearance before the carpenter, his anger in no way appeased.

"What's that you were saying about me, Mr Ichabod Chissel, I should like to know?" he exclaimed, in an irate tone.

"Why, Mr Trundle, no man likes to have his ferocity (veracity?) doubted, and if you goes for to affirm that I'm a liar—I don't mince matters, you'll understand me,—why, all I've got to say is, that you're the biggest speaker of untruths as ever was born, whoever the mother was who got you. Put that in your pipe, Mr Trundle, and smoke it."

This most insulting of all remarks increased tenfold the boatswain's rage, and the two would have come instantly to fisticuffs, but that, fortunately, at that moment the order to pipe to dinner was given. The boatswain's call came into requisition, and all hands, except the watch on deck, were soon busily employed in discussing the contents of a cask of beef, boasting of but a small proportion of fat or lean and a considerable superfluity of bone.

Now it happened to be Dicky Sharpe's watch on deck while dinner was going on, and at one o'clock, being relieved, he came down to his own repast, which he was not long in discussing. While he sat turning a large rib-bone over and over, in disgust at finding so little meat on it, and waiting for the boy to clear away, the boatswain, whose cabin could be seen from the berth on the larboard side, roused up from a nap, and

began to contemplate his visage in his glass, to discover if he looked in any way as if he had been asleep. It must be understood that it is contrary to the principles of a boatswain worthy of the rank ever to require sleep. He would consider himself disgraced in the eyes of the whole crew, if he were caught taking a wink. A regular-built boatswain is often on deck from half-past three in the morning till eleven at night, and should it be bad weather, or from any other cause, frequently two or three times during the night also; and as to his cabin, he merely looks in occasionally and keeps his donnage there.

Now, to do him justice, Trundle was a thoroughgoing boatswain. While he was rubbing his eyes, to get the sleepiness out of them, pulling up his shirt-collar, and brushing back his hair, the demon of mischief put a thought into Dicky Sharpe's head. To conceive, with Dicky, was to execute. I happened to be descending from the main-deck, when I saw Dicky standing at the door of the berth, with the rib-bone in hand, and a wicked look in his eye. I instantly perceived the state of affairs, and divined what was to happen. Away flew the bone across the deck, with so good an aim that it made a cannon against the boatswain's nose and his glass, breaking both one and the other with a loud crash, which was followed by a volley of oaths. The steerage of a frigate, even when a sunbeam penetrates through a scuttle, is not over and above brilliantly lighted; and on the present occasion a purser's dip here and there just enabled us to grope our way about the deck. Now it happened that the carpenter at that moment was coming out of his berth, which was nearly opposite the boatswain's.

"Oh! you blessed Chissel; I saw you heave that, you aggrawating so-and-so," exclaimed Trundle, in a towering rage, exhibiting his bleeding nose and broken glass.

"I never hove anything, and that you know, you so-and-so," answered Ichabod, drawing near to his adversary.

"You did, though, you so-and-so," cried Trundle, doubling his fist, and dealing Ichabod a hit on the eye which almost stove it in.

The blow was given back, and returned with interest, with expressions not fit for ears polite, till the noses of both heroes were streaming with

blood, and their voices were hallooing away at the highest pitch. Dicky was rubbing his hands in high glee at the successful result of his experiment, when the captain, aroused by the hubbub, rang his bell to know what was the matter. This sound, like that of Oberon's magic horn, instantly paralysed the combatants; and the sentry having put his head into the cabin, and made some report which apparently satisfied the skipper, the two warriors, like a couple of lions growling defiance at each other, retired to their berths, to staunch their bleeding wounds, and wash away the stains of the fight from their faces.

Here the first thing which met the eye of the boatswain, as he stooped to pick up the fragments of his glass, was the missile which had inflicted the injury. Now, as the officers generally choose the long ribs of beef for roasting, for which they pay one pound in six for the good of the ship's company, and the boatswain had actually seen the carpenter's servant carrying a piece of rib-beef for his master's dinner, he felt perfectly satisfied who had thrown the bone. Seizing it, therefore, in his hand, with the fragments of his glass, and his nose still bleeding, he rushed on deck, and halted, quivering with rage, on the quarter-deck, in presence of the first-lieutenant.

"By Jupiter, what a wigging I shall get," whispered Dicky, in a terrible funk. "I say, D'Arcy, my boy, don't 'peach, though."

I cocked my eye, and, pointing to the masthead,—"Six hours a day for the next week, eh!—pleasant, Dicky," I answered.

Master Dicky dared not show his face, lest his consciousness of guilt might betray itself; for, though unable to resist doing a piece of mischief when the temptation came in his way, he had not got the brazen front of a hardened sinner. I also, anxious as I was to learn the result of the trial, was afraid of showing too great an interest in it, lest suspicion should fall on me, and therefore walked the quarter-deck at a respectful distance, picking up what information I could on the way.

"What is this you have to complain of, Mr Trundle?" asked the first-lieutenant, as he stood at the capstern-head, with the enraged boatswain before him.

“Why, sir, as I was a-cleaning myself just now in my cabin, a-thinking no harm of nobody, Mr Ichabod Chissel, the carpenter of this here ship, sir, and my brother officer, thinks fit to heave this here rib-bone right across the steerage against my nose and my glass, and breaks both on ’em. If that ain’t enough to aggrawate and perwoke and—and—and—(he stopped for a word) flabbergast any one, I don’t know what is, sir, you’ll allow.”

“Very much so, I grant,” observed Mr Du Pre, taking the bone between his fingers and holding it behind his back. “Send Mr Chissel here.”

The carpenter soon made his appearance.

“Pray, Mr Chissel, what part of the meat had you for your dinner, to-day?” asked Mr Du Pre.

“The tail, sir,” said the carpenter.

“What became of the bone after dinner?” asked the first-lieutenant.

“The boy cleared it away with the rest of the things, sir,” was the answer.

“Let the boy be sent for,” said Mr Du Pre.

Bobby Smudge soon came rolling along, hitching up his trousers as he approached the capstern.

There was a wicked look in the young rascal’s eye, which made me suspect he knew all about the matter. He was the most complete little Pickle in the ship, and was continually getting punished, and most deservedly too, by his master. The very day before, the carpenter had reported him, and he had got eleven finnams on the hand for having, in conveying Mr Chissel’s grog from the tub to his cabin, being detected in the very act of taking a hatchway nip—the said hatchway nip, let it be understood, being a sip snatched furtively by the bearer of a glass of grog on the ladder descending from the main to the lower deck. A finnam, I must also explain, is a blow inflicted on the hand, with a cane generally, by the master-at-arms or the ship’s corporal. To the said finnams poor Bobby Smudge’s black paws were well accustomed.

“Boy, what was done with the bone after your master’s dinner?” asked Mr Du Pre, in a severe tone.

“I’m sure I don’t know, sir,” replied Bobby Smudge, in a long drawl, worthy of a London professional street-beggar.

“Should you know it again if you saw it?” asked the first-lieutenant.

“Oh yes, sir; I’m sure I should,” replied Master Smudge, brightening up and looking the picture of innocent simplicity.

“Well, my boy, what do you say to this?” said Mr Du Pre, producing the bone from behind his back.

All eyes turned towards Bobby Smudge: the carpenter’s fate hung on his decision. The young monkey felt his importance, and determined to exert it. Chissel knew it was the very sort of bone he had scraped not an hour before. Bobby took it, and, turning it round, examined it narrowly.

“Oh yes, sir; I’ll swear to it, that I will,” he exclaimed, holding up his blistered hand behind his back so that the carpenter might observe it. “As I was a-trying to get my dinner off it, I notched it with my knife, I knowed I did, ’cause there was so little meat on it.”

“Oh, you wretched young liar,” muttered the carpenter, for he dared not speak aloud; “won’t I pay you off, that’s all?”

The boy heard him, and gave a grin of defiance.

“Mr Chissel, go to your cabin, and consider yourself under arrest,” said the first-lieutenant; “I must report this affair to the captain. The discipline of the ship cannot be thus trifled with; and officers especially, who ought to know better, must not be allowed to set the men so bad an example with impunity.”

Saying this, Mr Du Pre resumed his walk on the quarter-deck, and I hurried down to report what had occurred, to my chum Dicky. At first he was highly delighted at having escaped detection.

“Stop a bit, Dicky,” said I; “I don’t think you are quite out of the fire yet. It

will never do to let the carpenter be disrated or dismissed the ship for conduct of which he is innocent. The truth must come out; and, to my mind, honesty is the best policy."

"Well, but don't you see, D'Arcy, I shall get mast-headed and have my leave stopped, and I don't know what else—all for shying a bone across the steerage," argued Dicky. "What business had the boatswain and carpenter to hit each other, I should like to know. If that stupid Trundle had taken the joke in good part, there wouldn't have been all this row."

I laughed outright at Master Richard's style of reasoning.

"That argument won't stand good with the skipper," said I. "Now, come, let me do the only thing which can set matters to rights; because it is the right thing. I'm a bit of a favourite with Mr Du Pre, I suspect; and I'll go up to him at once, and tell him the truth. If anything can get you off, that will; and if the affair reaches the ears of the captain, there will be a very serious row, I'm certain."

At last Dicky consented to my plan, and without waiting to let him change his mind, I went on deck, where I found the first-lieutenant.

"I've got something to say about that beef-bone, sir," I began.

"What's that, Mr D'Arcy," he exclaimed, turning sharp round. "When am I to hear the last of that beef-bone?"

"Why, sir, it wasn't the carpenter threw it, but one of the midshipmen; he couldn't help it, though. No one could, I'm sure," I rapped out.

"Why, Master D'Arcy, I verily believe you're the culprit," he exclaimed, looking at me steadfastly.

I detected, however, a smile in his eye, which showed that his anger was not very serious; so I at once told him exactly how the matter had occurred, and that Dicky had begged me to come and confess the truth and intercede for him. Master Sharpe was therefore sent for; and having been severely reprimanded, was told that as soon as we got into harbour his leave would be stopped, and was then ordered to the masthead for a couple of hours, to sit there instead of on the stool of repentance. The

carpenter was released from arrest, on condition that he should keep the peace. The boatswain's nose mended in the course of a few days; and though reminded of the outrage every time he attempted to shave before his broken bit of looking-glass, he and Chissel soon patched up their quarrel and resumed their former intimacy. The person who fared worst was Bobby Smudge, who, never a favourite with his master, now obtained a double allowance of finnams, and a sly rope's-ending whenever opportunities offered. Bobby began to discover that revenge, though sweet, may recoil on the head of the avenger, and become very bitter. More ultimately came out of the beef-bone affair.

Chapter Twelve.

Reach the Mediterranean—Malta—A Ride on Shore—A Ball—A Heroine—Our Partners—Mr Nip and his Partner—An Odd Egg Hatched—Adam Stallman's Advice—The Right Thing the Best Thing.

Nothing of importance occurred that I remember during our passage across the Bay of Biscay. We had the usual heavy swells (though I have found it as level as a fish-pond), a stiffish breeze for a day or so, which gave us a cheery shove on our way, and light and variable winds and calms, which latter let us roll till our yard-arms almost touched the water, and effectually turned the landsmen inside out. Ten days after leaving Plymouth, we were in the latitude of Lisbon. It was early morning, and the land we were approaching was shrouded to common eyes by a soft silvery haze, which allowed only a circle of blue sea to be perceived round the ship, and a patch of about the same size of clear sky overhead. On the larboard bow was perceived a darker mass of mist, which after some time resolved itself into the well-known form of the Rock of Lisbon. The wind being light and variable, we drew very gradually inshore, till the mist suddenly lifting, as if at the command of a magician, disclosed to us the splendid and fantastic scenery of those rocky heights, as they rose proudly from the glittering ocean, which was dotted with numerous sails of fishing-boats and coasters, and here and there the canvas of some loftier merchantmen, making for the mouth of the Tagus. On the lower land, to the north of the Rock, was seen the royal palace of Mafra—a

curious huge pile, imposing from its height and the large extent of ground it covers. I do not, however, intend to bother my readers with accounts of places and scenery, which they may find much better described in numberless books of voyages and travels. The wind freshening and coming fair, we continued our course, and, passing the Capes of Ortegal and Finisterre on the second day after leaving the Rock, were off Cape Saint Vincent, immortalised in naval memories by Sir John Jervis' great action, and since then, by the way, by a very pretty bit of fighting under Charlie Napier, when he took possession of Don Miguel's fleet with one half its size. Cape Trafalgar next came in sight, and was eagerly viewed by all hands, for, often as one may gaze on its dark blue cliffs, the deep interest they inspire can never fail; one is reminded that in their neighbourhood the glorious navy of England, under the greatest of its chiefs, secured the freedom of the world, and struck the blow which stopped the victor of continental Europe in his wild career of conquest. Peace to the names of England's gallant defenders, who died for their country off Trafalgar's Cape! and sacred be the memory of the immortal Nelson, our meteor-flag of victory!—But, little Neil D'Arcy, where are you steering for? Has the sight of Trafalgar made you fancy you can do a bit of fine writing? Just get back, boy, to your usual style, and leave such attempts to the pens of novelists and travellers.

It was near nightfall when we made the Rock of Gibraltar; and as we passed through the Straits when I was snug below in my hammock, my journal contains no description of that wonderful fortress. When the morning dawned, the high mountains of Spain were just visible in the horizon; and the next land we sighted was the coast of Barbary, somewhere to the westward of Tunis. Six days after that we were in sight of Sicily, when, after hauling off the coast, a gale sprung up, and such thick and cloudy weather came on, that we could take no observations. The ship was therefore hove-to; and while sail was being taken off her I got an ugly fall, which laid me up in my hammock for several days. During my illness, Dicky Sharpe was constantly with me, whenever he was off duty, and we became greater friends than ever.

"Do you know, D'Arcy, I am really very much obliged to you for having got me so well out of that scrape with the boatswain and the beef-bone!" he said to me in a tone of confidence one day, after we had reached Valetta harbour. "I have not ventured to ask Mr Du Pre leave to go on shore. Do

you think he would give it me?”

“I rather think not, Dicky,” said I. “Don’t say a word about it for some time to come, and then you can begin to look dull and melancholy, and to pine for the shore; and perhaps his heart will soften with compassion, and he will give you leave.”

“Capital advice! Won’t I look melancholy, that’s all, when the time comes?” he exclaimed. “How soon ought I to begin?”

“Not till I’m well and can go on shore to look after you,” I answered.

The fact was, I wanted Dicky’s company when I could go on shore myself, which the surgeon told me I might do in a few days; and when asking for myself, I intended putting in a word with Mr Du Pre in his favour. When I crawled on deck I found the ship had taken up her moorings in Dockyard Creek, a branch of the Grand Harbour, from which it runs at right angles, on the opposite side to Valetta. Most deservedly is the Grand Harbour so called, for in beauty, size, and security it is unsurpassed; and it is singular that it should exist in an island of dimensions so limited. Malta has an individuality of its own. It is like no other spot in the world; and when one looks at the magnificent lines of batteries, bristling with cannon, and the mass of churches, monasteries, and houses, which towers above them, one can scarcely believe that the whole has been hewn out of the solid rock of which the island is composed. But I am not going to describe Malta. In three or four days more I was quite well, and having succeeded in obtaining leave from Mr Du Pre for Dicky to accompany me on shore, we landed at the Nix Mangiare steps, and took our way through the town. The first thing we did was to hire horses to take a ride into the country. Both of us could stick on pretty well (what midshipman cannot?); but as for science, we had none of it. At first we trotted on gaily enough, and then our horses broke into a gallop, which we enjoyed very much.

“Capital goers, these!” exclaimed Dicky. “If they keep up at this rate, I vote we take a regular circuit of the island.”

“Faith, then, I’m ready for that same,” said I; and on we galloped.

So delighted were we at the way our steeds went, that we sat the saddles

and held our reins rather loosely. On a sudden they both came to a full stop, and up simultaneously went their heels in the air. Over their heads we flew, and alighted some dozen yards off; while the well-trained beasts, with neighs of derision which were truly provoking, galloped back to their stables, leaving us to find our way into Valetta as best we could. By-the-bye, the horse-master had taken very good care to get paid first. Dicky sat up on the ground and rubbed his head, to discover if it was broken. I followed his example, and finding no bones dislocated, my spirits rose again. We looked at each other, when there appeared something so ludicrously forlorn in the expression of our countenances, that we both burst out into fits of laughter. We indulged in our mirth for some time, and then got up and commenced our walk back into the town. Fortunately we had not got any very great distance from the walls, so the walk was easy of accomplishment. We had proceeded about a mile or so, when two midshipmen hove in sight, galloping along in high glee on the very horses which had just disburdened themselves of us.

“Hillo! you fellows, those are our horses,” sang out Dicky; “just get off now, will you?”

But he might as well have called a whirlwind to halt; for helter-skelter, past us they dashed, without minding us a bit. Dicky was highly indignant.

“Well, I never was so treated in my life!” he exclaimed.

“Wait a bit,” said I; for I had a shrewd suspicion that the horses would play their present riders the same trick they had served us; and sure enough, in about ten minutes, we heard a clattering of hoofs behind us, and, looking round, saw the knowing old steeds coming, galloping along by themselves.

“Now, now’s the time, Dicky,” I sang out. “You catch one and I’ll catch the other, and we’ll still have our ride out. The horses are ours, there’s no doubt of it.”

Sooner said, however, than done. The beasts came on very steadily till they got close to us, and then they began rearing and frisking, and kicking up such a dust that it was impossible to catch hold of their bridles; and, it must be confessed, we were glad enough to get out of their way

without being trampled over.

“Where are the brutes?” I asked, feeling very foolish.

“Where are they?” echoed Dicky, looking the same. “There they go, as steady as cart-horses. Hang it! they knew we were midshipmen.”

Our only satisfaction was to see a third set of riders come out on the same brutes, and to be able to laugh in our sleeves, while we wished them a pleasant ride across the island. What became of all the riders I don’t know. The steeds again passed us just before we reached the gates.—Three or four evenings after this, the officers of the ship were asked to a ball, and the captain took Dicky and me. We did not know anybody, and were hard up for partners, till the skipper introduced us each to a Maltese girl. They were both very short, though that was a fault on the right side; but they were also very fat and very dark, and could not speak a word of English; and one squinted, and the other had lost an eye. Their noses turned up, and their lips were thick and large. They were not beauties, certainly; but we danced with them all the evening, changing every now and then for variety, though I had to look hard to make out which was my original partner, as I only knew them apart by the defect in their eyes. Dicky asked me if I didn’t think them as pretty as Alice Marlow, at which I very nearly knocked him down in the ball-room. But he appeased me by assuring me with the greatest gravity, that he admired the squinting one very much, and should certainly, if he were older, make her Mrs Sharpe. He did nothing but talk about her for two days afterwards; and, as we did not know her real name, we called her Miss Smaitch, which, though not euphonious, did as well as any other. On the third day he dined with an officer in the dockyard who had a numerous family of daughters, to one of whom he transferred his affections, and they remained steady for nearly a week, about which time we left Malta. To return to the ball, however. When Dicky and I were not dancing, we amused ourselves by watching what was going forward, especially in observing the occupations of our superior officers.

“I say, D’Arcy, who is that young lady Mr Vernon is dancing with, I wonder? She is a stunner, isn’t she, my boy?” said Dicky, sidling up to me, and pointing with his chin towards a very beautiful girl, to whom our second lieutenant had just then given his hand, and was leading up to

form a quadrille.

There was a roseate blush on her cheek, and a brightening glance in her eye, as she looked up at the gallant officer, which betokened more than ordinary satisfaction at being chosen his partner in the dance. The colour increased, and the eyes brightened still more, while a smile played round her ruby lips, as Mr Vernon uttered, in a low tone, a few words in her ear.

Dicky observed it. “I twig something there,” he whispered. “What will you bet me, D’Arcy, that Mr Vernon doesn’t splice that same young lady, now? It’s a regular case, depend on it. I thought there was something going on, he’s been so constantly on shore since we came into harbour. He’s a right good fellow, and I wish him joy.”

“I hope, if it is a case, that he’ll not marry till the ship is out of commission,” I remarked. “I should be sorry indeed to lose him. But we must not talk so loud, or we shall be overheard.”

Just then the captain came up, to make Dicky dance with Miss Smaitch. I was left alone to watch proceedings. From what I saw, I was fully convinced that Master Sharpe’s conjectures were well founded, and that Mr Vernon and the fair unknown were certainly deeply in love with each other, and most probably engaged. She certainly, as far as I could judge from mere appearance, was well worthy the love of any man. Young as I was, she made a deep impression on me; and even at this distance of time I can bring her Hebe-like figure before me, with almost the vivid colours of reality. She was not tall, but her figure was full of grace and life. Her complexion was beautifully fair; her eyes were blue; and the expression of her countenance was soft, feminine, and full of sweetness; at the same time, the arch smile which occasionally played over it showed that she was not destitute of sense and wit.

While I was looking on, I was joined by Adam Stallman, one of the senior mates of the *Harold*. I have slightly mentioned him before. He was of a somewhat grave and taciturn disposition, but generous and kind, and as brave and honourable as any knight *sans peur et sans reproche*. He read much and thought more, and was ready to give good advice when asked for it; but innate modesty prevented him from volunteering to afford it, except on rare occasions, when he saw that it was absolutely necessary

to preserve a person from following a path which might lead him to ruin.

Dicky and I were favourites of his; for though he kept us in order, and more than once had inflicted a sound cobbing on my chum (certainly well deserved), he was very kind to us.

“I say, Stallman, can you tell me who the young lady is with whom Mr Vernon is dancing?” said I.

“Why do you ask?” he inquired.

“Because she is very beautiful,” I replied.

The colour heightened on his generally impassive, well-bronzed features, as his eye fell on the lady whom I indicated. “Yes,” he answered, with a firm voice, “that lady is Miss Blanche Norman, the daughter of Major Norman, who is out here for his health. But wouldn’t you like to dance, youngster?”

I told him that I had been engaged by the captain to dance with Miss Smaitch Number 2.

“Well, come to me if you want a partner,” he said, and moved on.

I saw him soon afterwards go up and shake hands with Miss Norman. His lip momentarily quivered, I saw; but his countenance otherwise remained firm. She received him as an old acquaintance, and seemed glad to see him.

I took it into my head that Adam was in love with her, or had been; but that, as he had little besides his pay to depend on, he could not indulge a dream of marrying. From what I afterwards learned, I was right in this conjecture. Poor fellow! he had loved her well and deeply, but he had never told his love. She might have suspected his attachment, but with the tact and delicacy of a right-minded woman, she did not allow him to discover that she did so, but endeavoured, by the frank kindness of her words and manner, to take away the bitterness from the wound she was inflicting. I do not mean to say, however, that at the time I knew this, but I made a pretty shrewd guess at the truth.

In a little time Dicky came hurrying up to me with a look full of importance.

“I say, D’Arcy, I’ve found out all about it. I heard our medico tell Old Nip (meaning the purser) that Vernon proposed a few days ago to Miss Norman, and was accepted; so they are regularly engaged, you know, and he has a right to dance with her as often as he likes. What fun for him! I know that I should like to be in his place. That’s her father: not the tall man with the white hair, but the shorter one next him. He looks almost too young to be her father, doesn’t he? Perhaps his being ill makes him look so. They are soon going home; but they are to stop at Gibraltar, so the doctor says.”

“I am afraid you’ve been an eavesdropper, Dicky, to hear all this,” I observed; “and that, you know, is not a very creditable character.”

“I know that as well as you do,” he answered; “but I could not help myself, for I was jammed up in the refreshment room between two fat Maltese ladies and the supper-table, and I couldn’t have moved without the risk of staving in their sides with my elbows. Old Nip and the medico were on the other side of them, sipping their negus, and didn’t see me.”

“That’s all right; and small blame to you, Dicky,” said I. “Well, I heartily wish Mr Vernon joy; and if his love don’t run smooth, and he ever wants a helping hand, I only hope he’ll let me give it him.”

“There’s nothing I should like better too, independent of my regard for Mr Vernon,” observed Dicky, pompously.

I remember that we long discussed the probabilities of Mr Vernon’s requiring our services; and we came to the conclusion that, though we should be delighted to help him to obtain the lady’s hand in any way he might require, in principle the running away with a lady was decidedly wrong.

The subject was changed by our seeing the purser lead out one of the fat ladies, behind whom Dicky had been hid, to attempt a waltz. Never was there a more extraordinary performance. Neither of them had a notion of the dance. They floundered and flolloped, and twisted and turned, and tumbled against all the other couples, till they spread consternation

around; and at last found themselves the sole performers in the room. As poor Nip went twirling round, much in the way that a child's humming-top does when it begins to stagger preparatory to stopping, he perceived a suppressed laugh on the lips and in the eyes of the surrounding spectators; and suspecting that he might be the cause of it, gave a convulsive gripe at his partner's waist, or at the part where her waist should be, in order to bring himself to an anchor. The effort was too great for his powers, and both he and she came with a run to the floor, close to where Dicky and I were standing. There they kicked and struggled in vain efforts to rise. At this Dicky could no longer contain himself, but, regardless of the purser's anger, burst into a loud fit of laughter. However, we ran forward to do our best to get the hero and heroine on their legs again, though we were too much convulsed to be of much assistance.

"I'll pay you off for this, Master Sharpe," whispered the purser, looking up fiercely.

"I couldn't help it, indeed I could not," answered Dicky in an apologetic tone; "you did look so funny."

"I'll wring your ears off, you young puppy," cried poor Nip, rising and shaking himself, in his rage forgetting the fair sharer of his misfortune.

"Look to your partner, Mr Cheesnip," said Captain Poynder, coming up, and guessing the cause of the purser's anger. "Here, Sharpe, help me to put the lady on her legs."

By some pulling and hauling, and by others shoving behind, we got Madame Cheesnip, as we ever after called her, into a perpendicular position; but she was too much shaken to dance again, especially with the cause of her misfortune. Indeed, for the rest of the evening the ladies fought very shy of poor Nip, and we took good care to keep out of his way. Dicky and I stayed to the last, spending our time very satisfactorily between our two partners and the refreshment and supper rooms; and I am afraid to mention the vast amount of sandwiches, cakes, and bonbons which Dicky consumed, washed down by cups of coffee, lemonade, and negus. At length, when nearly everybody was gone, with the exception of a few other midshipmen, and the musicians could no longer wag their bows, we deemed it time also to retire. We had got leave

to stay on shore, but it just then occurred to us that we had forgot to order our beds.

“Never mind,” said Dicky; “we are certain to find them at some hotel or other.”

As we were putting on our cloaks, we found that there were five or six more midshipmen belonging to other ships in the same predicament as ourselves. To get beds at that hour of the morning, we discovered was not so easy, as all the Hotels, from some cause or other, were full. We hunted about for some time, and were proposing trying to get on board our ships,—though Dicky Sharpe declared he should take up his berth inside one of the casks generally found down on the shore of the harbour, with their heads off; but we advised him not, as they are the usual abode of the beggar boys who infest Nix Mangiare stairs, and would be apt to have more inhabitants than one,—when some of the party who were on ahead, shouted out that they had found as cozy a place of shelter as they could wish. We were in the upper part of the town, which, as most of my readers probably know, is at a considerable elevation above the water. As it had lately begun to rain hard, and we had no desire to wander farther, there was a general rush made to the front. The cozy place to which we were invited, turned out to be an old family coach, which was standing at the top of a narrow lane intended to be used only by foot passengers. However, it was a place where some midshipmen had lately amused themselves by galloping up and down; but, to prevent such an exhibition of horsemanship, a guard had been stationed at the bottom, to prevent any similar attempt for the future. But to return to the coach. The first comers had taken possession, and one after the other the rest scrambled in, till by the time Dicky and I, who were rather behind, got up, it could hold no more: at all events those inside decided that such was the case. This was not what we had bargained for, and neither of us was inclined to yield his right to a share and shelter without a struggle. The doors had not been shut; and while Dicky boarded on one side, I tried to get in on the other. Wet caps and fists were dashed in our faces, but, undaunted, we strove on. I had actually forced my way in, and was stretching over my hand to my chum, who had got his feet on the step, when some one exclaimed, “By Jupiter! she is under way.” And, sure enough, our struggles had set the lumbering old vehicle moving. On it went, rolling and rattling down the steep pathway, which we had totally

forgotten. To get out was impossible, without the certainty almost of knocking our heads against the walls of the houses on either side, of being jammed between them and the wheels, or of being run over. We hauled Dicky in to save his life, and away we all went together, the vehicle every moment increasing its velocity. The path, from sloping from each side to the centre, kept her on a straight course, or we should have brought up against some steps, or a kerbstone, and been saved from the approaching catastrophe. But no such good fortune was in store for us. Rolling and rattling, and screeching and creaking, and bumping and thumping, downward went the carriage, we inside keeping up a chorus of shouts and shrieks. Most of us laughed; but one or two, who were strangers to the place, were in a mortal fright, not knowing whether we might find a precipice at the bottom, and be shot over, perhaps into the sea. Very soon, too, we reached some steps, down which we went, of course faster than ever, with terrific bounds, till the cranky old vehicle could no longer stand the unusual movement.

“Who goes there?” shouted the sentry at the bottom of the steps.

“Turn out the guard,” echoed the sergeant, not able to make out the cause of the unusual commotion. Just then the carriage split asunder, and sent us flying, with swords, dirks, and hats, in different directions.

“Arrah, was ever such an egg hatched before?” exclaimed the sergeant, who was an Irishman, running up and seizing hold of the first he could lay hands on. “Come, young gentlemen, I must march you off to the guard-house.”

“March the coach off, if you please, sergeant; but we are innocent, like the new-hatched babes which we are,” cried Dicky Sharpe, who was one of those in custody. “The order is against people on horseback coming this way: we hadn’t even horses to our egg-shell.”

The sergeant, amused by the way Dicky took up his joke, and seeing there was no use detaining us, consented not to molest us. We then invited ourselves to go to the guard-house, where we passed the remainder of the night, with our cigars to comfort us. I am sorry to say that we did not go back to try and find the owners of the coach, that we might apologise to them for having inflicted so much injury on their

property, which we ought certainly to have done. We none of us thought anything more would come of it.

“Oh!” said Dicky Sharpe, rubbing his hands, “the owners will think that the old coach grew tired of waiting all by itself, so ran down the hill to get warm.”

We resolved therefore to say nothing about the matter. The next day, while it was my watch on deck, we were ordered to send a boat to bring off a party of ladies from the shore. Dicky, who belonged to the boat, went in her. As they reached the ship, and the sides were manned to receive them, I saw that Mr Vernon was in the boat, accompanied by Major and Miss Norman, and several other ladies and gentlemen. The care with which he handed her up the side, and the attention he paid her, as he showed the party round the decks, convinced me still further that what I had heard last night was the truth. Adam Stallman accompanied them; he was grave, but kind and courteous as usual, and seemed to take great pains to answer all the questions, some of them not a little ridiculous, which were put to him. Mr Vernon invited him to join the luncheon-party in the ward-room, so I did not see what followed.

As soon as the boat was hoisted in, Dicky came up to me.

“I say, D’Arcy,” said he, “it’s all blown, and we are in for it, I guess.”

“What’s blown?” I asked.

“Why, the coach affair, of course,” he replied. “As we were coming off they were all talking of it, and Mr Vernon said he was very sure I was one of the chickens, so there was no use denying it. If it gets to the captain’s ears we shall have our leave stopped, and I shan’t have a chance of seeing little Miss Smaitch again.”

We consulted long what was to be done, but could come to no decision on the subject. After the guests were gone, Adam Stallman came down into the berth.

“Youngsters,” said he, “I suspect both of you were engaged in the destruction of the coach last night. Is it not so?”

We confessed the truth, and told him exactly how it happened.

“Did you endeavour to find out the owners, and to make them all the amends in your power for the mischief you had committed?”

We owned that we had not.

“You neglected your bounden duty, then,” he observed. “You should recollect that every act of meanness committed by a British officer brings discredit on the cloth. When a man is guilty of a fault, he but increases it if he neglects to make reparation for it. Now, if I get leave for you to accompany me on shore, will you follow my directions?” We promised we would. “Well then, we will find out the owners of the coach, and you must go and tell them that you are very sorry for the mischief you committed, explain how it happened, and beg their pardon. I do not think you can exactly offer to give them a new coach; nor would they expect it, probably.”

At this Dicky looked very blue; but he could not escape from his promise, and he soon mustered a sufficiency of moral courage to carry him through the work. I was, I own, very glad in being thus supported in doing what I felt was right.

In the afternoon we went on shore, and set off at once to the scene of our adventure: The fragments of the coach had been removed. Climbing up the lane, we made inquiries at the top—at least Adam, who spoke Italian, did—for any family from the country who might be stopping at a house near at hand.

“Oh, you want Signora Faranelli, whose coach was run away with last night by some ragamuffins!” said the master of a small shop where we inquired.

“The same,” answered Adam.

“She and her daughters are staying with Signor Bianconi at the big house, there.”

Adam led us to the house indicated.

“I feel in a great funk,” whispered Dicky; “don’t you, D’Arcy? What shall we say?”

“The truth,” said I. “It’s the only thing we can say. Tell our tale from beginning to end.”

We sent in our cards, with a message to say that two naval officers wished to speak to Signora Faranelli. Adam said he should wait outside for us, and told us to make haste. We were speedily requested to walk upstairs, and were ushered into a room full of company, when a very pleasing, kind-looking lady came forward and inquired to what cause she was indebted for the honour of our visit. As I knew Sharpe would make some mistake, I had offered to act as spokesman, and at once told the whole of our tale.

“Oh, it was very naughty in the carriage to run away with you,” she replied, in a good-natured tone, in somewhat broken English; “and it was very stupid in my servants to leave it standing on the top of the hill, though but natural that you, on a rainy night, should take shelter within it. I had been told that it was purposely sent rolling down the hill by a party of tipsy naval officers, and I was resolved to complain of them; but the frank way in which you have come forward to explain the matter removes all disagreeable feeling on the subject, and I am very happy to make your acquaintance.”

Dicky Sharpe drew a deep breath, as if some dire forebodings were removed. I don’t know what he thought was going to happen to us.

“I must now introduce you to Signor Bianconi, and I am sure he will have great pleasure if you can remain and spend the evening with us,” continued the lady. “I shall hope also to see you shortly at my house in the country.”

We thanked Signora Faranelli very much for her kindness, but explained that we had a friend waiting outside for us, who had, however, nothing to do with the carriage affair. Of course Adam Stallman was requested to come in, and, to my surprise, he consented.

“I like what you tell me of the people, D’Arcy, and their acquaintance must be worth making,” he observed.

We spent a very pleasant evening, got on board in good time, and the next day, meeting some of our companions in the carriage adventure, were able to relieve their minds from certain apprehensions of the consequences, and to tell them of the satisfactory results; nor did we fail to give Stallman credit, which was his due. They, the rogues, were now in a great hurry to go and apologise also; but their impudence, for a wonder, would not carry them up to the point for action.

Whenever we put into Malta, Dicky and I did not fail to call on Signora Faranelli and Signor Bianconi: and many a happy day we spent at their houses. Often and often I have since seen that, by acting with truthfulness and candour, very much inconvenience, and even misery and suffering, might have been saved, and much good obtained. There is a golden rule I must urge on my young friends ever to follow: *Do right, and leave the result to God*.

Chapter Thirteen.

Sailing of the Ariadne—Chissel's Cruelty—Loss of Bobby Smudge—A Heavy Squall—Bobby Smudge's Ghost—Reflections thereon.

Shortly after this we were ordered to get ready for sea, though our destination was not known. Before we sailed, Major and Miss Norman again came on board, and we heard that, his health being re-established, they had taken their passage in a brig bound for England. We were very sorry for this, as we feared that Mr Vernon would be wishing to go home to marry, and that we should thus lose him. The next morning the *Ariadne*, the brig in question, a remarkably fine vessel for an English merchantman of those days (for a more detestable fleet of tubs were never sent afloat), was seen to be getting up her anchor and loosing topsails. Mr Vernon had gone away in the second gig at an early hour; and she was now alongside, while he, with his boat's crew, were on board. We could see him standing with Miss Blanche Norman on deck.

"More gallant knight or fairer lady never trod this mortal world," quoth our poetical Third, as he took a sight at his brother officer through his spy-glass.

I heard a deep sigh, and looking round, I saw Adam Stallman standing near me; but his countenance was unmoved, and turning on his heel, he continued pacing the deck as if he had been an unconcerned spectator of what was going on. The anchor of the brig was run up to the bows and catted; sail after sail was dropped from its brails and quickly sheeted home; and under a wide spread of canvas the gallant craft came standing out of the harbour.

"A prosperous voyage to you," shouted Mr Du Pre through his speaking-trumpet, as she passed us.

He and all the officers took off their caps. Major Norman and the master of the *Ariadne* did the same, and Miss Norman bowed. It was a trying moment for her, poor girl; for in a few minutes he whom she had so lately learned to love must quit her for an indefinite period, to buffet the rude winds and waves of the ocean, or, perchance, to endure the dangers of

the fight,—so said our third lieutenant, or something to that effect. We watched the *Ariadne*, as long as her topsails appeared above the horizon, with no little interest, for Mr Vernon's sake. He at length came back, after a long pull, and was for several days somewhat grave and abstracted at times; but that mood wore off by degrees, and there was a buoyancy in his step, and a light in his eye, which showed that he loved, and was conscious of being beloved in return.

It would be impossible to give an account of all the minor adventures I met with in the Mediterranean; but such as I can I will narrate. Captain Poynder was very anxious to make his midshipmen gentlemen, and to give us a knowledge of polite literature, as well as to instruct us in navigation and seamanship. Accordingly he got a Maltese on board to teach us Italian. Poor Signor Mezzi had never, I believe, been at sea before; and though we tried to make him comfortable, and Dicky Sharpe generally resisted the temptation to play him tricks—for he was certain to be cobbed by the oldsters if he did,—I fear that his life was far from a pleasant one. When we had completed our refit, and had stowed away a supply of provisions, despatches were sent on board, and we were ordered to proceed to Tripoli and Tunis. We made a very quick passage to Tripoli, which is the capital of the most easterly of the Barbary States. It boasts of a castle and port, and has a large harbour, defended by a moat and batteries, capable of containing a considerable fleet of merchantmen. We remained there a very short time, so I do not remember much about the place, nor exactly for what purpose we went there. There is another town of the same name in Syria, and they are often confounded. Leaving Tripoli, we made sail for Tunis. It was on this trip, if I remember rightly, that a circumstance occurred, which for some time appeared wrapped in mystery. The adventure of the rib-bone, in which Dicky Sharpe played so prominent a part, will be remembered. Since that time, Ichabod Chissel, the carpenter, had led his unfortunate boy, Bobby Smudge, a very dog's life. I fully believe, however, that Master Smudge richly deserved every rope's-ending he got. He was always dirty: he loved dirt, and nothing could keep him clean. His honesty also was doubtful. While in Malta harbour, some of our plate had disappeared. Our boy accused Bobby of taking it, though he denied this, and, to our surprise, confessed that he knew where it was.

"Why, do you see, sir," he said to Stallman, who sat as judge on his trial,

“it somehow or other got into my tub of hot water, and I never knowed it; and when I went to heave the water overboard, I then see’d the glitter of it in the sea, as it sunk to the bottom.”

The defence was ingenious, and as there was no witness to prove to the contrary, Bobby escaped punishment on that occasion; though, as he had been seen in deep confabulation with an ill-looking Jew a short time afterwards, suspicion went much against him. From bad, things grew to worse with Bobby Smudge. Not a day passed, scarcely an hour, that he did not taste the flavour of a rope’s-end—most frequently bestowed by his master, the carpenter.

“You will be the death of me, I know you will, Master Chissel,” he groaned out one day, when his castigator was even severer than usual. “I’ll go and drown myself, that I will, if this goes on much longer—you’ll see if I don’t. I won’t stand it, that I won’t;” and he blubbered as few have blubbered before.

“You will, will you, you young scamp?” exclaimed the carpenter, seizing a rope’s-end. “Take that, then, and remember, when you come back from the drowning of yourself, I’ll give you six times as much.” And poor Bobby got it worse than ever.

I think Chissel was very wrong in the way he treated the poor wretch. Had he been tolerably kind and considerate, he might, I am certain, have worked on his good feelings, and certainly have improved him; but the unhappy lad had from his earliest days been so constantly knocked about, and so accustomed to receive more kicks than halfpence, that all his better feelings had been pretty well beaten out of him.

It so happened that one evening, as the ship was running pretty fast through the water, and as darkness was coming rapidly on, a loud splash was heard alongside, and that cry, so startling to a seaman’s heart, was raised—“A man overboard!”

“Silence, fore and aft,” sang out Captain Poynder, who at the same moment appeared on deck. “Does anybody see him?”

There was no answer.

“Does anybody hear him?”

There was an ominous silence. A pin might have been heard to drop on deck. The life-buoy had been let go at the first by the officer of the watch. Its signal fire now burned bright astern, but no one was seen clinging to it. There could be little doubt that the poor fellow, whoever he was, had sunk at once. The ship had been running at the time a few points off the wind. She was now brought close on a wind, and then the helm was put down, and she was hove about with her head towards the life-buoy. While she was in stays, the two quarter-boats were manned and lowered. Mr Vernon jumped into one of them, and the master into another; and as the frigate lost her way, they shoved off and pulled in the direction of the spot where the man was supposed to have fallen.

“Who can it be? Who is missing?” was asked by all hands, while we were anxiously looking out towards the boats, to see if they were picking up anybody.

When the ship reached the same locality, she was hove-to, and there we remained till the boats, having picked up the life-buoy, returned on board. They brought, however, too probable a sign of some one having been lost—a boy’s hat. It had been picked up exactly at the spot where the ship was supposed to have been when the alarm was first given. The ship’s muster-roll was now called over, to ascertain who of the ship’s company was missing. One after the other had answered to their names, and it had so nearly reached the end, that we began to hope there might be some mistake after all, when that of Bobby Smudge was called. There was no answer. Poor Bobby! There could be but little doubt that the unfortunate wretch had put his threat of making away with himself into execution, rather than longer endure the tyranny of Mr Chissel. I hoped that the carpenter’s accusing conscience would make him repent of his cruelty. This surmise as to the poor boy’s fate was confirmed the next morning, when some of his clothes were discovered under the forechains. The next day the chief conversation among the men was about Bobby Smudge’s suicide, and of the threats he had uttered of haunting the ship. This led to the recounting of similar circumstances; and many a forecastle yarn was spun that evening, abounding in horrors sufficient to make the hairs of a less stout-hearted auditory stand on end. From the extraordinary remarks I heard as I passed about the decks, I

declared, when I went to the berth, that I believed that some of the men fully expected to see poor Bobby Smudge come in at one of the ports and drive all hands out of the ship. A seaman will encounter anything living and tangible with a hearty good-will; but he has a mortal antipathy to meet any spirit, black, blue, white, or green, from the nether world.

“I say, D’Arcy, it would be great fun if we could just manage to give some of these fellows a fright,” whispered Dicky Sharpe. “A white sheet and a howl would do it. I could manage to imitate Bobby Smudge’s voice, and I should just like to look in on old Chissel when he is taking his first snooze. I’d just mutter, ‘Bobby Smudge’s ghost come to fetch you away, you old sinner,’ and his villainous conscience would do the rest.”

“Don’t play any such foolish trick, Dicky,” said I. “You would certainly be found out in the first place, and get severely punished into the bargain. Besides, the matter is too serious to be turned into a joke. Think of that poor unfortunate wretch, driven to despair, and plunged suddenly into another world, through the cruelty and tyranny of one who ought to have protected him, and tried to make him better!”

“But he was plunged into the sea,” said Dicky, interrupting me; “and as for the cruelty he received, I don’t think he was so very much worse off than numbers of other fellows in his position.”

“I tell you, it is not a subject for joking on. Perhaps poor Bobby Smudge had a mother and sisters who will mourn bitterly when the ship returns home, and they find he is not in her.”

“Dirty drabs, in all probability, who won’t care a rap what has become of him,” persisted the incorrigible Dicky.

“For shame, Sharpe—for shame,” said I; thinking how my cousins would grieve for me if I were to be lost overboard. I began to feel a strange sort of satisfaction at the idea. Sentiment, or whatever it might be called, was very quickly put to flight by the shrill sound of the boatswain’s whistle, and the hoarse cry of “All hands—shorten sail!”

We were hurrying to our stations aloft as fast as our legs could carry us—for the tones in which the order was issued showed us that there was not a moment to be lost,—when, just as we were springing into the rigging, a

squall, which had but the moment before been perceived by the officers of the watch, struck the ship. As ill-luck would have it, it was the third lieutenant who had the first watch, and he happened to be in a poetical mood, and deeply absorbed in composing an ode to Queen Dido, or the Dodo—I don't remember which it was reported was the case—one or the other, I know. The squall was a very heavy one: if not a white squall, not inferior to it in strength and suddenness. The ship rushed through the water, which was lashed in an instant into a sheet of foam; the masts bent like wands, and looked as if they would instantly go by the board. The helm was ordered to be put up; but before she could answer it—stiff as she generally was—over she went, as if she had been a mere skiff, till her yard-arms almost touched the water. It appeared as if she would never right herself again. Then many a stout heart quailed, and many a brave man gave himself up for lost; but, dreadful as was the scene, discipline triumphed speedily over all unworthy fears. Some of the ports were open, and the water rushed through them in torrents. Such was the case with the one in our berth. Poor Signor Mezzi, our Italian master, was sitting there. Never was a poor wretch more completely horrified. He gave up all for lost, and fancied that every moment the ship, and all in her, were going to the bottom. The assistant-surgeon and captain's clerk, who were at the time in the berth, each seized a pillow from the hammocks, which had just before been piped down, and cramming them into the port with tolerable effect, stopped the gush of water; but terror had too completely mastered the poor dominie to allow him to observe what was going forward. He shrieked out for mercy from every saint in the calendar, and entreated one or all of them to carry him on shore, even if it was but to the sandy coast of Africa. "*Ah! misericordia, misericordia, misericordia*!" was the burden of his plaint.

"*E impossible*, signor. If you do go to the bottom, heretics though we are, you will be in very goodly company," exclaimed Tourniquet. "And then think of the magnificent feast we shall make for the fishes. Let that be your consolation."

But poor Signor Mezzi refused to be comforted even by such a prospect; and even our medico himself, when he found the ship still remaining in her unusual position, and heard the uproar going on overhead, began to entertain some very disagreeable doubts as to the possibility of the event to which he was alluding actually occurring, and looked very blue about

the gills; whereat little Scribble, the clerk, laughed heartily at him, and seated himself on the table, with his feet on the side of the ship, affirming that he was not afraid, and was as contented and happy as ever—the truth being, not that the young donkey was a bit more brave than the other two, but that he had not the sense to know the danger he was in, and that not a seaman on board but saw that the next moment might be his last. Tourniquet had not the heart to move and give Scribble a thrashing, or he would have done so. But to return on deck. The instant the squall struck the ship, Captain Poynder hastened from his cabin, and, seizing his speaking-trumpet, in a calm tone issued the necessary orders.

“Down, every youngster, from the rigging. Clue up—haul down—let fly of all!”

It was too late. Before the words were out of his mouth, the ship was over on her beam-ends, and lay like a log, neither sails nor rudder having longer power over her. To describe the wild horror of the scene would be almost impossible. The rent sails flashing and flapping in the gale; the ropes lashing furiously, as if in an attempt to seize some one within their deadly coils; every timber quivering and groaning; the wind roaring; and the foam in thick sheets flying over us. Though the helm, as I have said, was hard up, still she lay in the trough of the sea, without a hope of once more rising.

“Send the carpenter and his crew aft, with their axes,” shouted the captain.

Chissel and his mates quickly obeyed the summons, for he had seen from the first that his services would too probably be required.

“Stand by, to cut away the masts,” added Captain Poynder.

It was a melancholy alternative, but the only one to save the ship from foundering. Afterwards we must trust to our anchors; and if they failed to hold with the wind as it then was, we could not fail of being driven on the inhospitable coast of Africa. And who could tell how many might reach the shore alive!—perhaps none. The uplifted axes gleamed in the hands of Chissel and his mates, as they stood round the mizen-mast; others were sent to cut away the shrouds, and clear the wreck of the mast as it

fell. Once more Captain Poynder raised his trumpet to his lips. It was to give the dire orders to cut, when, at that moment, the ship with a violent jerk righted herself, and, speedily answering to the helm, away she flew before the wind. As such a course would very quickly have brought us up, sail was taken off her; and then, merely under her spanker and fore-staysail, she was brought to the wind, for it was discovered that the bowsprit was badly sprung, and that the topsail sheets were carried away. Happily the squall, having vented its fury on our heads, quickly passed over, and we were left with much less wind than before.

“This is all that young beggar Bobby Smudge’s doing, I’ll warrant,” I heard Ned Grummit, a topman, exclaim, as he came down from aloft. “I never knowed a chap of that sort who went for to go for to drown hisself, if he threatened to do mischief, but found means to do it. I knowed it would be so from the first, and we shall be lucky if worse doesn’t come of it.”

I tried to expostulate with the man, for whom I had a liking, for he was an honest fellow; but to no purpose. He still persisted in the belief that poor Bobby, who, while alive, had never done anybody harm, was destined to work us all sorts of mischief.

Everything had been made as snug as circumstances would allow. The watch below had been piped down, and had turned in; and silence reigned on board, and on the face of the ocean around us. It had been my watch on deck, and I was just about being relieved, when the silence was broken by a loud, unearthly cry; and the carpenter rushed on deck in his shirt, his hair standing on end, and his eyeballs starting from their sockets. Had not several men laid hold of him, I believe he would have thrown himself overboard. He was carried back to his cabin, and the doctor was summoned. All Chissel could say was, “Bobby Smudge! Bobby Smudge! you young villain, be off with you!” The doctor gave him some stuff or other, and the carpenter went off into a sound sleep; but a man was ordered to sit up by his side, and watch him.

“Now,” thought I, “this has been one of Dicky Sharpe’s tricks, and all my good advice has been thrown away.” But when I looked into Dicky’s hammock, he was sleeping away with such unfeigned soundness that I could scarcely fancy that he had played any trick; and the next morning he assured me, on his word of honour, that he knew nothing whatever

about the matter. I had never known Dicky to tell an untruth, and I felt very sure that he would not conceal anything he had done from me; indeed, the great pleasure he had in playing any mischievous prank was, to tell me of it afterwards, if I happened not to be a partaker of it,—a very rare occurrence, by-the-bye.

“Suppose you had played your trick on old Chissel, and what he has seen was really an evil spirit, how very dreadful it would have been for you to have met the unnameable thing at his bedside!” said I.

“Oh! don’t talk of such a thing,” exclaimed Dicky, shuddering. “I am sure I will never again think of carrying out such a joke as I contemplated. The idea is too frightful.”

I advised him not; and, after talking the subject over, and turning it in every way, we came to the conclusion that, as no one else was likely to have tried to frighten old Chissel, if he had not really seen a ghost, his terror had been the result of his own evil conscience.

“Yes, it is a dreadful thing to have a bad conscience,” said Dicky, with a sigh. “Do you know, D’Arcy, I sometimes wish that I had not played so many wild pranks in my life. I know that they will some time or other bring me into trouble; and yet, when the fit seizes me, I cannot help it. I wish that you would remind me of my good resolutions when I next propose anything of the sort.”

I promised that I would, but suggested that unless he had some higher motive than the fear of being brought into trouble, he would in all probability continue as great a pickle as ever, if he did not go on from bad to worse. Indeed I read my chum a very severe lecture, which he took with perfect composure, feeling at the time that he fully deserved it; though I fear that he was not in the end very much the better for my sage advice.

We were busy all day repairing damages as well as we could at sea; but it was found that they were so considerable that the captain resolved to return to Malta, instead of pursuing our course to Tunis. While the work was going forward, a man in the forechains discovered a jacket and waistcoat, which were known to have belonged to Bobby Smudge. This

was considered still stronger proof that the poor lad had destroyed himself, as no doubt he had hung them there before jumping into the sea. Seamen are certainly the most superstitious beings alive, for this trifling matter made them talk the whole evening after they had knocked off work about Bobby and his ways; and scarcely one but believed that his spirit would haunt the ship as long as she remained in commission. The crippled state of the ship prevented our making much sail on her, and as we had frequently baffling winds, our voyage to Malta was considerably prolonged.

Dirty Bob, as poor Bobby Smudge was generally called, excited far more interest after his death than he had done during his lifetime, as is not unfrequently the case with much greater men. The night succeeding the squall passed off, as far as I know, quietly enough; but the next morning I saw several groups of men talking together, as if something mysterious had occurred.

“I knowed it would be so,” said Ned Trunnion, as I passed by. “He was as bold a topman as ever stepped. I knowed the little chap wouldn’t let us alone, after he’d given Mr Chissel a taste of his quality. No, no; depend on’t he’ll haunt the ship for many a long day, if he don’t manage to run her ashore, or to send her to Davy Jones’ locker outright.”

“What’s that about?” I asked, for I suspected the observation was intended for my ears.

“Why, sir,” said Tom Barlow, another topman, “Dirty Bob (saving your presence) has been aboard again, a playing off his pranks, and many of us see’d him as clear as we see you.”

“Nonsense, man,” said I. “If you mean Bobby Smudge, he’s snug enough at the bottom of the sea, fifty miles astern of us, by this time; besides, if any of you saw him, why did you not catch him?”

“It wasn’t ’xactly him we saw, sir,” blurted out Ned. “It was his spirit or ghost like; and a chap might just as well try to catch one of them things as to grip an eel with greased fingers.”

“How do you know it was his spirit, though?” I asked; for I suspected that the men had been working on each other’s imagination till all fancied they

had seen what perhaps only one had dreamed of.

“Why, sir,” replied Tom Barlow, with a hitch to his waistband, “we knowed it was him, because it was as like him as he could stare, only a good deal blacker and dirtier even than he was in his lifetime. It had just gone two bells in the middle watch, when three or four of us who was awake saw him as plainly as we do you, sir, now—creeping about for all the world like a serpent, in and out among the hammocks. It was more, just then, than any one of us wished to do, to speak to him; but, thinks I, there can’t be any harm telling him to cut his stick, just civilly like; so I lifts up my head, and sings out, ‘Be off, you dirty son of a sea cook!’ But scarcely was the words out of my mouth, than he was away like a shot up the main-hatchway, and through one of the ports, or right through the bottom of the ship, for what I knowed; for I couldn’t see, you may suppose. All the others who saw him said, too, there was a strong smell of sulphur, wherever he’d been, and that he vanished away in a flame of fire; but I can’t ’xactly swear to that myself.”

I laughed outright at the absurdity of the story, and was more convinced than ever that the men had allowed their imaginations to be worked up to a pitch which would make them believe anything.

Dicky Sharpe and I talked the matter over, and agreed not to say anything about it, as were the circumstances to get to the ears of the captain, it would certainly make him very angry.

I thought we should hear no more about the matter; but two days after this I found the people more busy than ever talking about Bobby Smudge’s ghost. Numbers declared they had seen it. Some described it as having one shape, some another. Not a few gave it a tail, and horns, and fiery eyes. All described it as black; and several were ready to affirm on oath that it smelt strongly of sulphur and other horrible odours. At length many of the men showed a great unwillingness to go below, and to turn into their hammocks.

Old Chissel had become a completely altered character. His conscience told him that he was the cause of poor Bobby’s death. He grew thin and pale; his voice was no longer heard in loud dispute with his brother officer, the boatswain; and even his manner was softened towards his

inferiors. The men remarked the change; and all argued that the ghost had done him some good at all events, though it certainly confirmed them in their belief of its existence. Night after night, no sooner was it dark, and the watch below turned in, than Dirty Bob's ghost was sure to appear to some one or other; till at length the gun-room officers heard of the matter, and ultimately the captain himself was informed of it.

At the same time a curious circumstance occurred. Every morning one or other of the messes had to complain that their bread-bags had been rifled, and different sorts of eatables had disappeared in a most unaccountable manner. None of the men suggested for a moment that the ghost had anything to do with the matter—for what could a ghost want with biscuit, bacon, or cheese; but Captain Poynder, who at length heard of this also, had, it appeared, formed a different notion on the subject.

Two of the marines—steady old hands—who were ready to believe or disbelieve in ghosts or spirits, and to fight carnal or spiritual enemies in any shape or of any colour, as their superior officers might command them, were sent for into the cabin. What their orders were I do not know; but one of them, Jabez Cartridge, was placed that night as sentry on the lower deck.

The first watch had nearly run out, and Jabez, who had his eyes about him in every direction, had seen nothing of the ghost, when, as it had just gone seven bells, he fancied that he observed a dark object gliding about under the hammocks. He stood as upright and stiff as his own ramrod. So immovable was he, that any one might have supposed him asleep on his post; but his little black eyes were not the less vigilant. The dark object moved slowly and cautiously on till it reached the lockers, where the men's mess things were kept.

Jabez saw that it had hands, and, by the peculiar movement of those hands, he came to the conclusion that it had pockets. Still a ghost might have hands, and trousers too, for what he knew to the contrary. To convince himself, he sprang forward, and the ghost, with an unearthly shriek, took to flight; but Jabez was too quick for the phantom, and grasping him tight, he sung out, "I don't care if you be a ghost or not, but I've got you, at all events."

“Oh, let me go, let me go! and I’ll lie snug and quiet till we get into harbour, and then I’ll leave the ship and never come back—that I won’t,” answered the ghost, in piteous accents.

But Jabez was inexorable, and dragging him to the sentry’s lantern, by its sickly light discovered features which belonged to no other than Bobby Smudge.

“Why, where have you been, you young scoundrel, all the time?” asked Jabez.

“In the coal-hole,” blubbered out poor Bobby. “I never thought of doing harm to no one; but I can’t live without eating. Oh! let me go back,—oh! do, now.”

“My order is to take you to the captain,” replied Jabez, unmoved; and forthwith to the captain’s cabin the unhappy Smudge was led captive.

He was soon, however, sent out again under charge of the sentry, and kept in durance vile till the next morning.

After breakfast the men were called aft; and the captain appeared on the quarter-deck with Bobby, in the same garb and condition in which he had been captured. He was truly a wretched object, as he stood trembling, and blubbering, and covered with coal dust and dirt, before all the crew.

“I have called you aft, my men, to show you how foolish you have been to allow yourselves to be frightened by the equally foolish trick of this miserable lad,” said Captain Poynder. “I am not angry with you; but I wish you to learn, from this event, that all the ghosts you are ever likely to see will turn out to be no more ghosts than is this poor fellow at the present moment. He confesses that to avoid punishment, and in the hopes of ultimately escaping from the ship, he devised the scheme for making it appear that he had destroyed himself. He managed, it seems, to get a lump of coal in the forechains, and after heaving it into the water, and crying out that a man was overboard, to get in at a port, and to stow himself away in the coal-hole. Trusting to the superstition and folly which the people have exhibited, he thought he might venture out at night to supply himself with food. His plan succeeded; and had the story not come to my ears, I conclude he would have kept up the farce till the ship

got into port. I ask, my men, do you think it possible that God, who made this mighty universe, and governs it by just and wise laws, would allow a mischievous imp, who could do no harm while alive, to return to earth, merely for the sake of wreaking his own petty malice, or for troubling and frightening a number of grown men such as you are. To believe such a thing is both wicked and absurd, for it is mistrusting God's wisdom and providence; and I hope, when you come calmly to consider the matter over, you will think as I do. I have another word to say, both to petty-officers and men. The lad must have received much cruel treatment to make him attempt to escape from it by the expedient he followed. Remember, for the future, I will have no bullying. The discipline of the ship will be kept up far better by strict justice. Had it not been for this, I should have punished the lad severely for the prank he has played. As it is, he has pretty well suffered already. But beware. If anybody attempts to imitate his example, he will find I do not overlook the matter so easily. Now pipe down."

The captain's speech did much good in several ways. It put a stop to any outrageous bullying for some time; for the men knew perfectly well that what he threatened he would effectually carry out. It also tended to cure some of them of their superstitious belief in ghosts and goblins.

"Well, I never heard the like afore," said Tom Barlow, as he and his messmate, Ned Trunnion, were talking over the affair of the previous day. "The skipper says as how there is no such thing as ghosts; and I suppose, seeing as how he has as much larning as a parson, he knows all about it. It don't come within my category, though."

"What he says is all shipshape," replied Ned. "I never yet met the man who really did see a ghost, though I've met scores who've heard of some one who's seen them, and for that matter come to fisticuffs with them; and certain sure I never see'd one myself till that young cheese-nibble made himself into one. Then, if he hadn't been found out, I'd have staked my davy that he was one in reality."

"That is what the captain says," I remarked, as I stopped a moment. "All the ghosts which have been seen will turn out to be only shams after all."

But enough of Bobby Smudge and his ghost.

Chapter Fourteen.

Letter from my Uncle—Chase of Myers—Supposed Loss in Portland Race—Good Advice—The Ariadne Missing—Mr Vernon's Anxiety.

Two days after this, much shorn of the pride and beauty with which we left it, we entered Malta harbour. As may be supposed, Mr Vernon hastened to the post-office as soon as he could get on shore. I accompanied him, with a note Captain Poynder had to send to the governor. His eye brightened as it glanced at the superscription of a letter which was handed to him. He read it over eagerly.

"I hope, sir, that you have good accounts from your friends," I said.

"They have had most provoking light winds and calms; and, when this letter was written, had not made good half the distance. Heaven grant that the *Ariadne* may have escaped any squall such as crippled us."

"Indeed, sir, I trust so," I replied; but as he again turned to his letter, I made no further remark. I found a letter also for myself, to my no little surprise, for I thought no one would take the trouble of writing to me. I did not deserve a letter, I felt, for I had not written a line to any one since I left England. It was from my uncle. I put it in my pocket, to read at my leisure when I returned on board. It ran as follows:—

"My Dear Nephew,—As a word or two now and then from those who are deeply interested in your welfare, will but tend to keep them in your remembrance, and to cheer your spirits, should you find yourself surrounded by troubles or hardships, your aunt and I hope occasionally to send you a sheet of paper, with an account of what is going on at home; and I must beg you in return to let us know how the world speeds with you. Your aunt and cousins are well, and one day passes with them so like another, that I have little to tell of them. Terence grows apace, and seems resolved to go to sea. I will not baulk the lad of his wish when he is big enough; and I hope better times will come in the navy, both for you and him, than I have seen for some time past. I have given the cutter plenty of work, and have made several captures; but the prize I most

covet, that villain Myers, has again slipped through my fingers. I must tell you all about it. It is supposed, indeed, that he has at length gone to render up his final account in another world; but even now I can scarcely believe but that he will yet turn up somewhere or another in this. I had received notice that he had been again seen in England, and that he had got command of a cutter of about sixty tons,—a very fast craft, which nothing could come up to; so, of course, I resolved to try and catch him. I soon found that he was visiting his old haunts. I conclude that he fancied no one would believe he would have the audacity to go there after all the crimes he had committed, and that therefore no one would be on the watch for him. He had succeeded in running two cargoes, and all the goods were got up to London. He had gone away for a third, and I learned that preparations were made to receive it in West Bay, not far from Beere. For two days and nights we had been cruising about, just far enough out not to be seen from the shore, in the best spot for cutting him off, when it came on to blow very hard from the north-west. It had blown long enough to kick up a heavy sea, when, just as it had gone three bells, in the middle watch, we caught sight of a cutter standing in for the shore, and going along at a tremendous rate, not the eighth of a mile to the eastward of us. We were on the larboard tack; but we were instantly about, and in chase of her. We could just make her out through the darkness; but I do not think many eyes could have seen her, but those long accustomed to such work as ours. It was some time before she perceived us; for, from the way we were standing, we were end on to her. As soon, however, as she saw us, she kept away, and off she went like a shot before the wind. We packed everything on the cutter she could carry, and rather more canvas, as you may suppose, than under ordinary circumstances I should like to set; but the stranger, at all events, seemed resolved not to be outdone; and though by this time it was blowing half a gale of wind, had not only his whole mainsail, but his square-sail and gaff-topsail all set. This circumstance made me pretty certain that Myers was on board, for he knew well that a halter would be his lot if he was caught. I think he would have done better by keeping on a wind, for before the wind her larger size gave the *Serpent* a decided advantage over him. After an hour’s chase, if we had not overhauled him, he certainly had not increased his distance from us; and we had great hopes, should the wind increase, or the sea get up any more, that we should at last catch him. It was a trial of the strength of our sticks, and the goodness of our rigging. I had every confidence in ours; but I also knew

that the smuggler would not fail to have got a tough stick for a mast, and sound rigging also. Another half-hour passed, and Hanks agreed with me that we were certainly gaining on the chase. To give us a chance of winging him, we now ran a gun forward; but with the heavy sea there was, and the way both vessels were pitching into it, there was very little probability that we should do so. We, however, fired several times; but with no effect. Only think! the fellow had the audacity to run out a couple of guns, and to return the fire. To be sure, it was his only chance of escaping; for if he could manage to knock away any of our spars, he would, he thought, show us a clean pair of heels. His practice was not a bit better than ours; indeed, it would only have been by chance that a shot could have hit its mark. However, we both of us kept blazing away at each other with hearty good-will. In the meantime the wind and sea, already high, were getting up very much. At any other time I should have hove the cutter to; but now, follow I must; and I hoped, from our greater power, we should be able to hold out the longest, and that at last the smuggler must give in. We were now nearing Portland Race, and never in my life had I observed the sea running higher on it than it now did. ‘The fellows will never attempt to cross it,’ observed Hanks: ‘they’ll be swamped if they do; and if they haul up to round it, we shall catch them to a certainty.’ ‘Cross it they will try, at all events,’ I replied; ‘they can never carry canvas on a wind, in a breeze and with a sea like this. See, they are standing into the very thickest of the breakers.’ Sure enough, there was the cutter approaching the most dangerous part of the Race. The spring-tide was making down, and the wind, meeting it, threw the foaming breakers higher up than usual. Still it was possible, if everything was battened down, that the cutter might shove through them. We all held our breath. If she got through, we also must follow. We had everything secured, and were better prepared than she was. On she went—her white sails appearing against the dark sky—her whole hull enveloped in foam. For some seconds she pushed on bravely. I never took my eye off her. Suddenly the white canvas seemed to bend low down—the breakers danced on as before. I rubbed my eyes, but without avail: the sail had disappeared. There was a cry of horror on board the cutter, but no shout of triumph, though our long-sought-for foe was no more. He and everybody on board must have been swallowed up in those foaming billows. We had barely time to shorten sail and to haul off, to avoid sharing the same fate; for I scarcely think, on that day, that even we could have run through the race. Some days after this I was on shore on

Portland Bill, and the lighthouse-keeper told me that he had witnessed the catastrophe. He told me, also, that several planks and spars had shortly after come on shore, and with these the body of a man. When, however, he went down to the beach to look for the body, he could nowhere find it; so he concluded that it had been swept away by the tide. Such is the fate of the smuggler Myers, and certainly no one ever deserved it more richly. I have no other events to narrate.

“I should like to give you some good advice, Neil; but I am so little accustomed to lecture others, I cannot find words to do it. I will try, however. Never forget that you were sent into this world to do your duty to Heaven and to man; not to amuse yourself, but to obey God’s laws,—to prepare for another world, which will last for ever. Remember always that this world is only a place of trial—of probation. Trials of all sorts are sent on purpose to prove us. When man, through disobedience, fell, and sin entered the world, the devil was allowed to have power over him. He would have gained entire power, and man in his fallen state would have been inextricably lost for ever; but Christ in his mercy interfered, and by His obedience, His sufferings on earth,—by His death on the cross,—was accepted by God as a recompense for all sinners who believe in Him. By His resurrection, He became a mediator for us, showing us also that we too shall rise, like Him, from the dead, in the bodies in which we died. Thus a pure and just God, who cannot otherwise than hate sin, was able at the same time to show forth his justice and his mercy,—to punish those who go on in their wickedness, but to pardon those who believe in their great Mediator, and repent of their sins. I remind you of these important truths, Neil, because I know all men are too apt to forget them. Endeavour always to remember them, and I am sure that they will keep you from evil more than any other safeguards which I can offer you. I do not tell you, my boy, not to do this, or not to do that; but I remind you that Christ came down on earth, on account of the sins of mankind, to teach men His laws; that He suffered pain, toil, and disgrace, and a dreadful death; and that, in gratitude to Him, we are bound to do our utmost to obey Him. Read your Bible constantly—not now and then, but every day; learn what His will is, and do your best to follow it. Remember, also, that the devil is ever at your elbow, endeavouring to persuade you not to follow it,—telling you that sin is sweet and pleasant; that God will not be angry with you if you sin a little; that hell is far off; that God would not be so cruel as to send you there; and that it is cowardly to be afraid. Oh, my

boy, let me entreat you to pray to God for grace to enable you to resist those temptations. Come they will, assuredly; and never trust in your own strength to resist them. Christ will give you strength. Fly to Him in prayer. Go to your Bible,—read that, and you will be strong to resist all temptations. Of course, never mind what your companions may say or think on the subject. I ask, are you to be biassed by the opinions of poor, weak, sinful mortals; or to obey the laws of the great all-powerful God, who made the whole universe—the innumerable globes you see in the sky—the world we inhabit, with all its wonders—man, with his proud intellect—the animals of the forest, the birds of the air, the creeping things innumerable, scarcely the nature of one of which you can comprehend,—of the merciful Saviour, who died for you, and who is eager to preserve you and all who believe on him? Still I know that, with a full consciousness of God's greatness and goodness—of Christ's mercy —man is so weak that nothing but constant prayer for grace will enable him to keep in the right way. I feel, my dear nephew, that I could not write too much on this all-important subject; but still I must conclude. Keep my letter by you, and look at it at times when you are inclined to forget its advice. Your aunt joins me in earnest prayer for your welfare.

"Your affectionate uncle,—

"Terence O'Flaherty."

I am most grateful to my kind uncle for having sent this letter to me. It had a very beneficial effect on my mind. I do not mean to say that at the time I received it I thought as seriously of its contents as I did afterwards; yet I tried somewhat to follow its advice,—not as I might have done; but I read my Bible more frequently, and prayed more earnestly than I had ever done before. I do not mean to say that I knelt down by the side of my hammock to pray, as those on shore are able to do by the side of their beds; but I found many an opportunity to offer up my prayers during a watch on deck at night, and on those occasions I felt more freedom and earnestness. Also I often would do so after I had turned into my hammock, and before I turned out in a morning. I own that when I was first observed to read my Bible I was frequently called by my messmates a Methodist and a saint, and Dicky Sharpe was especially liberal in his application of such epithets to me; but Adam Stallman soon silenced him as well as others.

“Let me ask you, Master Dicky, what you mean by a Methodist?” he inquired. “If it is applied to a man who acts the part of a consistent Christian, and does his duty methodically—with system, and not by fits and starts,—it is a very high compliment you pay him; and as for the term saint, let me assure you that those who do not become saints have their souls in a very perilous condition.”

These remarks of Stallman’s, though my young messmate tried to look unconcerned and indifferent to them at the time, had, I believe, a very beneficial effect on him. I will not, however, dwell longer on this subject, important though it is, or my readers may declare that, instead of writing my adventures for their amusement, I am giving them a book of sermons. I will not do that; but still I must urge them to pay attention to what I have said—never to be ashamed of their religion; far, far rather to be proud of it, and ever to make God’s word the rule of their conduct.—To return to my narrative. The repairs of the frigate having been completed, we once more put to sea, and made sail for Tripoli and Tunis. Our poor Italian master, Signor Mezzi, had declared most positively that nothing would ever again tempt him to venture on the treacherous ocean; but a few weeks on the smooth water of Malta harbour had wonderfully reassured him, and he continued therefore with us, to our somewhat problematical benefit. Nothing occurred on our passage to and from those places.

We were once more entering Malta harbour. Mr Vernon at once went on shore, and I again accompanied him. He repaired to the post-office, but there were, to his evident disappointment, no letters for him. He considered for a moment. “We’ll go to the agents of the *Ariadne*; she must have arrived at Gibraltar long before the last mails left.”

The agent’s office was close to the harbour. We threaded our way to it among bales, and casks, and packages.

The senior partner, Mr Dunnage, received us very politely; and when Mr Vernon inquired for the brig, his countenance assumed a grave look.

“We must hope for the best,” he replied; “but she is, I own, very long overdue, and we have had no tidings whatever of her. She may have put into some little-frequented port, with the loss of her spars or masts, and the master may not have been able to communicate with us.”

“Nay, I am sure it must be so,” he continued, seeing the agitation into which the information had thrown my lieutenant.

“Was the master a steady and good seaman?” asked Mr Vernon, in a voice husky with emotion.

“Not a steadier man nor a better seaman comes to this port,” replied Mr Dunnage. “If his craft was caught by a squall, or got into any other difficulty, I am sure he would have done all that could be done for her.”

“We fell in with a terrific squall soon after she was at sea,” mused Mr Vernon. “Heaven grant that she was not exposed to it.”

“It is impossible to say,” answered the merchant in a kind tone. “I feel more than usually anxious, on account of her passengers, I own. Sailors are accustomed to hardships; they expect to meet them in their career; and they are aware, when they go afloat, that they must be prepared to lose their lives in the gale or the battle.”

Mr Vernon shuddered. He began to realise the possibility of the loss—the dreadful death of her he loved. Still he was a right-minded, brave man, and what is more, a sincere Christian; and he resolved not to give way to despair.

Mr Dunnage perceived, at length, the effect his information had produced, and he now did his best to mitigate the anxiety of my lieutenant, entering warmly into all his plans for gaining information as to the fate of the brig.

It was agreed that he should write round to all the ports on the shores of the Mediterranean, near which it was possible the *Ariadne* could have been driven; and that his correspondents there should send boats along the coast from port to port, so that no part should remain unexplored.

“I should advise you also to see the Admiral; he will, I am sure, take a warm interest in the matter.”

No sooner said than done. When sensible men are in earnest about an affair, they do not lose time by talking, the plan of action being at once decided on.

Mr Dunnage having penned the draft of a circular letter to be sent to the ports, left it to be copied by his clerks, while we set forth to see the Admiral, who was, fortunately, at Malta.

The worthy old man at once entered into all the proposed plans for searching for the brig, and suggested others.

“We’ll send the *Harold* to sea at once; and I’ll despatch all the small craft I can spare on the search. Stay,—you shall take an order to Captain Poynder to sail forthwith. I suppose he’s ready to go?” said he to Mr Vernon.

“We are well supplied with provisions, and can soon fill up with water; we can be off this evening, I know,” replied Mr Vernon.

“Away with you! and may your search be prosperous,” said the Admiral, with much feeling.

The order to go to sea again was at first received with no little surprise on board; but the fact that the *Ariadne* was missing being generally known on shore, and the blue-peter being hoisted, the officers who had gone on leave came hurrying back.

That night, with a fine breeze we had run Malta out of sight.

Chapter Fifteen.

Sail in Search of the Ariadne—Fall in with a Boat and Crew—The Master of the Helen—His Narrative—Attack of Pirates—Captain Delano—Can he have seized the Ariadne?

“Something black and low over the starboard bow,” sung out the man stationed on the main-topgallant-masthead.

“How far off is it?” hailed the first-lieutenant.

“Two miles or thereabout, sir,” was the reply.

“What does it look like?” was again asked.

“A boat, I think, sir, as much as anything,” answered the look-out.

Scarcely had the seaman aloft hailed the deck, than Mr Vernon, his countenance paler than usual, showing the agitation within, had slung his glass over his shoulder, and was on his way up the rigging. At the topgallant-masthead he now sat, eagerly looking out towards the point indicated. The ship’s course was instantly directed towards it. It was an exciting moment. It might prove to be a boat, keel uppermost, and have no tale to tell, except to let us surmise that she had proved no ark of safety to those who had trusted to her; or she might have living beings on board, whom our discovery of her might rescue from starvation and death. Other officers followed Mr Vernon aloft.

“She is a boat afloat, and pulling towards us,” sung out one of them.

Everybody on board was looking over the sides or out of the ports at the boat, which we neared rapidly. We soon made out that there were several people in her besides those who were pulling; but whether there was a lady or not, we could not discover. I pitied poor Mr Vernon’s feelings all the time very much. He came down on deck again, and stood at the gangway pale as death, but manfully suppressing his emotion. The boat drew near us. She was evidently belonging to a merchantman, and, from her build, and the appearance of the people, they were English; but

there was no female form among them. Mr Vernon scrutinised the countenances of those in the boat as she came alongside; but he soon, apparently, recognised none as those he had seen on board the *Ariadne*, for he drew a deep breath, and, I thought, seemed more composed.

The people from the boat now came up the side, and she was hoisted up. She was in a very battered condition, and had evidently been lately repaired in a hurried manner.

They were received at the capstern by Captain Poynder. An honest, sturdy-looking gentleman stepped forward as spokesman.

“I see that I am fortunate enough to have got on board a British man-of-war,” he began. “Well, sir, I have a pretty account of piracy and attempted wholesale murder to give.”

“Let me hear it at once, sir, that I may judge what is to be done,” said Captain Poynder.

“Yes, sir, certainly. My name is Hudson, sir. You must know that I am, or rather was, master of the *Helen* brig. We sailed from Liverpool, where we took in a valuable cargo of manufactured goods, chiefly silks and fine cottons. We were bound for Leghorn. While we were taking in our cargo, there lay alongside of us a fine new brig, the *William*, owned by some very respectable merchants of our port. Her master was a certain Captain Delano, a very well-spoken, fine-looking man. I cannot say that I ever liked him. There was something in his eye, and way of talking, which made me doubt him. Not but that he said many things that were very good and right, but there was nothing hearty in them; and now and then he let out opinions which made me sure he was a bad man, notwithstanding the way he had managed to come over his owners. There were several suspicious things which I had heard of him from time to time. He was an American, hailing from New York; yet he fought very shy of all masters coming from thence, and had refused, on some excuse or other, to take charge of a vessel going there. He, two years ago, had command of a barque, the *Brunswick*, trading up the Straits. Some queer things were said to have taken place in her; and I’m very much mistaken if the black flag did not fly aboard her more than once. At last this Mr Delano was caught attempting to carry out a large smuggling transaction

in Malta harbour, as, perhaps, you may have heard, sir, when you have been there. He was convicted, and thrown into prison. After having been shut up for a year, he was liberated, ruined in character, and without a penny in his pocket. Any other man, almost, would never again have been able to lift up his head; but his tongue served him in good stead, and finding his way to Liverpool, he had the impudence to present himself before his owners, and the wit to persuade them that he was a much-injured individual, and innocent as the new-born babe of all the charges brought against him. They gave him in consequence, as I said, the command of the *William*, a new brig just off the stocks. On some pretext or other, he was constantly aboard us as we were taking in our cargo; and, with the thoughts I had of him, I cannot say that I quite liked it. I understood also, from my people, that four of the *Brunswick's* crew had found him out, and shipped with him; and the night before he sailed another very suspicious-looking character shipped aboard, and, as the vessel went out of harbour, was seen doing duty as mate. I mention these things, sir, that you may judge whether I am likely to be right in my conjectures as to what afterwards occurred. I will not now keep you longer than I can help. We had a fine passage to the Gut, though with three or four days of light and baffling winds. We had got through the Straits; and about a couple of days after we had passed them, we made out on our weather-bow, a brig, under easy canvas, standing across our course.

"'Where can she be bound to?' says I to my mate, here.

"'Only to the coast of Africa,' says he; 'for you see, sir, she had a fair wind up or down the Mediterranean.'

"'She is in no hurry, at all events,' says I, 'with that sail she has set.'

"'I can't make it out,' says he. 'See, sir, she looks as if she intended to speak us. She has altered her course a couple of points. Ay, I see how it is—she is short-handed, by the way those sails are set, and the ropes, too, are all hanging slack about her. Perhaps she has lost some of her people by fever, or maybe they have been washed overboard in a squall.'

"As I looked at the brig more attentively, there was a strange foreign look about the paint on her sides and figure-head which puzzled me, and still

the cut of her sails and the rake of her masts was English. Presently, however, an ensign, with the stars and stripes of the United States, flew out at her peak. That seemed to set the matter at rest. The stranger soon bore down on us, and I hailed her to know who she was, and what she wanted.

"'The *Crescent*, from New York, bound for the Levant,' was the answer. 'We've lost more than half our ship's company in trying to save some people off a wreck, and have ourselves sprung a leak. Can you send any of your people aboard to help us to try and stop it?'

"'Ay, ay,' I answered; for you see, sir, I am always glad to lend a hand to any other ship's company requiring assistance. To show that what he stated was true, three or four hands were working at the pumps, though I did not see that they were forcing much water over the sides. We lowered a boat accordingly, and I jumped in, with four hands, and pulled aboard the stranger. As the bowman caught hold of the main-chains—

"'Why, she has canvas over her sides,' he remarked.

"'Shove off, my lads; it's not all right,' I sung out.

"But before the bowman could clear his boat-hook, a couple of cold shot were hove into the boat, and she began to fill rapidly. We had no choice but to scramble on board, or to go down with her. As soon as we were on the deck of the stranger, we found ourselves knocked over; and before we could get on our legs, we were bound hand and foot. The men who acted as officers, as well as the crew of the vessel, were rigged out in so odd a fashion, and their faces so covered up with hair and black patches, that I could not have recognised them had I known them ever so well; but still, at the time, it struck me that the fellow who seemed to be the captain, had a figure very like that of Delano. Of course I did not say anything, as I knew that to do so would be a sure way of getting knocked on the head, and made food for fishes. Leaving my people and me on the deck to think what we might, the villains, who had now got a boat in very good condition, lowered her, and, with pistols hid under their shirts, and cutlasses and muskets stowed away underneath the thwarts, went aboard my brig. In a few minutes they hailed, which showed me that they had made quick work in taking possession. The two vessels were now

brought alongside each other, and lashed together, and my men and I were then handed on board our own craft, and carried below—I into my cabin, and the rest into the forepeak, where others of the crew had been already conveyed. I won't attempt to tell you how I felt, as I saw the villains rifling my boxes and lockers, and carrying off everything worth having. They made quick work of it, being hurried on by their captain; and then they set-to to take possession of our cargo. They left me in my own sleeping-berth, on my back, so that I could see nothing; but, from the sounds I heard, I judged that they were handing bale after bale of our cargo into their own craft. Their cargo, if they had one, I suppose they hove overboard, to make room for ours. How long they continued at this work, I don't know. It seemed to me an age, you may be sure, sir. At last they knocked off, and there was silence for some time. I thought they were going to leave us, when I heard them return on board; and there was a sound which I could not mistake. The murderous villains were boring holes in the ship's bottom. I felt it was all up with us. They intended to let the brig founder, with all her crew, so that there should be no witnesses to their robbery. In vain I tried to get my hands loose. They were too well secured, and I had, therefore, nothing to do but to resign myself to my fate. It was not the first time that I had faced death; and, sirs, I knew in whom to trust. He had before preserved my life. Gentlemen, I should be an ungrateful wretch if I did not thus at once acknowledge God's great mercy to us. He has preserved our lives, and we are here."

The reverential way in which the worthy master spoke made a deep impression on me. There was no ostentation, no hypocrisy, no cant; but heartfelt gratitude, and humble reliance on God's protecting hand.

"No excuse necessary. What you say is right—perfectly right. You speak as a Christian should, and I honour you for it; but go on," replied Captain Poynder, who was evidently anxious to arrive at the conclusion of the master's somewhat prolix narrative.

"Well, sir," he continued, "of one thing I felt pretty certain, that Delano was the perpetrator of this horrible outrage. It was the very trick he was reported to have played before, and which, from what I had seen of him, I judged he would be ready to play again. I could hear the water begin to rush into the ship, but it did not reach the deck of the cabin so soon as I

expected. There was a good deal of noise on deck, as if the pirates were knocking things to pieces; and then I judged that the vessels had separated, and that the pirate had sheered off to leave us to our fate. All was silent, and I could not tell whether my poor fellows had been carried off or been left to share my fate with the brig. Some twenty minutes or half an hour had passed in this state of uncertainty, when I heard a noise, as if bulkheads were being knocked in, and my own name was called by a voice which I recognised as that of my mate. I shouted joyfully in return, and in a few seconds he and some of the crew rushed into the cabin and released me. ‘The brig seems in no way inclined to go down, captain,’ they exclaimed. ‘If we could but get the pumps rigged, we might save her as well as our lives; but the pirate has only sheered off to a short distance, and if the villains on board were to catch sight of our faces on deck, they would soon return and put a finishing stroke to us.’ ‘Let’s see if we can do anything to keep the water out,’ said I, though I had little hope of success. On going into the hold, which was pretty well free of cargo, on examination I discovered that the holes had been bored through the timbers, instead of through the planks. ‘Either a friend or a lubber has done this,’ exclaimed my mate. ‘I think the former,’ I observed. ‘Get some plugs as fast as you can, my lads, and we’ll soon stop these leaks, and yet keep the old barkie afloat.’ The holes were bored mostly high up, so that they were easily got at, and we thus had the greater number of them quickly plugged. There is no doubt in my mind that the man who bored the holes hoped by that means to save our lives. One of the crew, who had all been shut up in the forepeak, told me that the man who had lashed his hands took occasion to pass him, when he whispered, ‘Don’t move till we’re clear off. Things are not so bad for you as they look.’ When I heard this, I was sure that all on board the pirate were not as great villains as their leaders. As soon as this man had got his hands free —which he did without difficulty, for they were purposely ill secured—he loosed the rest; and then, afraid to show themselves on deck, lest the pirates should see them, they worked their way aft to my cabin. A strong confirmation to my suspicions that the pirate brig is no other than the *William*, commanded by Delano, is, that as one of my people lay bound on her deck, when we were knocked down on boarding her, he observed the name of the sailmaker on her fore-topsail—John Reynolds, of Liverpool. He remarked the name particularly, because he was the maker who had furnished the sails of the last vessel he had sailed in; and he remembered that he had observed the same name on the *William’s* sails.

We remained below for some little time after we had plugged the holes, and then we managed to wrench off the hatches of the forepeak. When we had done this, I crept cautiously out, and looking over the bulwarks, I saw the pirate about a quarter of a mile off, laying by us apparently to watch till we should go down. This made our position very perilous, for any moment the pirates might return and knock us all on the head, though, for that matter, I resolved that if they attempted it, we would sell our lives at no cheap rate. As I glanced my eyes along our deck and up aloft, a sad scene of havoc and destruction met them. Our running rigging was un-rove and carried off, our standing rigging was cut through, and what sails remained on the yards were hanging in shreds. On deck, our boats were stove in, the caboose knocked to pieces, and the cooking things gone. Indeed I could scarcely have supposed that so much mischief could have been committed by a few people in so short a time. Having made these observations, I again went below to hold a consultation with my mates as to what was best to be done. We made up our minds that as long as the water did not gain on us, and the pirate lay near us, all we could do was to remain quiet below; but we agreed to arm ourselves in the best way we could, and, if the pirates returned, to rush out on them in a body, and to attempt to take them by surprise. The arms from my cabin had been carried off; but there were three brace of pistols and a couple of fowling-pieces in a chest in the after-hold, which had escaped their notice; as also some ammunition. We had also among us a couple of axes, and some thick ends of crowbars; so that we were likely to prove pretty formidable in a close scuffle. When we were ready, we almost wished that the fellows would come back, that we might punish them for what they had done, and I believe that we should have rendered a good account of them. But at the same time, as bloodshed must have followed—and that in any case is bad,—and we could not have regained our property, I cannot say but what I am glad they did not make the attempt. If we had had the brig under control, we might have done something; but without sails, and almost sinking, we were helpless. I now returned on deck, to watch the movements of the pirate. All this time the water kept coming in, and I began to fear that our brig would not keep afloat till the pirate had sheered off, when suddenly I saw her sheet home her topsails, let fall her courses, and make sail away to the eastward. After watching her for a quarter of an hour—which seemed four times as long a period,—to make sure that the pirates could no longer see us, I called the people up from below to rig the pumps. The pirates had,

however, done their utmost to render them useless, and we soon found that we must give up all hopes of clearing the ship of water. We then turned-to to examine the boats. One was so completely stove in that she was perfectly useless; and we made up our minds that we should have to take to a raft, when the carpenter reported that he could in a very short time render the other boat seaworthy. We accordingly did our best to make her fit to float, though darkness came down upon us before we had finished. We could only find one lantern, which enabled us to continue our work, but very slowly. We made a rough sort of a raft to keep us afloat, in case the brig should go down suddenly; but I never passed a more anxious night. It was noon the next day before the boat was ready. Scarcely had we got clear of the brig before she went down; and certainly it was from no mercy of Delano's that we did not sink in her. I at once shaped a course for Malta, as the wind had shifted round to the westward, and it was the British port we could most easily reach, and where we could at the same time get aid to go in search of the pirate. What with baffling winds, we have been a long time knocking about, and might have been still longer, had we not fallen in with you, sir. All I can say more is, that the sooner a stop is put to the career of those villains, the better. It is impossible to tell what other atrocities they may have committed."

While the master of the *Helen* was giving his narrative, I saw Mr Vernon turn very pale; and as he made this last observation, I thought he would have fallen. It had evidently occurred to him that the *Ariadne* might have been seized by Delano. By a mighty effort of self-command, however, he recovered himself.

"I am much pleased with your clear statement, Mr Hudson," said Captain Poynder. "We will return to Malta immediately, and take steps to discover what has become of the *William*, or rather the pirate which plundered you. I cannot doubt that they are one and the same craft."

"Thank you, sir; that's what I think should be done," said the worthy master. "I've no doubt the pirate will be found before long."

"Captain Poynder, is it possible that the pirate could have fallen in with the *Ariadne*?" said Mr Vernon in a hollow voice, trembling with agitation.

“I trust not—I trust not,” replied the captain. “We’ll hope for the best: at the same time we will do our utmost to ascertain the truth.”

Chapter Sixteen.

Return to Malta—Sail in a Schooner—Search for the William—The Ionian Islands—Reach Smyrna—Surprise the Pirates—I Preserve the Ship from being Blown Up—Myers and his Tricks.

We had a foul wind, and it took us three days to beat back into Malta harbour. Our return caused much surprise, for it was deemed prudent to keep Captain Hudson’s narrative a secret till we had ascertained what had become of Delano, lest any of his friends should hear of it, and, by giving him notice, might enable him to escape. I was again Mr Vernon’s companion on shore, where we went as soon as we had dropped our anchor. We first bent our steps to the office of Mr Dunnage, as he seemed to take a warmer and more active interest than anybody else in the mysterious disappearance of the *Ariadne*. We were shown into the worthy merchant’s private room, where he sat surrounded by piles of tin boxes, with long bygone dates marked on their sides, and heaps of old ledgers and journals; with pictures of ships on the walls, and a model of one of antique build, fully rigged, over an old dark oak press at his back. Mr Dunnage had a full fresh, Anglo-Saxon countenance, which, though I at first thought rather grave and cold, after a few minutes’ conversation seemed to beam with kindness and good nature. He looked grave as we entered, and having motioned us to be seated, shook his head as he remarked, “I have no news, lieutenant, of the brig, I am grieved to say. Have you anything to report.”

“The worst surmises only, sir,” said Mr Vernon; and he then gave him an account of our having picked up the master and crew of the *Helen*, and of the outrage they had suffered.

Mr Dunnage listened with deep interest.

“Ah! that fully accounts for a circumstance which has puzzled me exceedingly. That very brig, the *William*, belongs to my friends, Hodge,

Podge, and Company, of Liverpool; and I am sure they would have consigned her to me, had they intended her to come here. Here she came, however, consigned to a Jew, a man of very disreputable character; and I understand that she discharged but a very small part of her cargo. We must try and find out what has become of it, and see if Captain Hudson can identify any portion of it. When I sent down to inquire about her, I found that she had sailed again, and, it was reported, had proceeded up to the Levant. Altogether my suspicions were very much excited, especially when I found, on inquiry, that Delano was her master. Her crew, also, were said to have come on shore in gay-coloured silk waistcoats, and to have spent more money than seamen are likely to have lawfully possessed."

"Oh, let us at once try and find out what was the nature of the cargo sold by Delano," exclaimed Mr Vernon. "Can you tell me what the *Ariadne* had on board?"

"I see the drift of your question," answered Mr Dunnage; "but I do not think that, foolhardy as Delano may be, he would have ventured to offer for sale articles which had been shipped from this, and would be so easily recognised. No; all that we can hope to prove without a doubt is, that the *William* is the brig which plundered the *Helen*; and we must then take means to find out, without delay, what has become of her, and to put a stop to her career. Stay; let me consider what is best to be done. The Admiral will, I am sure, gladly send all the men-of-war that can be spared to look out for her."

"I have thought of that already," said Mr Vernon; "but, my dear sir, I suspect that such would not be the best way to capture the pirate crew. They would very likely hear of our being on the search for them, or would become suspicious at the sight of a man-of-war, and contrive to make their escape. We shall require to use great caution to get hold of so clever a fellow as Delano is described to be. I would propose rather to fit out a small merchantman, a xebeque or schooner, and to man her with men-of-war's men. We may, in a craft of that description, be able to get alongside the *William*, unsuspected, and to capture her without loss of life."

"A capital idea," exclaimed Mr Dunnage. "I have a craft in my eye, which I

think you will consider suitable for the object; and I am certain the merchants here will gladly defray all expenses."

So the matter was settled; and as neither Mr Dunnage nor my lieutenant were men who would allow the anchor to block up Mr Neptune's cottage door for many days together, we immediately set off to have a look of the vessel proposed. She was a small schooner, the *Thisbe*,—most vessels in the Mediterranean have classical names; and the result of the examination was the opinion that she was well suited for the purpose.

"Now, my dear lieutenant," said Mr Dunnage, "do you go on board and beat up for a crew. I will run round to the merchants to get them to share the expenses. By this evening she shall have her stores on board and be ready for sea. Don't suppose I'm bragging. Where there is a will there is a way."

Off ran our excellent friend, while Mr Vernon and I hastened on board to describe the proposed plan to Captain Poynder, and to get his leave to borrow some of the *Harold's* men. As may be supposed, there were plenty of volunteers for the expedition,—indeed, everybody wanted to go; but we had to wait patiently till Mr Dunnage came on board, as he promised to do, to announce what arrangements he had made. When I got back into the berth, I found all the youngsters discussing the subject of the disappearance of the *Ariadne*. It was the general opinion that it was possible Delano and his crew might have fallen in with her; but still she had had ample time to reach Gibraltar. We made up our minds that Mr Vernon would be placed in command of the expedition, and we each of us hoped to be selected to accompany him. Adam Stallman, who was in the berth, did not make any remark; but after a time he got up and went on deck. He looked, I observed, more sad and full of care than even Mr Vernon. At last Mr Dunnage came on board with a despatch from the Admiral to Captain Poynder. Mr Vernon was soon afterwards sent for into the cabin. The consultation was very short. When he came out, he informed Adam Stallman that he had applied for him as his mate, and, to my great satisfaction, told me that I was also to accompany him. I was very anxious to get Dicky Sharpe; so, mustering up all my courage, I boldly asked Captain Poynder if he might be of the party.

"I suppose Mr Du Pre can dispense with his valuable services in the ship

for a time," replied the captain; "so, if Mr Vernon will take charge of him, and you, Mr D'Arcy, will undertake that he gets into no mischief, he has my leave to go."

The truth was, the captain was glad to allow the mates and youngsters to go away in small craft, as he considered that they thus gained more knowledge of seamanship, and confidence in their own resources, than they could have done by remaining on board. Twenty picked men were selected from among the volunteers to man the schooner. Mr Hudson, and four of his crew, were also asked to go, to identify, if they could, the pirates. As soon as the volunteers had got their bags ready, and been mustered, we were ordered away in the boats to bring the schooner down to the frigate, from up a creek in the harbour where she lay; while the purser was directed in the meantime to get provisions and stores in readiness for her. Where a body of disciplined men labour with a will, a large amount of work can be done in a short time; and thus, before night set in, we had the *Thisbe* fitted for sea, provisioned, stored, and watered. We shipped, likewise, four light guns, and a supply of small-arms and cutlasses, that we might make sure of mastering the pirates, in case the plan of taking them by surprise should miscarry. We were also ordered to take with us our rough clothes, that we might look as much as possible like merchant seamen. Our shipmates in the *Harold* gave us three cheers as we cast off from her side, and, with a light breeze and a clear sky, stood out of the harbour. The merchants had left full discretion to Mr Vernon to proceed as he judged best from the information he might obtain; but they suggested, at the same time, that he should run through the Greek islands, among which it was probable the pirate would have gone; and, not finding her there, proceed to Smyrna, where it was reported one of the pirates had said they were going. Both Mr Vernon and Adam Stallman had been on shore all day picking up what information they could. Among other things, they found that the crew of the *William* had been very profuse in their expenditure on shore; and, as if to account for the quantity of cash they possessed, had said that they had the luck to fall in with an abandoned vessel. To show, however, how difficult it is for rogues to agree in a false story, one had said that they had met her in the Bay of Biscay, and another, inside the Straits, while a third had the audacity or blind folly to declare that the name was the *Helen*, though the others gave her different names. As soon as it was known that suspicions were attached to the crew of the *William*, several

tradesmen came forward to say what they knew about them. One of these gentlemen said that he thought it rather odd, as I think indeed he might, when one of the men ordered twenty silk waistcoats of him of different gay patterns, and paid the price down at once, while another bought six green coats. I dare say Mr Snip charged him a full price. He declared that he had not sufficient reason to give any information to the police about the matter, as seamen were curious fellows, and sometimes fond of displaying fine clothes. Another had spent large sums in a jeweller's shop, and had gone out with several gold chains about his neck. From what was reported, indeed, it appeared that the wretched crew had spent a large part of their ill-gotten wealth. To account for their having so much cash, it was ascertained that they had at first gone to Leghorn, where Delano had doubtless disposed of some part of the cargo. It is only surprising that the authorities at Leghorn had not detained her, when there were so many suspicious circumstances about her. Thus, all the time that the wretches were under the idea that their crime was unknown, and themselves unsuspected, they were insuring the means of their own detection and capture. I kept the first watch, with Adam Stallman, the night we sailed, when he made the above remark, and many others.

"You will observe, D'Arcy," said he, "as you go through life, that evil-doers nearly always lay nets for their own destruction: I might, I think, safely say always. These men have already given us evidence which must be sufficient to convict them; and, if not, depend on it, we shall find it before long. Now, how do you think this happens? Because, as I believe the Evil Spirit is ever going about seeking whom he may devour, he tempts men to commit sin; and then so blinds their minds, that they can no longer form a right judgment, even to save themselves from the detection of their fellow men. His temptations, also, are so weak and frivolous, when viewed in their proper light, that, did not one know the folly of man, one would be surprised that he could venture to make use of them. His baits are always of a tinselly or shadowy nature, either worthless when caught, or altogether illusions, as useless to people in general as the gold chains and silk waistcoats are to these rough pirates. Should it not make our hearts sink with sorrow, when we see the worthless wealth, the empty titles, for which men barter away their souls?"

I agreed with Stallman as to the correctness of his remarks. My excellent

messmate was very fond of endeavouring, in a similar mode, to give instruction to the youngsters brought in contact with him. To do him justice, he contrived to do so in a more interesting way than my account might leave my readers to suppose. We had a fair wind, though light, for the first twenty-four hours, and the schooner made good way; but at the end of that time it shifted round to the eastward, a regular sneezer came on, the sea got up, and, close-hauled, the little schooner was soon ploughing her way through the foaming waves. My long service in the cutter made me perfectly at home; but Dicky Sharpe, who had never been in a small craft in his life, was very soon done up. He threw himself down on a locker in the little cabin aft, looking the very picture of misery.

“Oh! D’Arcy, my dear fellow, do have the kindness to heave me overboard,” he groaned out. “I can be of no further use to any one in this world, and it would be a charity to put me out of it. It would, indeed, I assure you.”

“Oh, nonsense, Sharpe,” I answered. “You are speaking gross folly: only your sea-sickness excuses you.”

“Now, don’t scold me, Neil,—don’t,” he replied. “If you felt as I do, you would not be inclined to be very sensible.”

“Well, then, get up, and be a man,” said I. “If you give in like that, and fancy yourself dying, and all sorts of things, you deserve to be thrown overboard; though I’m not the person going to do it.”

“All hands shorten sail!” sung out Adam Stallman, who had charge of the deck.

I sprang up the companion-ladder, followed by Dicky, and from that moment he forgot all about his sea-sickness.

We soon got the little craft under snug canvas, and time it was to do so; for, as man-of-war’s men often do small craft, we had been treating her like a big ship, and carrying on till the last moment. Never had the *Thisbe* been shoved through the water, probably, at the rate we had lately been going; but more haste the worst speed, as we ran a great chance of proving to our cost, for we were very near carrying the masts over the sides, or making the small craft turn the turtle.

For two days we beat up against the gale, not one of us keeping a dry thread on our backs; but after forty-eight hours of a good honest blow, the wind seemed to have done enough for the present, and turning into a light baffling breeze, left us to make an easy, though slow, passage across the blue calm sea. This sort of weather continued till we made the mountainous and wild-looking coast of the island of Cephalonia. We ran in close along shore, as there are no rocks to bring up a vessel; and, standing up a deep bay on the western side, with Guardiana, or Lighthouse Island, on the north, dropped our anchor off Argostoli, the chief town. Most of the people were ordered to keep quiet below, while Mr Vernon, in plain clothes, went on shore in the dinghy. He came back in a short time, and reported that he could gain no tidings answering to the description of the *William*.

My own knowledge of Cephalonia is but slight; but Stallman, who had been there before, gave me some information about it. It is one of the Ionian Islands, under the protection of England, and had an English garrison, at that time consisting of about five hundred of the rifle brigade. Thanks to Sir Frederick Adams, the country appears to be in a flourishing condition; the roads are excellent, and the inhabitants cultivate not only the fertile valleys, but every inch of soil to be found among its rocky heights. There is another neatly-built and pleasantly—situated town, called Luxuria, about three miles from Guardiana.

If we thought Cephalonia interesting, Zante, the next place at which we touched, was far more so. Its citadel occupies a lofty hill, situated at the head of a deep bay. The citadel, bristling with guns,—the town, with its steeples and domes,—and the surrounding country, with its groves of olives, its fields of waving corn, and its villas and hamlets, presented to our eyes a scene of surpassing loveliness. Not a word of information could we obtain of the objects of our search; so we again weighed anchor and stood on towards Corfu, the most beautiful and interesting of all the Ionian Islands, within sight of the lofty and picturesque mountains of Albania. The citadel of Corfu, standing on an island on the southern side of the town, may, from its lofty position, surmounted by a lighthouse, be discovered at a considerable distance out at sea. Its southern side is completely inaccessible, and art has rendered the other sides equally difficult to ascend; so that it is almost, if not entirely, impregnable. The island is connected to the mainland by a bridge, at the end of which is the

fine open place called the Esplanade, extending from the west side of the bay, to the palace of the Lord High Commissioner on the east. Most of the streets run at right angles to each other; the principal, the Strada Real, runs to the gate which forms the chief entrance to the town. The houses are for the most part built in an irregular and slovenly manner; and even the public buildings cannot boast of much beauty. The inhabitants, of the town especially, are a mixture of Greeks and Venetians. In the country the population is more purely Greek. The roads, constructed chiefly by fatigue parties from the garrison, are excellent, and extend to every corner of the island, and must contribute much to its material prosperity. At all events, British rule has been of great benefit to the Ionian people. It might have been of greater. More might have been done to educate and improve the people, both morally and religiously; but had they been left to themselves, they would most probably be in a far worse position than they now are.

Our inquiries here were as little satisfactory as at other places; and we were just tripping our anchor, when a merchant-brig, coming up the harbour, passed us. Mr Vernon hailed her, to learn where she came from.

“Smyrna,” was the reply.

She brought up near us, and he went on board. He returned shortly with more animation in his countenance than I had long seen there.

“I have at last notice of the fellow,” he said. “A vessel answering the description of the *William* was in Smyrna harbour when the brig came out. The crew, by their conduct, seem to have excited some suspicion; and my only fear is that they may find it not safe for them to remain, and will, therefore, take their departure.”

This information put us all in spirits, for we had begun almost to despair of catching the pirate after all. Not a moment was lost in getting under weigh, and in making all sail the schooner could carry.

We had a fair wind, and nothing worthy of note occurred on the passage, till we made the entrance of Smyrna harbour, in the outer port of which we dropped anchor. Mr Vernon then dressed himself like the mate of a merchantman, and with one of our own people, and one of the crew of

the *Helen*, prepared to leave the schooner's side in the dinghy. Just at the last moment I mustered courage to beg that he would let me accompany him. I had rigged myself in plain clothes, and might, I fancied, have been taken for a steward, or the captain's son. Mr Vernon considered for a moment.

"Yes, come along, D'Arcy," said he. "You will not do us any harm in that dress, and your eyes and judgment may be of service."

I was delighted at the permission I had gained, and eagerly jumped into the boat. Away we then pulled up the harbour, in the lazy fashion of a collier's crew. We scrutinised narrowly each vessel in our course, but none answered the description of the *William*. At last John Norris, the seaman from the *Helen*, exclaimed—

"There, sir, that's her; inside the barque there. See, she's got her fore-topsail loosed, and there's the name of the maker on it—the very thing which first let us know that she was the *William*."

To make more sure that the man was not mistaken, we pulled up the harbour a little way, and then touching the shore, so as not to excite the suspicion of the pirates, should they by chance observe us, we passed close by the vessel on our return. There was, I thought, as I watched her, a dark, ill-boding look about her; but that might have been fancy. One man only was to be seen. He was walking the deck, with his hands in his pockets, and occasionally looking over the side. He caught sight of us as we pulled by, and seemed to be watching us narrowly. I felt almost sure that he suspected something was wrong; but probably he had got a habit of scrutinising everything which approached him, as a London pickpocket does when he knows that the police are aware of his course of life. As we dropped past the brig's quarter, I got a better view of his countenance, and I felt sure that I had seen it before. It was that of a man I supposed to have been hidden long ago, with all his crimes, beneath the waves—no other than Bill Myers. It was a countenance I could not readily forget, after our encounter in the cavern. Then, in spite of all probabilities, he had contrived to escape from the breakers of the Portland Race. I was afraid to look up again, lest he should also recognise me, and give the alarm to his shipmates; indeed, I was not at all satisfied that he had not already suspected our intentions. A small boat was floating astern of the

brig. He watched us for some time, as we returned towards the schooner, and as long as I could observe him, he was keeping his eye on us. We lost not a moment, on returning on board, in getting out a merchantman's long-boat, which we had brought with us. She pulled four oars, and was a large, roomy boat. Besides the hands to pull her, eight of our men were stowed away under a tarpaulin, which was thrown over them, to look exactly as if it were covering up some merchandise. All hands under the tarpaulin were strongly armed, and arms were placed in readiness, stowed away for the use of those who were pulling.

Mr Vernon again changed his dress, and I followed his example, lest Myers—or the man I took for him—might recognise us. With beating hearts we once more left the schooner. We pulled slowly up the harbour, and soon came in sight of the pirate brig. The people, who had probably been at their dinners when we before passed, were now some of them aloft, fitting the rigging, and others working on deck. It required, therefore, careful management on our part to take them by surprise. We pulled up, as if we were going to pass them at some little distance on the starboard side. The men imitated admirably the lubberly, sluggish fashion in which some merchant seamen handle their oars. Just as we were abeam, each of the two men pulling our port oars pretended to catch crabs, and this suddenly brought the boat broadside on to the brig's side. Before, however, we could hook on, even the hands aloft seemed to suspect that something was not right, and came sliding down the rigging. But notwithstanding this, we were too quick for them, and before they could get below to alarm the rest, the party under the tarpaulin had thrown it off, and we all together sprung up the sides, and attacked every one we encountered. Some fought desperately. One fellow tried to throw himself overboard; but we soon overpowered them, and had them lashed hands and feet. To rush into the cabin was the work of a moment. The door was locked, but we burst it open. The noise made the captain, who was in his hammock, start up. He gazed at us for a moment, wildly and fiercely, and then drawing a pistol from under his pillow, fired it at us. The ball passed close to Mr Vernon's ear, and buried itself in the bulkhead. With a savage oath, the pirate was drawing out another pistol, when we threw ourselves on him and seized his arms. The weapon went off in the struggle, and very nearly finished my career—the ball actually taking off the rim of my tarpaulin hat. Before he could make any further resistance, three of our people followed us into the cabin, and we soon had him, with his arms

lashed behind him, and his feet secured together. While the operation was going on, he glanced at us like a tiger, but did not utter a word. The remaining few of the pirates, who had been asleep forward in their hammocks, had been secured without resistance. I looked round for Myers, or the man I had taken for him, but he was nowhere to be seen.

Just as we had finished securing Delano, I bethought me that I smelt an unusual sulphurous odour. A dreadful suspicion had seized me. Outside the main cabin was a door, leading to a smaller one. I forced it open, with a strength I did not think myself capable of exerting. I felt that there was not a moment to be lost. On the deck were a couple of casks, and a slow match, burning at one end, communicated with one of them. I cannot say that I thought, and yet I was conscious, that in another moment I and all on board might be blown into eternity. I know not what impulse moved me; but, bending down my mouth, I seized the burning match between my teeth, and, though it much burned my lips and tongue, held it there till it was extinguished. Then, overcome by the excitement of my feelings, I sunk down over one of the casks. There I lay for a moment, almost unconscious of anything. I need scarcely say that the casks were filled with gunpowder. I should have fainted had not Mr Vernon come in, and had me carried on deck.

“Your presence of mind has saved all our lives, D’Arcy, and I can never forget it,” he exclaimed. “But we have still more work to do. Lift off the hatches, my lads.”

This order was quickly obeyed. With eager haste he hunted through every part of the ship. I guessed at length what was in his mind. He was seeking to discover any property of the Normans, or any articles which might have been on board the *Ariadne*. It was a moment of dreadful anxiety. Nothing, however, was to be found which could lead us to suppose that the *Ariadne* had fallen into the power of Delano. Mr Vernon had directed Adam Stallman to get the schooner under way, and to bring her up alongside the pirate brig, as soon as he calculated we could have taken possession. She now appeared, and, furling sails, dropped her anchor close to us. The scuffle on board the *William* had attracted the attention of the crews of the vessels lying near, several boats from which presently came alongside; and it was, I fancy, at first believed that we were a band of pirates, attempting to cut out a British merchantman. Mr

Vernon explained to them what had occurred, and after a little time satisfied them that we had full authority for what we were doing. I can scarcely describe events in the order they occurred. Our search over the brig having been concluded, and no one else being discovered, we made inquiries among the pirate crew, to learn who had laid the plan for blowing up the ship; but one and all denied having any knowledge of it. Even Delano was taken by surprise when he was told of it by Mr Vernon.

“Ah! that’s the work, then, of that unhung scoundrel, my mate, Dawson,” he exclaimed. “It was a thought worthy of him. What! and has he escaped?”

“We found no one who appears to be your mate,” said Mr Vernon. “But what could have induced him to commit such an atrocious act?”

“To try and save his own neck by sending us all to perdition before our time,” exclaimed Delano, evidently for the moment forgetting all caution, from his feeling of exasperation, and thus clearly inculpating himself.

“Where do you think he has gone, then?” inquired Mr Vernon, quickly, hoping to gain further information from the pirate in his present mood.

“That’s not for me to say,” he replied; but not another word could we elicit from him on the subject.

He kept his fierce eyes glaring on us as we searched the cabin. We came on a box of cigars in one of the lockers.

“Ah! bring me one of those,” he growled out. “You will let a man make himself comfortable in his own cabin, at all events.”

A seaman, as sentry, had been placed over him, with a pistol in his hand.

“May I give it him, sir?” asked the man.

“No; not on any account,” replied Mr Vernon; “but do you, D’Arcy, light one and put it in his mouth.”

As I stooped down to follow my superior’s directions, I fancied the pirate would have tried to bite off my fingers, he gave so vindictive and fierce a

look at me. As I stood by him, I asked, “Has your mate, whom you call Dawson, ever been known by the name of Myers?”

“What’s that to you, youngster? Most men have more than one name,” was his somewhat equivocal answer.

His manner, however, rather confirmed me in my suspicion that the man I had seen on deck was no other than the daring smuggler we had so often tried in vain to capture in the cutter. Having thoroughly examined the ship, we transferred Delano and five of his crew into the schooner, while the remainder were secured on board the brig, into which Adam Stallman and Sharpe, with ten of our people, were sent as a prize crew. Before sailing, Mr Vernon went on shore to report to the English Consul, as well as to the Turkish authorities, what had occurred. He got great credit from the merchants for the mode in which he had captured the pirate. It appeared that even there the conduct of the crew had begun to excite suspicion; but as it happened to be nobody’s business to inquire into the affair, they would have escaped, had we not opportunely arrived, that very day.

No information could be obtained of the missing mate. He had not been seen to land, and no one had heard of him. The dinghy, however, having disappeared from the brig’s stern, was sufficient proof that he had effected his escape in her. I was too much occupied all the time I was at Smyrna, to make many observations about the place. Figs are the great staple produce and subject of conversation for the greater part of the year, enlivened now and then by a visit from the plague, and then people talk about that; but at the time I speak of, I do not know that it had ever occurred to the inhabitants that they had the means in their own hands of avoiding its constant presence by properly draining their city. I have since, from the observations I have made in my course through life, come to the belief that there is not an ill which afflicts mankind which they have not the means of mitigating, if not of avoiding altogether.—But to return to my narrative. As there was nothing more to detain us at Smyrna, the two vessels made sail, and shaped a course for Malta.

Chapter Seventeen.

Voyage to Malta—The Repentant Pirate—The Plague—A Squall—Bobby Smudge proves Useful—Attempt to Capture the Schooner—Trial of the Prisoners—Their Execution—The young Pirate's Dying Counsel.

We had been five days at sea, and a fair breeze, though somewhat light at times, had sent us tolerably well on our course. A strict watch had been kept on the prisoners. All seemed very unconcerned as to the almost certain fate which awaited them. They ate and drank, and laughed and conversed among themselves, as if they were to be released at the end of the voyage. One of their number, however, who had received a severe hurt in the scuffle when they were captured, was in a very different temper. He kept as far apart from them as he could, and joined neither in their jokes nor conversation. He was far younger than the rest; and as I watched him I observed an expression in his countenance which would not have been there had he been a hardened villain. He seemed grateful to me also for noticing him, and I consequently frequently took an opportunity of saying a word to him appropriate to his situation.

"I should like to read, sir, if I had a book," he said to me one day. "I once was used to reading, and it would be a great comfort."

I promised to try and get him a book. When I told Mr Vernon of the man's request, he advised me to lend him my Bible. "He may not care for it at first," he observed; "but as he wishes to read, he may draw instruction and comfort from it; and it may, by God's grace, enable him to perceive the evil of his career."

I accordingly took the pirate my Bible—it had been my sainted mother's. The unhappy man's eye brightened as he saw it.

"Well, sir, I was ashamed to ask for it, and I knew not if one might be on board; but that is the book I wanted."

I left it with him, and he was constantly reading it attentively and earnestly; nor did he allow the sneers and jeers of his companions to

interrupt him. I had perceived a considerable change in him since he was brought on board; and he every day seemed to grow thinner and weaker. I thought that he was dying; and I believe that he was of the same opinion.

Some bulkheads had been run up in the after-part of the hold to form a cabin for Delano—not for his own comfort and convenience, because he was the greatest villain of the gang; but in order not to allow him an opportunity of communicating with his companions. He lay there on a mattress, with his heavy handcuffs, and his legs chained to staples in the deck, like a fierce hyaena, glaring on all who looked at him. I should not, however, picture him properly if I described him as a wild-looking savage. On the contrary, there was nothing particularly objectionable in his face and figure. His face was thin and sallow, without much whisker; his features were regular, and could assume a very bland expression; his figure, too, was slight and active, and his address not ungentlemanly: but it was his eye, when either sullen or excited, which was perfectly terrible. Conscience he seemed to have none: it was completely dead, as were all the better feelings of which our nature is capable: they were destroyed, too, by his own acts—his long unchecked career of wickedness. Once he had been gay, happy, and innocent; but no good principles had ever taken root in his heart. Very early, those a mother's care had endeavoured to instil into him had been eradicated; and step by step—slow at first, perhaps—he had advanced from bad to worse, till he became the consummate villain he now was. But I am forestalling the account I afterwards got of him.

We had three officers' watches on board the schooner. Mr Vernon kept one, I kept another, and an old quartermaster we had with us kept the third. Mr Vernon, in compassion to poor Bobby Smudge, had applied for him as cook's boy, to get him out of the way of Chissel the carpenter, his master, and in hopes of improving him by a somewhat different treatment to what he had been accustomed. The good effect of considerate kindness was already apparent; and the poor lad seemed most grateful for any encouraging word spoken to him. The best of our men had been sent on board the brig, and we remained only with eight and the *Helen's* crew—a very fair complement, had we not always required two to stand sentry over the prisoners. We had another and a more insidious enemy on board, of whom we wot not, and whom no sentry could control—the

plague—that fell scourge of Asiatic cities. How it came on board we could not discover. It might have been in some of the pirates' clothes, or some of our men might have caught it while they were on shore for a short time; or it might have been concealed in the schooner long before, and only brought forth by a congenial state of the atmosphere. There it was, however. It made its appearance on the fifth day, and in two days carried off three of our people and one of the *Helen's* crew. The pirates escaped unscathed. It seemed, indeed, in no way to alarm them. They laughed and talked, and blasphemed more than ever. We hailed the brig, which had hitherto kept us company, and found that she was free from the affliction; so that, of course, except at a distance, we could hold no communication with her. I will not attempt to describe the appearance of that dreadful disease. It was sad to see the poor fellows attacked, with so little prospect of their recovery; while no one could tell who would be the next victim. As they died they were sewn up in their hammocks, with a shot at their feet, and at once consigned to the deep. Mr Vernon read the funeral service appointed by the Church of England for such an occasion.

After the first man was buried—a fine, active young fellow two days before, apparently full of life and strength—he addressed the crew:—

"Do not suppose the prayers I have read can do any good to him who has just gone for ever from our sight. For your benefit they were offered up. A like fate to his may be that of any one of us before another day has passed; and I would earnestly urge you, for the short time which yet may remain for you, to turn your hearts to God—to prepare for eternity."

Something more he said to the same effect. It was good advice at the proper time. I am sorry to say that it was very little heeded, or, at all events, very quickly forgotten. Two of those who stood by and heard it, were themselves, within two days, called to their last and dread account. Mr Vernon took it very much to heart; anxious and agitated as he had been of late, his nerves were much shaken, and I feared that he would be the next victim. He bore up bravely, like a Christian, for some time; but, as one after another of the crew was taken ill, he succumbed, not to the malady itself, but to very weariness, and was compelled to take to his cot. My commander's illness threw a larger amount of responsibility on me than I had ever before enjoyed. I felt on a sadden grown wonderfully manful, and did my best to be up to my duty. Watson, the quartermaster,

was a great aid to me. The old man seemed never to want sleep. He was on deck at all hours, constantly on the look-out, or seeing that the sentries were on the alert. Perhaps he did not place full confidence in my experience. We had had light winds or calms, with a hot burning sun, and sultry nights, for nearly a week. When this weather commenced, the plague appeared. The barometer had been falling for some hours; but still there was no other indication of a change of weather. A fourth man was taken ill. I had gone below to report the case to Mr Vernon, when I heard Watson's voice, in quick eager tones, calling the people on deck to shorten sail. I sprang up the companion-ladder. The sea was as smooth as glass, and the sky was bright and clear enough in the south-east, whence a small dark cloud came sweeping up at a rapid rate towards us. I perceived that there was not a moment to lose. The people sprang to the halyards and brails; but before all the sail could be taken off the vessel, the squall had struck her. Over she went on her beam-ends. A cry of terror was heard above the roar of the wind in the rigging, and the rattling of ropes and blocks, and the dash of the surging waves. The water almost reached the combings of the hatches: everybody on deck thought we were gone. Two of the men were washed overboard. Watson, who was aft, hove one of them a rope. He seized it with convulsive energy: his life, dear to the meanest, depended on the firmness of his grasp. We hauled him in out of the seething cauldron; but the other poor fellow drifted far away. To the last he kept his straining eyes fixed on the vessel. He was a strong swimmer, and struck out bravely—lifting himself, every now and then, high out of the water, as if that useless exertion of strength could bring him nearer to us. Perhaps he was looking for a plank, or something to make for, to support himself. Unhappily, none was hove to him in time. All hands were too much occupied in the means for preserving their own lives. Weak and ill as he was, Mr Vernon had rushed on deck as he felt the vessel going over. He had ordered the helm to be put up; and Watson had seized an axe, waiting his directions to cut away the mainmast, when the throat-halyard block parted, the peak-halyards had already been let go, and the mainsail coming in of itself, the vessel righted in an instant; then, feeling her helm, and the headsail being yet set, she flew off before the squall. While we were rejoicing at our own preservation, we almost forgot our poor shipmate. Never can I forget the cry of despair he gave as he saw us flying from him. He knew full well that it was impossible for us to return; not a spar or plank was near to support him, to prolong his life even for a few short hours. The brig, also,

was too far away to leeward to render him any help; so that aid from man he had none. Lifting up his arms, with eyeballs starting from his head, he gave one last look at us; and then, uttering a cry of agony, sunk for ever. It had been dreadful to see strong men struck down by the plague, and die by rapid degrees; but I know not whether a scene like this was not still more harrowing. In the course of an hour we had run out of the squall, and the weather had become cool and refreshing. The squall had one very beneficial result, for no other persons were attacked with the plague, and the man who was suffering from it began rapidly to recover. Vernon also sensibly felt the change in the weather, and every day I saw an improvement; though the causes of his illness were too deeply seated to callow the atmosphere to have much effect on him. We very soon repaired the damages which the schooner had sustained, and by the next morning we were all to rights. Our chief anxiety was for the brig. We had lost sight of her in the squall, and we could not tell whether she had been more prepared than we were to meet its fury. Even had she not suffered from the gale, the plague might have broken out in her. Mr Vernon came occasionally on deck, but he was compelled, from weakness, to spend the greater part of the day in his cot, though this was very much against his inclination. We had in vain questioned and cross-questioned our prisoners, to discover if they knew anything of the fate of the *Ariadne*, but not a particle of information could we obtain; and I was myself satisfied that they really knew nothing about her. Our late peril suggested a new cause of alarm to the mind of Mr Vernon, which apparently had not before occurred to him; and he began to fear that the vessel in which the Normans had sailed might have been overtaken by one of those white squalls so common in the Mediterranean, and might have suffered the fate we so narrowly escaped. Since the squall, our prisoners had remained unusually quiet; though, while the plague was aboard, they were as noisy and blasphemous in their conversation as ever. The sick man continued in the same state as before, though he seemed more reserved when I spoke to him than he had been at one time. He continued reading all day, as long as there was light, and asked to be allowed to have a candle to read at night; but this, of course, could not be permitted. There was evidently something working in his mind, which he would gladly be rid of, but could not. Having lost so many hands, the duty fell, naturally, more severely on the survivors; and we had enough to do to keep watch on deck, and a vigilant guard over our prisoners.

One night I had charge of the deck. Besides the man at the helm there was the look-out forward, and two hands lying down by the windlass. There was no moon, and the sky was covered with clouds, so that it was very dark. As I kept moving about, now looking out to windward, now over the lee-side, and then at the binnacle, to see that the schooner was kept on her proper course, I fancied that I saw a dark figure come up the main-hatchway; and while I stopped at the waist, I heard a voice, in a low whisper, say—

“Hist, sir, hist! I want to speak to you.”

“Who is it?” said I, in the same low tone.

“Bobby Smudge, sir; listen: there are not many moments to lose, before we shall all have our throats cut, if we don’t take care.”

This piece of intelligence put me on the *qui vive*, though, remembering Master Smudge’s pranks, I own that I did not much credit it.

“Come here,” said I, rather impatiently, “and let me know all about it.”

“I didn’t like to be seen, sir,” he replied, coming cautiously up to me, and looking round to ascertain that no one was near. “I don’t know, sir, who’s a friend and who’s an enemy aboard here, just now.”

“What do you mean, boy?” I asked.

“Why, just this, sir. That thundering scoundrel below there, is just trying hard to turn all the men’s heads; and if we don’t look alive, he’ll do it, too.”

I now felt that there might be some truth in poor Smudge’s information.

“Go on, my lad,” said I.

“Well, sir, I has to confess that he first tried it on with me. While the people were dying with the plague, and no one was looking on, he called me to him, and told me that he knowed where loads of gold was stowed away—enough to sink the ship and freight another twice the size; and that if I would help him to get his liberty, he’d show it to me, and that I might have as much as I wanted. I listened to him, and thought there

would be no great harm if I was to help him to get free, and save his neck; so I agreed to take a message to the rest of the brig's people, to tell them to keep up their spirits, and to try and get their arms and legs out of limbo. He then told me to hunt in the carpenter's chest for a file, and a cold-chisel and hammer. While I was looking one night for the tools, the thought struck me, all of a heap like—if this chap was to get free, what would he do with Mr Vernon and you, sir, who had been so kind to me, and saved me from so many of that Mr Chissel's finnams? Why, he'll be cutting their throats, to be sure, and making off with the schooner; and where should I then be, I should like to know. So I goes back to Captain Delano, and tells him I couldn't find the tools. He swears a great deal at this, and tells me to go and look for them again; and that if I didn't bring them, he'd be the death of me. How he was to do me any harm while he was chained hand and foot, I couldn't tell; but still I was very much frightened. Well, howsomedever, I keeps a watch on him, and I soon seed that he was trying it on with some of the *Helen's* crew; and at last, that he'd got one of our people to listen to him. How far he had succeeded in getting them over to his plans, I couldn't tell till just now. I had stowed myself away in the coil of the hawser, just before the bulkhead of his cabin, where I lay in a dark shadow, so that no one could see me, when I heard a man talking to him. I made out that he had almost got his fetters off his limbs, and that the other people would be shortly free of theirs; and that they knew where the arms were to be found; and that as soon as they had got them, they would make a rush on deck, and throw overboard all who wouldn't join them. Then they were to carry the schooner to the coast of Africa, to the very place where all Captain Delano's gold is stowed away."

How much of this story might be true, and how much imagination, I could not tell; but it was too serious a matter to allow any risk to be run; so I ordered him to slip below, and to beg Mr Vernon would at once join me on deck with his pistols. He was then to make his way forward, and to rouse up Watson, with directions to him to come to us. Bobby was so quick in his movements, that before a minute had passed they both joined me. They were but just in time, when some dark heads were seen rising up above the combings of the hatchway. Before, however, they had time to make their footing good on the deck, Mr Vernon, Watson, and I had sprung on them, and knocked them below again with the butt-ends of our pistols. At the same time, before they could make another attempt,

the three men forward came running aft, and we quickly got the hatches on over them. There they and the two wretched traitors Delano had inveigled to release them remained, like wild beasts shut up in a cage,—much more dangerous, however, for they had the sentries' muskets, and perhaps other arms which might have been conveyed to them. They were, moreover, driven to desperation, and it therefore required great caution in dealing with them. Mr Vernon had recourse to a *ruse* to assist in damping their spirits.

"Brig ahoy!" he sung out, "send your boat aboard here well-armed; our prisoners have broken loose. Watson," he whispered, "go and get the people up from forward. I suppose you can trust them."

"Ay, ay, sir, they are all true enough," he replied; "it's only one of the merchant-brig's crew, and that poor fellow, Nolan, who was always weak-like. They ought never to have been placed as sentries."

When all the people were mustered, we outnumbered the pirates; but, though we had arms in our hands, so had they; and if we took the hatches off, we could scarcely hope that they would yield without a struggle, which would very probably prove a bloody one. Still, if we let them remain below, they might commit some mischief—very probably set the ship on fire, or force their way out through the bulkheads, either forward or aft, when we were not expecting them. While this state of things was continuing, I happened to look over the side: my eyes caught sight of an object looming through the darkness.

"A sail on the weather bow!" I sung out, with no little satisfaction.

We hauled up a little, and stood for her. She had seen us and shortened sail.

"What vessel is that?" I inquired.

"A prize to his Majesty's ship *Harold*," answered the voice of Adam Stallman.

"All right; we want your aid. Heave-to, and send your boat aboard, with the people well-armed," I sung out.

In a few minutes Adam himself stood on our deck, with four well-armed followers. The inconvenience of a lengthened quarantine, to which he would be exposed, was not, under the circumstances, to be taken into consideration. A plan of operations was soon settled on. We agreed to have lanterns ready, and by swinging them down into the hold the moment the hatches were off, we hoped to discover where the pirates were stationed, and thus, if they attempted to fire, to be able to take better aim at them in return. It was an anxious moment. At a signal the hatches were in a moment thrown off. Delano stood like a lion at bay, with a musket in his hand. He fired it at Stallman, and then attempted to spring up on deck. Happily the ball missed its aim, and he was knocked over by several stout fists, which his head encountered, and fell like a log back into the hold. Several shots were exchanged, and the four pirates fought desperately in their hopeless attempt to regain their freedom. They were soon, however, overpowered, and borne down on the deck, without loss of life to either party. The only people who did not fight were the two traitors and the sick pirate, and he remained bound as before, having refused to be liberated. Delano had been stunned by his fall, and when he regained his senses, he found himself again in irons, with additional chains round his arms. This showed him probably that all that had passed was not a dream, as it might otherwise have appeared to him. He growled out curses against his ill-luck, but he had no other means of venting his rage and disappointment. The other men took the matter very coolly. It appeared to me that their minds were too dull and brutalised, and their hearts too callous, to comprehend their awful position. Seared in their consciences, they were truly given over to a reprobate mind. The two men who had been gained over by Delano to assist him we sent on board the brig, exchanging them for two who could be relied on; and now our misfortunes seemed to have come to an end. The young man I have spoken of belonging to the pirate’s crew, after this seemed to sink faster than ever. Mr Vernon, in consideration of his condition, had him removed from the immediate neighbourhood of the others, and placed within a screen in the after-part of the hold. I then, at his request, went to visit him one afternoon. He was sitting up, with the Bible on his knees, and his back resting against the bulkhead, so that the light which came down the hatchway-glanced on his forehead and the leaves of the sacred book. His hair, which was of a light brown (almost auburn, it had probably been, as a lad), was very long, and hung down on either side of his high, smooth, and sunburnt brow. His dress was that of an ordinary seaman, and when

he was first captured it was perfectly neat and clean. I went and sat down on a bucket by his side.

“I have asked to see you again, sir, for you are the best friend I have found for many a year,” he began, in a weak voice, speaking apparently not without pain and difficulty. “From this book I have discovered, at length, the cause of all my crimes, my sufferings, and ultimate doom. Disobedience brought me to what I now am. I never learned to obey or to fear God or man. I was born in the same rank of life in which you move, perhaps with far greater expectations; and when I think of what I might have been and what I am, it drives me to madness, and I wish that I had never been born. My father was a man of property and position, and much esteemed for many virtues. My mother was highly educated and refined, and of religions feeling. It might be supposed that a child of such parents could not but turn out well. Unhappily for me, they loved me much, but not wisely. I was allowed to have my own way in all things, I was never taught to obey. As I grew up, my self-willed disposition became more and more developed. I could not bear constraint of any sort. Too late they discovered their error. I had received at home some little religious instruction; I even knew something about the contents of the Bible, but its spirit was totally beyond my comprehension. At last it was determined to send me to school. I went willingly enough, for the sake of the change; but, not liking it, ran away. I was not sent back, but instead a tutor was provided for me. He was totally unfitted for his occupation, and was unable, had he tried, to make any good impression on me. We quarrelled so continually, that he was dismissed, and I was persuaded to go to school again. Once more I ran away; but this time I did not run home. I wanted to see the world, and I was resolved to become a sailor. I cannot bear to dwell on my ingratitude and heartlessness. I knew that my disappearance would almost break my mother’s heart, and that my father would suffer equally; yet I persevered. I little thought what I was to go through. A fine brig was on the point of sailing for the coast of Africa. I fell in with the master, and offered to go with him. He asked no questions as to who I was, or where I came from; but, wanting a boy, he shipped me at once. The next day we were at sea, and all means of tracing me were lost. I was not ill-treated; for the captain, though bad enough in many respects, had taken a fancy to me. We were to engage, I found, in the slave-trade. At first I was shocked at the barbarities I witnessed, but soon got accustomed to them. We did not

always keep to that business. The profits were not large enough to satisfy our avarice; and even piracy we did not hesitate to commit at times, when opportunity offered. At length the brig was cast away, and many of the crew and all our ill-gotten gains were lost. I, with two or three others, who escaped, shipped on board a Spanish slaver. We changed from bad to worse. Knives were in constant requisition; more than once I dyed my hands in blood. I gained a name, though a bad one; and was feared, if not loved. Such was the training—such the scenes of my youth. After a time I began to weary of the life, and wished to see English faces, and to hear English spoken once more; so, finding a vessel short of hands returning home, I ran from the slaver, and shipped on board her. We were cast away on the south coast of England; many of my shipmates never reached the land. I was picked up by a boat's crew when almost exhausted, and was carried by them into a cave near the shore.

"They belonged to a large band of smugglers,—their leader one of the most daring and successful on the coast. I was too much hurt to be moved for some days, and passed the time listening to their adventures, which they were at no pains to conceal. I became so much interested in their mode of life, that a few words of encouragement from their chief, who was known under the name of Myers, induced me to join them. I thought I would take a few cruises with him before I paid a visit to my home, to inquire for my father and mother. A wild life I spent for some time. Our lawless occupation led us into many acts of violence, in which I was never backward. One you are cognisant of. I was in the cavern when you and your commanding officer were brought there, and I assisted in hanging you over the pit. I was a favourite with Myers; and he trusted me entirely. When he was obliged to leave the country, I had resolved to start homeward; but was engaged in running a cargo on shore, when I was captured by the revenue men, and after an imprisonment of some months, sent on board a man-of-war. She was bound for the coast of Africa. I laughed at the climate which carried off many of my shipmates; but the discipline of a king's ship did not suit me, and I took an early opportunity of running from her.

"I lived among the blacks for some time; but it was a weary life, and finding a trader homeward bound, I got on board, and at length reached Liverpool. I went to my father's house. Both he and my mother were alive, but I had great difficulty in persuading them of my identity. When

they were convinced of it, they were ready to receive me like the Prodigal. But I had not repented. I was not fit to dwell with them. I felt like a wild beast among lambs. I had not an idea in common with them. When the novelty wore off, my evil habits came uppermost. I asked my father for money. He told me that he wished me to embrace some regular calling, and desired to know what I would choose. I laughed at the notion. He still declined giving me the sum I asked for, but I insisted that I must have it. My looks alarmed him, and at length he reluctantly gave it me. With it I set off for Liverpool, where I soon spent it. Then the first pang of remorse came across me. I thought of the calm quiet of that home for which I had so completely unfitted myself. I was meditating returning to it once more, and asking my father to explain his wishes, when, as I was sauntering along the quays, I encountered Myers. He was much disguised, but he knew me and stopped me. He told me that he was engaged in a scheme by which a rapid fortune was to be made; that he could not then unfold it; but that, if I would ship on board a vessel with him, he would explain it when we were at sea. My impulse was to refuse; but I was tired and weary, and consented to enter a tavern with him. He there plied me with liquor till all my scruples vanished, and I became once more his slave.

“What occurred on board that vessel I cannot now tell; but you will probably know ere long. But the favour I have to ask of you is, that if I die, as I hope to do before our trial, you will find out my parents, and tell them, not all the truth, but how you encountered me on the point of death, and that I died repentant.”

I promised the unhappy young man that I would do as he desired, and, at his request, I took down the name and address of his parents.

I have often since thought, as I recollected this story, that if parents did but consider the misery they were storing up for themselves and their children by neglecting the precepts of the wise King of Israel, they would, oftener than they do, search that book for counsel and advice, and would teach their children also to seek instruction from its copious pages.

Oh! my young friends, remember that you cannot live well without some rule of conduct, any more than you can steer a ship across the ocean without a compass or knowledge of the stars. Then, let me urge you to

take the best rule you can find; and where, let me ask, does there exist one comparable, in any way, to that found in the Proverbs of Solomon? If you would be truly wise, learn them by heart, and remember them always.

We were very thankful when, at length, we reached Malta harbour. Of course we were put into quarantine, but we were relieved from the charge of our prisoners. To his own surprise, as well as mine, Charles Adams—so he called himself—the young man whose short history I have just narrated, still survived, and there appeared every probability that he would be able to undergo his trial. Our first inquiry was to ascertain if any news had been received of the *Ariadne*; but nothing had been heard of her, and poor Mr Vernon was doomed still longer to endure the tortures of suspense.

At last our quarantine was concluded, the pirates were carried off to prison, and we returned on board our ship, which had come in from a cruise just in time to receive us. For several days we did nothing but talk about our adventures with our own messmates, as well as with various people who came off to see us. I got great credit for the way in which I had saved the brig from being blown up; though, as I was as much interested as any one else in the success of the performance, I cannot say that I thought I had done any great thing.

Poor Bobby Smudge came in, too, for his share of praise for having informed us of the plot of the pirates to retake the schooner; and most certainly he had been the means of saving all our lives. No one after this attempted to bully him, and I observed a marked improvement in his appearance and character.

The trial of the pirates came on at once; and the *Harold* was kept in harbour, that we might attend it as witnesses. I will not enter into minute particulars. The leading facts of the case will be of sufficient interest. Evidence had been collected to prove that the *William* had sailed from England with one description of cargo, and that her master had disposed of various articles not among it. To account for this, Captain Delano replied that he had fallen in with an abandoned ship, and had taken part of her cargo out of her. He stood bold and unabashed, as if confiding in his innocence; but his countenance fell when two of his own crew

appeared in the witness-box, and he was informed that they had turned King's evidence.

"Then there is a conspiracy against me, and my life will be sworn away," was his reply.

Nothing that he could say, however, made any one doubt his guilt.

I was in hopes that the young man in whom I had taken so much interest would have been allowed to turn King's evidence, but I found that he had refused to do so.

"No," said he, when asked the question; "I do not wish to preserve my own worthless life by aiding in the condemnation of others. If I am found guilty, I am ready to suffer with them."

Nothing, I found, would alter his determination. When brought into dock, he was far too weak to stand; but there was a look of calm contentment in his countenance—I might describe it almost as happiness—seldom borne by a person in his awful position. His appearance excited much interest in all those who saw him, though few were aware of the mighty change which had taken place within his bosom, and still less of the cause of that change. How different did he look from the rest! No ferocity, no callousness, no stoical indifference, no assumption of innocence could be traced in any one of his features. Calm and thoughtful, he sat watching the proceedings, as one deeply interested in their result. People could scarcely believe their senses when they heard the evidence given against him. Who more blood-thirsty, who more eager for plunder, who so regardless of the terror and sufferings of others, as Charles Adams?

From the evidence brought out in court, it appeared that Delano, late master of the *William* brig, belonged to New York, in the United States of America. Though of most respectable parents, at an early age he had taken to evil courses, and was at length compelled to leave his native city for some notorious act of atrocity. His plausible manners, however, enabled him after a time to get command of several merchantmen in succession. One after another, they were cast away under very suspicious circumstances. The underwriters suffered, and the owners built larger and finer vessels, while he had evidently more money than

ever at command. It now appeared, by the evidence of one of the prisoners who had sailed with him, that one at least he had purposely cast away, for the purpose of obtaining the insurance, she being insured for a far larger amount than she was worth. After this he got into the employment of a highly respectable firm in Liverpool, and sailed in command of a fine brig for the Mediterranean. Here was a good opening for making an honest livelihood; but such a course did not suit the taste of Delano. Several of his crew, brought up in the slave-trade, or as smugglers, were ill-disposed men; others were weak, ignorant, and unprincipled, and were easily gained by his persuasions to abet him in his evil designs. Finding, after they had been some time at sea together, that neither his mates nor his crew were likely to refuse joining in any project he might suggest, he boldly proposed to them to turn pirates; and not only to plunder any vessels they might fall in with, whose crews were unable to offer resistance, but, by putting them out of the way, to prevent all chance of detection. They waited, however, till they got into the Mediterranean, and they there fell in with a fine brig, out of London, laden with a valuable cargo. They surprised and overpowered the crew, whom they confined below, while they plundered her of everything valuable. Some of her crew had recognised them. To let them live would certainly lead to their own detection; so they scuttled the ship, and remained by her till she sunk beneath the waves, with the hapless people they had plundered on board. Then they went on their way rejoicing, and confident that no witnesses existed of their crime. They knew not of the Eye above which had watched them; they thought not of the avenging witness in their own bosoms. In the wildest revels and debauchery they spent their ill-gotten wealth. This time they were true to each other, and if any one suspected that their gold was obtained by unfair means, it was found impossible to prove anything against them. It was before this, I believe, that Delano had attempted to carry out some smuggling transaction at Malta, and had been thrown into prison; on being liberated from which, ruined in fortune, he had taken to the desperate courses I have described. He next got command of the *William* brig, in which he was joined by four of his old crew. Two were put in by the owners,—the carpenter and another man. He would willingly have sailed without them. He was also joined by an old comrade, Bill Myers, who had just lost his cutter off Portland. He had no fears of finding any opposition to his projects from his scruples. The *William* lay alongside the *Helen*, which vessel was taking in a rich cargo. He easily excited the cupidity of his

crew by pointing it out to them. His own vessel had a cargo of very inferior value—chiefly, I believe, of earthenware. The *William* sailed a short time before the *Helen*. He first proposed the plan of plundering her to the four old pirates. They did not offer the slightest objection, but expressed their doubts whether all the crew would join them.

“They must be made to do it,” answered Delano, fiercely.

Myers at once acceded to Delano’s proposal. Charles Adams was the next to join them. They now felt themselves strong enough to talk openly of their project. Each man boasted of the deeds of atrocity he had committed with impunity, especially of their last act of piracy, and of the mode in which they had spent the proceeds of their crime. They told tales of the buccaneers of old—of the adventures of pirates in their own day, of which they had heard, and of some with which they were acquainted—of the hoards of wealth they had acquired. When they found that these stories had not sufficient effect with some of their shipmates, they applied to Delano, and liquor was freely served out. Most of those who had before resisted now consented, in their drunken state, to join in the proposed scheme. The most persevering and eager tempter was the mate. If he could not persuade, he laughed away the scruples of the more honest or more timid.

“Detection! nonsense!” he exclaimed. “Who can ever find it out? Who can know it, unless you go and talk of it yourselves? What’s the reason against it? Let’s be men! Let’s be above such folly! If they go to the bottom—why, a gale of wind and a started butt might easily send them there; so, where’s the difference? In one case, their rich cargo would go with them; now, you see, shipmates, we shall get it. So, hurra for the black flag, and overboard with all scruples!”

Now, however glaring the folly and wickedness of such reasoning may appear to us, it seemed very tempting and sensible to the miserable men to whom it was addressed. The carpenter only, and another man, refused to drink, or to participate in any way in the project. They could not, however, turn the rest from their intentions. The treacherous mode in which the *Helen* was taken possession of, I have already described. The carpenter alone held out; the other man pretended to join them, with the hope, it appeared, of saving the lives of their prisoners. When they had

mastered the crew of the *Helen*, the pirates jeered and laughed at them, as they were removing the cargo, and, bound as they were, even kicked and struck them, and treated them with every indignity. They then compelled the carpenter to accompany them on board with his tools, and, holding a pistol at his head, made him bore holes in the ship's bottom. No one appeared to have been wilder or more savage than Adams. Having completed this nefarious work, as they thought, effectually, the pirates left their victims to their fate. They would certainly have returned to remedy their mistake, and to send the *Helen* more speedily to the bottom, when they caught sight of a ship of war in the distance. They watched impatiently, but still the *Helen* floated. At length the strange sail drew near, and, fearful of being found by her in the neighbourhood of the plundered vessel, they stood away under every stitch of canvas they could set. Scarcely had the deed been committed, than each began to fear that the other would betray him; and, as if oaths could bind such wretches effectually, they all agreed to swear, on crossed swords, that they would never divulge what had occurred. They compelled the carpenter and the other honest man to join them in their profane oath, threatening to blow out their brains forthwith, if they refused. It seems strange that men guilty of such crimes should make use of the sign of the cross to confirm their oaths, and call God especially to witness their misdeeds. What extraordinary perversity such is of reason! Yes; but are not those we mix with every day guilty of similar wickedness and madness, when in their common conversation they call on the name of the most high God to witness to some act of folly, if not of vice, of extravagance, of cruelty, or senselessness?

The pirates sailed first for Leghorn, where they sold part of the plundered cargo, and spent the proceeds in a way to excite much suspicion. They then sailed for the island of Sardinia; but they there found that they were already suspected. Nothing could be more foolhardy than their visit to Malta, where the crew spent their money in rigging themselves out in gold chains, silk waistcoats, and green coats. How their conduct should not have excited suspicion, I cannot say; but it does not appear that the people with whom they dealt thought anything was wrong. It is one of the numberless examples to prove that criminals are deprived even of ordinary wisdom. Delano, however, saw, from the way his crew were behaving, that if he remained long at Malta, they would inevitably bring destruction on themselves. Having, therefore, got them on board, he

sailed for Smyrna. On the voyage Myers tried to induce them to plunder other vessels; but none they could venture to attack fell in their way. Their rage against Myers was excessive when they found that he had attempted to blow them up, and that he had done so doubtless for the purpose of getting possession of a considerable amount of treasure which had been left on shore in the hands of an agent of Delano's. I afterwards heard that he had in all probability succeeded, as the agent had stated that he had presented an order from Delano for its payment about the very moment we were taking possession of the brig, and, as he thought, being blown into the air. Search was made for him throughout Smyrna before we left the place, and continued for some time afterwards; but the last accounts had brought no intelligence of him, and it was concluded that he had escaped in disguise.

During the greater part of the trial, Delano had maintained his confidence and composure; but at length the evidence of his own people, and the master and crew of the *Helen*, became so overwhelming that he lost all hope, and, overcome by the most abject fear, sunk down, and would have fallen, had he not been supported. Recovering himself a little, he broke forth into earnest petitions that his life might be spared. He made the most trivial and weak excuses for his conduct, utterly unlikely to avail him anything. He declared that he had been led on by Myers; that his crew had forced him to consent to the piracy; that he had endeavoured to dissuade them from it, and that the fear of death alone had induced him to consent. Nothing he could say could, of course, alter the decision of his judges; and he, with six of his companions, was condemned to be hung at the fore-yard-arms of the *William*, then lying in Quarantine Harbour. It was dreadful to hear the shriek of despair to which Delano now gave vent.

"Mercy! mercy! mercy!" he cried. "Oh, spare my life! I am unfit to die! Send me to toil from day to day in chains, with the meanest in the land; but, oh, take not away that which you cannot restore!"

"Let him be removed," said the judge of the court; and he was borne away, still crying out for mercy.

The miserable man, who had never shown mercy to others, still besought it for himself. The other prisoners said not a word in their defence. One

only voice was heard when all others were hushed in the court. It was solemn, though hollow and weak.

“Our doom is most just. We suffer rightly; and may God have mercy on our souls,” were the words spoken.

I recognised the voice of Charles Adams. I saw him the night before his execution. He was calm and happy.

“O that my fate,” said he, “might be a warning to others! and I should feel still more contented to die.”

He begged to keep my Bible to the last, promising to give it to the chaplain to be delivered to me. I will not dwell on the dreadful particulars of the execution. No Maltese could be found willing to perform the office of executioner. The chief of the police, therefore, ordered a swinging stage to be formed on either side of the vessel, on which the criminals were placed with ropes round their necks, secured to the fore-yard-arms, three on each side. These stages were secured in their horizontal position by ropes rove through blocks made fast to the fore-rigging, with lanyards at the end. As the chaplain reached a certain word in the Service, the seamen stationed at the lanyards were ordered to cut them. This was done, and the stages sinking from under their feet, the miserable men were launched into eternity. A barge was then brought alongside, into which the bodies were lowered, and carried to Fort Ricasoli, at the entrance of the great harbour. Four of the bodies, being sewn up in tarred canvas, were hung in chains to a lofty gibbet; while two were buried beneath it. For many long months afterwards the four pirates hung there,—a terrible and disgusting sight, and an awful warning to all who might be inclined to pursue the same evil course.

The chaplain returned me my Bible the following day. Within it I found a note from Adams, first, thanking me warmly for my attention to him; and it then continued,—“Shameful as is my merited fate, I would that all my young countrymen may know it. Tell all you meet that they are sent into this world, not to live for themselves, but for others,—as a place of trial, not of amusement; that if they would secure contentment now, and happiness for the future, they must, first of all things, learn to conquer themselves; they must overcome their tempers—their passions—their

love of ease—of self-indulgence; they must remember that they are surrounded by snares and temptations of all sorts, all allowed to exist for the purpose of trying them; that the devil is always going about, ever ready to present the bait most likely to lure them to destruction. I entreat you—I adjure you—to make this known wherever you can. The knowledge of this may save numbers from ruin. It cannot too often be brought before the minds of the young. I was ignorant of it. I thought that I had a right to follow my own inclinations,—that it was manly to do so; and, oh! how sorely have I suffered for my ignorance!—how bitterly do I repent my infatuation. Yet, miserable as is my fate, if I can but prove a warning to others, I shall not have lived in vain."

Chapter Eighteen.

Can she be the Ariadne?—Sail for the Reef Coast—Discover the lost Vessel—Make a Prisoner—Adventures on Shore—Visit the old Sheikh—Find Jack Stretcher—How we did the Reefians—Jack and his Hornpipe—Our Flight—Pursued—Escape.

So completely had Mr Vernon's health and spirits given way, that we on board the *Harold* were afraid he would have to leave the ship and go home. At this juncture a merchant-brig came in from the westward, and the master reported that, having been driven close in on the African coast, he had seen a vessel, apparently a complete wreck, on shore. He stated that he had stood-in to examine her more closely, when, seeing through his glass a number of armed men come down and prepare to launch their boats, he judged it prudent to stand-off out of their reach. Mr Dunnage obtained this important information, and instantly brought it on board. Mr Vernon's eye brightened as he heard it; for hope, almost extinguished, once more dawned within him.

Captain Poynder, who felt a deep interest in the fate of Major Norman and his daughter, easily managed to get ordered down to the Barbary coast to examine into the matter. Having ascertained from the master of the merchantman the spot, as nearly as he could describe it, where he had seen the wreck, we made sail for the westward. We came off the coast about dusk, and then hove-to. "Boats away!" was on this occasion a welcome sound; for we knew that it portended that there was work to be done. Mr Vernon commanded one of the boats, and I went with him. Stallman had charge of a second, and Dicky Sharpe, who since our trip to Smyrna had much improved in steadiness, accompanied him; while Stanfield, another mate, went in a third. A light gun was placed in the bow of each boat; and each man had a musket and brace of pistols, as well as his cutlass; so that we were well-armed and ready for anything. We were in high spirits, though we knew full well that it was no party of pleasure we were on; for, if discovered, we might expect some pretty sharp fighting, as the inhabitants of that part of the coast are the most warlike and determined pirates along the shores of the Mediterranean. With muffled oars and in perfect silence we pulled towards where the

wreck was supposed to be. There was no moon; but the stars of a southern clime were shining—as they well know how to do in that region,—so that we could distinguish the dark outline of the coast, backed by a range of high mountains. The only sound was from the splash of our oars, which, as they rose rapidly from the water, let drop a sparkling shower of phosphorescent fire. I steered, while Mr Vernon with his night-glass swept the coast, in the hopes of discovering the wreck. We got close in with the shore; but not a sign of her was to be seen.

“Avast pulling, and let the other boats close up,” he whispered.

When the boats had got near enough, he ordered Stallman to pull to the eastward, and directed me to steer to the west, and Stanfield to follow us. That the coast was pretty thickly inhabited we had strong evidence; for so close in with it were we, that we could hear dogs barking, and music, and even human voices; while now and then the report of firearms showed that some Arabs were coming home from hunting, or were firing off their muskets at some festival or other. We had pulled at least five miles along the coast, when I fancied that I discerned, still further on, some dark object on the sands. We pulled up to it, and there, sure enough, lay a stranded vessel. Mr Vernon now directed Stanfield to wait off about a quarter of a mile, while we went in and tried to board the vessel, to ascertain positively what she was.

“Should any accident happen to us, or should we be taken prisoners,” he continued, “you will wait till nearly dawn to render us assistance, in case you have an opportunity, and then make the best of your way back to the ship. Captain Poynder will then, without doubt, devise some plan for rescuing us or any other persons we may find on shore.” Stanfield, of course, knew very well what he meant by this, and promised to keep a bright look-out, whatever might occur. Using still more caution than ever, we approached the vessel. She lay with her head inshore, in a small inlet, and it appeared much more likely that she had purposely been hauled in there, than that she had been driven on shore. There was ample water for our boat right under her stern. The stern-windows were open. Holding on by the rudder-chain, Mr Vernon climbed up, and got in at a sternport. Without asking leave, I followed his example, and the bowman then handed us up a lantern. I had a match-box in my pocket. We struck a light and lighted the lantern, and then commenced an examination of the

cabin. At the first glance we saw it was that of an English merchantman. There were the state-cabins on either side, the buffets for plate and crockery, the neat book-case, the racks for charts and telescopes, the sofa at one end, and the fireplace, all showing an attention to the comfort of any passengers who might be on board. Everything valuable had, however, been carried away, the more cumbrous articles alone remaining. Mr Vernon looked round with deep anxiety depicted on his countenance. “Yes, D’Arcy, this is indeed the *Ariadne*. I know her well,” he whispered. “I myself put up that book-case, and screwed in those hooks for a cot in the state-cabin. Oh! what can their fate be? I must ascertain it without delay.”

“It would never do to go on shore as you are at present, sir. You would be taken prisoner or murdered outright, to a certainty,” I replied. He was silent for a minute.

“You are right, D’Arcy, you are right,” he replied, in a dejected tone. “The affair requires time and great circumspection. These people are not to be trifled with, I know. Force alone will not succeed, or I am certain Captain Poynder would land every man who can be spared from the ship, and would compel these Reefians to let us know what has become of their captives.”

“Yes, sir, and every man would gladly follow, wherever you might lead,” I replied.

“I know they would—I know they would, D’Arcy,” said he. “But let us take a look over the ship, and perhaps we may find out something to direct our proceedings.”

We opened the cabin-door cautiously, and crept up the companion-ladder. The hatch was off. We got on deck: no one was there. Shrouding the lantern, we crept along the deck, and descended into the main-hold. The entire cargo had been removed. We concluded that the vessel had no one on board, and were about to return, when I suggested that we should look into the forepeak. We therefore moved cautiously, as before, along the deck, and were descending the ladder, when Mr Vernon touched my leg.

“There is some one breathing down here,” he said. “Be prepared for a rush.”

When we got to the bottom of the ladder, as he threw the rays of the lantern round the place, they fell on the sleeping form of a young Arab, dressed in a turban, and his white haick folded gracefully round him. The instant the light fell on his eyes, he started up with a look of mute astonishment, and laid his hand on the hilt of a dagger by his side. Before he could unsheath it, Mr Vernon had thrown himself upon him, and wrenched it from his grasp, while, I following, we without much difficulty secured him; for, though graceful and active in appearance, he had not much muscular power. He did not call out. Perhaps he disdained to do so. But to prevent him, should he show any inclination to call for help, Mr Vernon rather unceremoniously thrust a handkerchief into his mouth.

“Now, hurry, D’Arcy, and call up one of the men to help carry this lad into the boat. Here is a prize worth having indeed,” he said. “He may be of incalculable service to us.” I did as I was ordered, and he quickly got the lad securely bound and up on deck. As we were dragging him along, the handkerchief fell out of his mouth, and he gave a shriek, which showed that he was no willing prisoner. The noise, however, only made us hurry him along the faster down the companion-ladder, and out at the port into the boat. We handed him along into the stern-sheets, and then, Mr Vernon giving the order to shove off, we backed out of the creek, and got the boat’s head round, to pull out to sea. We were only just in tune, for the lad’s cry had attracted the notice of his friends; and we could hear people shouting, as they ran down to the beach, to learn who it was that had cried out. Unfortunately the splash of our oars attracted their notice, and they began firing away at us, as fast as they could load their matchlocks. “Give way, my lads, give way!” cried Mr Vernon, more from habit than that the men required any inciting to pull fast, as the shot came splattering about us. The young Moor made one or two attempts to rise, evidently with the intention of springing into the water, and swimming on shore again; but we held him down; and, as we got further off, he either saw that the attempt would be useless, or, from something he learned from the shouts of his countrymen, he thought it wiser to remain quiet. We were congratulating ourselves on none of the shot reaching us, and fancied that we were getting out of danger, when we saw a dark object glide out from a creek or harbour to the westward, followed by another,

and then another, which we at once made out to be row-boats, pulling probably some twenty oars or so, and famed for their speed. We had the start of them, however, by half a mile or more; and, as our two gigs were far from slow coaches, we did not altogether despair of escaping. Still the odds were fearfully against us; and, even if we were not killed outright, potato-digging and water-drawing for the rest of our days was not a pleasant prospect for contemplation, independent of failing in the object we had in view. This made all hands bend to their oars with redoubled vigour. Happily the row-boats had no guns in their bows, or if they had, the people had forgotten their powder or shot, as the few bullets which reached us now and then were the only missiles we had to dread. Well, away we pulled, with the Reefian row-boats after us, our great hopes being that we should decoy them within range of the *Harold's* guns, and then, if we could bag a boat-load, we might hope to treat advantageously for any prisoners they might have taken. We made the dark, smooth water hiss and bubble under our bows, as we clove our rapid way through it, throwing up a mass of shining foam before us, and leaving a line of liquid fire in our wake. We soon gained more hope of escape, from the rate at which our pursuers came on; and we began to suspect that the boats, probably in the hurry of the moment, were manned with old men and lads, and any one who was at hand; and that they were likely rather to fall off than to increase their speed. This proved to be the case. We gained on them slowly at first, but more rapidly by degrees, till we actually ran them out of sight. Our next business was to find our ship; and I kept a bright look-out for her. Our young captive, meantime, lay at the bottom of the boat, and when he found that we had escaped from his countrymen, he seemed to take things very coolly; and when Mr Vernon assured him that we meant him no injury, he replied, that if we took his life, his tribe would some day cut us up piecemeal, and throw the bits to the jackals. As we were pulling along, we heard a shout, which proved to come from Stallman, who had, of course, seen no wreck; but he had discovered a spot where the water was deep up to the shore, and where there appeared to be no inhabitants, so that he had been able to pull close in, and could have landed, if necessary. We now altogether pulled out to sea, and in another hour fell in with the frigate. She then stood off shore, and by daylight we were out of sight of land, so that the Reefians could not have guessed who their visitors could have been. I think that I before have said that Mr Vernon was a great linguist. He spoke Arabic perfectly, and was thus able to hold communication with our young

prisoner, whose fears, before long, he succeeded completely in silencing, and whose confidence also he soon appeared to have gained. All the morning Mr Vernon was in earnest conversation with the young Reefian, and, by his countenance, he appeared to be gaining information of a highly interesting character. He then went into the captain's cabin, and after a long conversation with him, the ship's course was shaped for Tangiers.

Just before we reached that place, he called me to him.

"D'Arcy," he said, "I have remarked your steadiness and discretion above your years; and as I have a difficult and—I will not conceal it from you—a hazardous expedition to make, in which a companion to assist me would be very valuable, I wish to know whether, if the captain will allow you, you would be willing to accompany me?"

Where is the midshipman who would not have answered as I did, and say that I should be delighted, and that the more danger the better fun? In fact, my heart almost came into my mouth at the proposal; and my only fear was that the captain might put his veto on it.

"Oh! just tell him, sir," said I, "that I have neither father nor mother, nor brother nor sister; and I don't think that the great Counsellor D'Arcy would break his heart if anything happened to me, nor bring an action against him for expending a midshipman uselessly. My other uncle is a naval officer, and he would never dream of objecting."

I do not know if these reasons had any weight with the captain, but he granted his consent to my accompanying Mr Vernon, who forthwith gave me a sketch of his proposed plan of proceeding.

"You must know, D'Arcy," said he, "that the young Reefian informs me that the *Ariadne* was driven inshore by a heavy gale; and that before she had time to haul off, a calm came on, when several boats, manned by his people, pulled off to her. The master, who seems to have been a brave fellow, had no notion of yielding without a blow, and, arming his crew, gave them a warm reception. Several of the Reefians were killed and wounded before they could make good their footing on board. The gallant master was killed, and so were more than half his crew. Major Norman

and the rest of the people escaped without a wound, though they expected to be cut to pieces; but their defence had so excited the admiration of their captors, that they were, instead, treated with considerable kindness, though ultimately marched off as prisoners. Miss Norman was discovered in the cabin; but when it was known who was her father, he was allowed to accompany her. The people who captured the brig belong to a tribe ruled over by a powerful chief, who resides some miles along the coast. He seems to have claimed the brig as his own perquisite; and this youth, who is a relation of his, was living on board to take care of her. Miss Norman and her father likewise became his property, but I cannot speak my gratitude to Heaven, on finding that she is treated with the most perfect respect, while her father is employed in the gardens of the Kaid. His young nephew describes him as a fierce, despotic old fellow, not at all likely to give up his captives, unless compelled by force. He says that he is so very wealthy, that no temptation of a high ransom will influence him. This, however, I am resolved, without delay, to ascertain, and to employ every means in my power to liberate my friends. He seems to owe no allegiance to the Emperor of Morocco, or to any other acknowledged potentate; so that I will not attempt the long business of negotiation, which would, too probably, end in disappointment. At first I thought of taking the lad with me, but then I considered that he would be of more service as a hostage on board; and I have promised him that, if his information be correct, and I succeed in recovering my friends, I will give him an unerring rifle and a silver-mounted dagger, so that I have won him over completely to our interest. As I speak Arabic as well as any Turk, I have resolved to assume the character of a Turkish jewel-merchant on a journey to buy precious stones for the Sultan. I feel that I can act the part very well. How does the plan strike you?”

“Very good; capital, sir,” I answered, the romance of the thing taking my fancy immensely. “But, as I do not speak a word of Arabic, or any Eastern language, I do not see how I am to help you.”

“I have thought of that,” said Mr Vernon. “You must pretend to be dumb; I hope that you will not have to hold your tongue long. I wish you also to take your violin. I do not know that the Turks ever play it; but you must be my slave, you know—a Christian slave, not long captured,—and that will account for your knowledge of so Nazarene-like an instrument. Miss

Norman heard you play once on board, and you will thus certainly attract her notice, and be able to hold communication with her."

"Oh! excellent—excellent," I exclaimed, enchanted at finding the very event I had once dreamed of about to be realised. "When are we to commence our adventure?"

"As soon as I can arrange our costumes, and make other necessary preparations. Captain Poynder, after he has landed us, intends to watch off the coast, and to stand in at night, to be ready to render us any assistance we may require."

Two days after this conversation, a party of travellers were seen issuing from the ancient gates of the city of Tangiers,—in days long gone by, when Charles the Second ruled the land, held by a British garrison, till delivered over to the Portuguese. He who seemed to be the leader of the party rode a strong, active horse, and was habited in long, dark, flowing robes, a turban of many folds of muslin, long yellow boots, and spurs of great size. A large moustache, and a beard bushy and long, almost concealed his month. The ink-horn at his waist, and his want of weapons of defence, showed that he was a peaceable character. A lad also, in an Eastern dress, though of simple and somewhat coarse materials, followed him on a stout mule, which likewise carried a pair of saddle-bags, and a small square chest secured in front. Slung over the back of the youth was a long case, of curious form. A dagger at his side was the only arm he wore. A tall man, well-armed with matchlock and scimitar, rode ahead on a stout nag. On his head was the high red Moorish cap, with many folds of muslin twisted round it. The flowing hair fell over his shoulders, above which he wore a soolham of red cloth, while gaily-worked yellow boots, and a pair of spurs of cruel length and sharpness, adorned his feet. He evidently felt his importance, as the protector and fighting-man of the party. Another personage followed, of inferior rank, with a mule, which carried the chief part of the baggage. The country through which they travelled was of an undulating character, but parched by the suns of summer, the beds of the winter torrents being now stony ravines, and the only green visible being furze and palmetto, and here and there patches of Indian corn not quite ripe, though the stubble of fine wheat and barley extended over a considerable portion of the ground.

“D’Arcy, my boy, how do you like being turned into a young Turk?” said Mr Vernon, calling me up to him, after we had proceeded some way.

I touched my mouth, and pointed to out escort.

“Never mind them,” he replied; “they are, I am assured, faithful to the backbone, and know how matters stand. There is little use of giving such men half-confidences.”

“Then,” said I, “I’ll make play with my tongue while I can. I like the fun amazingly. What do you propose to do, sir, next?”

“In the first place, when we get up to the territory of the old chief, Mulai Mohamed, we must leave our escort and proceed alone to his village. We must present ourselves at his residence, and, inquiring whether he has jewels to sell or wishes to buy others, must endeavour to gain access to the inmates of his harem; or, at all events, we must try to meet with Major Norman, or some of the crew of the *Ariadne*. However, we must be guided entirely by circumstances.”

It was a great satisfaction to me to be able to talk, for I fancied that I should have had to hold my tongue from the moment I set foot on shore. I wish that my space would allow me to describe my journey, for it lasted a considerable number of days, and was very amusing. We pushed on as rapidly as the strength of our steeds would allow, though that was far from fast enough to suit Mr Vernon’s impatience. We met with a variety of adventures also. At night we used to halt, and pitch our tent, and fetch water, and cook our supper; while our followers would sit before the fire, recounting their adventures, or boasting of the deeds of their ancestors or friends, or telling tales of genii or ghouls, and a variety of other beings, in whose existence they firmly believe. As we journeyed on, we killed a quantity of game, chiefly partridges, which crossed our path in great numbers; and now and then we got a shot at a wild boar, and knocked him over. At night, watch was always kept with a good fire, or we should have had the jackals, who were always howling round us, paying us a visit. These beasts the Moors do not object to eat, though they will not touch pig. We one day fell in with an encampment of a powerful tribe, the Sheikh of which insisted on my master, Taleb Moostafa, otherwise Lieutenant Vernon, dining with him. I accompanied him for the pleasure

of looking on, though, of course, I was not expected to eat likewise. On arriving at the tent of the Sheikh, we found him seated within it, on a cushion, covered with thick skin, another being placed for the Taleb, or scribe, for to that learned profession Mr Vernon thought he might venture to belong. A variety of compliments having passed, a table was brought in and placed between them. It was circular, about two feet in diameter, and scarcely more than six inches from the ground, richly inlaid and painted in arabesque. A large bowl, full of a highly-seasoned soup, with some sort of macaroni in it, was first placed on the table. The bowl contained spoons, with which the guests were to help themselves at the same time. Next came a plate of beef, much stewed, and garnished with melons; and lastly a huge dish of kesksoo,—a thick porridge, made of wheaten flour piled up, which the Sheikh attacked most vigorously, while my master attempted to follow his example. When dinner was over, some of the tribe assembled on horseback, and played all sorts of pranks. Some stood on their heads while their horses went; they charged each other at a rapid speed; they changed places with their companions at full gallop; then they would dash up to where we stood, and, discharging their muskets, wheel about and give place to others, who followed at their heels. Some would dash their haicks or turbans on the ground, and leaning from their horses, would pick them up, without for an instant slackening their speed. Next they shot at a mark, a flower on a pile of stones being their target; and certainly they managed to hit it in a wonderful way. The same men, however, would probably have but a poor bag of game to show after a day's walk over the moors in Scotland. Our friendly Sheikh accompanied us some way on our journey on the following day, with many good wishes for our welfare. I must leave out the rest of our adventures, till one evening, Hamed, our chief guide, pointing to a line of lofty mountains which fringed the coast, exclaimed—

"There, most learned Taleb, at the foot of yonder mountains, you will find the residence of the fierce Sheikh you seek. Further we dare not go, as we have no wish to feel our throats being cut. Here we will remain till you return, if you ever do return, which Allah grant may soon be, though I am doubtful of it. If you do not come back, we will report your loss to your friends, and trust they may find means to avenge you."

Taleb Mohammed laughed at this speech, though he saw the difficulties in our way; and next morning, leaving our tents and heavy baggage, we

entered the district of the Reefian chief. It was towards evening that we approached his dwelling, which we discovered from its superior size to the rest of the neighbouring sun-dried brick cottages, thatched with reeds. It was surrounded by a garden, full of melon plants and vines, and many other fruits, delicious in a hot climate; and backed by fields of Indian corn. Before entering the village, we ascended a height, whence Mr Vernon took a long anxious glance over the blue sea with his telescope, which he had brought with him.

“There she is, D’Arcy,” he exclaimed at length, in an animated tone, pointing to a white speck just seen above the horizon, which I made out to be a ship’s royal. “I knew that Captain Poynder would be up to his time. Now we can depend on help from without, if we can but find our friends.”

It was near the time that the voice of the Mueddin, from the summit of the village mosque, announced that the hour of evening prayer had arrived, and called on the faithful to worship Allah, when we entered the village. Without halting, we rode at once up to the entrance-gate of the great man’s abode. Cool confidence afforded us the best chance of success. We were brought up at a porch, with a closed gate, in a high wall which ran round the mansion. We knocked loudly, and after a time the gate was opened by a slave, who salaamed low as he demanded our business.

“To see your great, powerful, and most illustrious master, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera,” said Mr Vernon, in Arabic. “Tell him that I have come to treat with him about a matter of great importance.”

The slave on this disappeared, keeping us outside, though he shortly returned, with two or three more slaves and a couple of armed men. Two of the slaves taking our steeds, the first signed us to advance, and led the way through a garden full of sweet-scented plants, the verbena, the jessamine, and rose, and shaded by luxuriant vines, trailed on bamboo trellice-work over head, the fruit hanging down in tempting bunches within our reach. In front of an alcove, or summer-house, on a rich carpet, sat a stout old man, in flowing robes, and long white beard, which hung down over his breast. We bowed low, and then stood still before him, for he did not offer us cushions to sit on; while Mr Vernon, paying the fullest compliments his knowledge of the language could command, opened his

business.

“I do not understand clearly what all this is about,” said the old Sheikh, in reply. “Jewels to sell and jewels to buy. Perhaps to-morrow I may understand better. Come again in the forenoon, and show me your wares, and we will see what is to be done.”

Taking this remark as a signal that we were dismissed, we salaamed as before, and retired down the garden. We had reached the entrance, when a slave overtook us, and informed us that his master would allow us to sleep in a guest-room, opening into an outer court-yard, on one side of the main entrance. Mr Vernon told me afterwards, that not having any definite plan, he thought it would be wise to accept the Sheikh’s offer with a good grace, as more likely not to excite suspicion. The room to which we were shown was a small one, without windows or furniture, some little apertures over the entrance alone admitting light and air when the door was shut. It had the advantage, however, of enabling us to get out without being observed. Still a great difficulty remained—how we were to obtain any information about Miss Norman in the first place, and how we were to gain access to her in the second. In my character of a slave, I assisted the Sheikh’s slaves in bringing in the box of jewels, the saddle-bags, and saddles, and horse-cloths, as well as our blankets, which we had brought to form our beds at night. Our room being arranged, Mr Vernon told me to remain within, while he went out to try and obtain some information in the village, advising me in the meantime to amuse myself with my fiddle, which had already delighted the ears of many of the believers of the Prophet of Mecca during our long journey. I had some misgivings about his going, for I was afraid that the villagers might suspect his character, and might ill-treat him. For myself I had no fear as long as I could continue to feign dumbness, as my character was easily kept up. He had told the Sheikh’s people that I was a Nazarene lad, who was ignorant of their language. Being dumb, they considered me under the peculiar care of Providence.

After a little time, having recovered my spirits and cast all forebodings from me—which are, after all, but the result of a morbid imagination, or of a want of trust in God’s providence,—I sat myself down on the chest, and pulling my fiddle out of its case, began playing away most vigorously some of the old tunes Hanks had taught me. I had gone through some

five or six of them, when a voice, which I felt sure I had often heard, hailed—

“Hillo! shipmate, what part of the world do you come from?” The faint light which came through the door was obscured by the figure of a seaman.

“Why!” I exclaimed, forgetting that I was dumb, as he stepped into the room,—“why, if I can believe my senses, there is Jack Stretcher himself.”

“What! is that you, Mr D’Arcy?” he answered; coming up to me, and taking my hand. “I should not have known you in that rum rig, sir, if it hadn’t been for your voice, I declare.”

Our errand was soon explained; and he then told me that, having been offered a berth as second mate of the *Ariadne*, he had obtained his discharge from the cutter. To my great satisfaction, he told me that Major Norman was really a slave in the Sheikh’s house, and that his daughter was in the harem. What had become of the rest of the crew he could not tell.

While I had been speaking, I had been scraping away to drown my voice, in case anybody came near. I now urged Jack to go and find the major, to let him know that help was at hand.

“Time enough by-and-by, when he comes in from the fields, where they’ve sent the poor gentleman to work. They put me to field labour at first, but they found out that I was handy as a rigger, so they’ve put me to refitting some of their craft. They’ve given me to understand that if I’ll consent to turn Moor or Turk, or somewhat of that sort, and worship their Prophet, they’ll make me a captain, or admiral for what I know, and will give me one of their black-eyed young women for a wife; but I’ll see them all triced up at their own yard-arms before I changes my religion, or forgets my own faithful rosy-cheeked Poll at home.”

I applauded his resolution, and charged him to adhere to it in ease he should not escape.

“No fear of me, sir, I hope,” he answered. “But, I say, sir,” he added, in a serious tone, “I hope Mr Vernon, who used to be a very nice young gentleman when I knew him in the *Turtle*, ain’t turned Turk in earnest.”

I assured him that he was only acting the part for a short time, which, I believed, was lawful.

“Well, I’m glad of that, sir,” he replied. “But, I say, sir, what do you think?” He looked out of the door, and then came back, and continued,—“I see a number of these Moorish fellows coming here, drawn, it’s pretty clear, by your music. Now I’ll just see if we can’t astonish the natives. Do you strike up a right jolly hornpipe, and I’ll toe and heel it till all’s blue, and see if I don’t make them understand what a real sailor can do with his feet when he’s inclined.”

The idea pleased me amazingly; so I came to the door, and began to scrape away right merrily, while Jack commenced one of the wildest hornpipes I ever saw danced. How he cut and shuffled,—how he crossed his feet and sprang up in the air, and kicked and capered,—it is almost impossible to describe. I could scarcely forbear laughing myself, especially when I saw a number of grave long-bearded Moors assembled round him, with looks of mute astonishment and admiration at his agility.

Mr Vernon soon joined them, and was as much astonished, evidently, as the rest. At last even Jack’s physical powers could hold out no longer, and, exhausted, he threw himself down on one of our horse-rugs near the door. He had, however, not remained there long, when one of the Sheikh’s slaves made his appearance, and, salaaming Mr Vernon, said that his master had been informed that his young follower possessed a wonderful instrument, and a wonderful talent for playing on it, and that he wished to hear him. He intimated also to Jack that he must get up and go through his hornpipe again. Jack, nothing loth, sprang to his feet, and, as he passed Mr Vernon he whispered, “Now’s your time, sir; look about you.”

We and several of the spectators were now forthwith ushered into the presence of the great chief. We found him seated in the garden-porch of his house, a number of lamps hanging from the trees around him. It was a picturesque and romantic scene. Four or five persons—mostly grave old gentlemen with long white beards—sat on cushions on either side of him; while others, in rich dresses, which betokened some rank, stood behind him. He had evidently been having a dinner party, and now wanted an evening entertainment. Mr Vernon salaamed before him, and

asked what was the pleasure of so generous, magnificent, and grand a chief.

“Why, this: Understanding your young slave can play in a wondrous manner, I wish to hear him,” said the Sheikh. “But tell me, O merchant! how is it that he can communicate with my captive, as I am told he does. They must have been acquainted before.”

This question at first puzzled the pretended Turk, but he promptly replied, “O most wise and sagacious chief, worthy of being monarch of the faithful, know that these Nazarenes are in their youth instructed in many arts and sciences. Some play on instruments, some dance, others sing, or paint likenesses of men and beasts, strange abomination as that may appear. Now my slave is one who has learned to play on an instrument, and he who has the happiness to be owned by your highness, is one who has learned to dance.”

“I see, I see,” exclaimed the chief; “and it is a sin that two such accomplished slaves should belong to different masters; therefore, merchant, what price do you fix on yours? for, if he answers my expectations, I intend to become his purchaser.”

This announcement puzzled Mr Vernon somewhat; but, of course, he could not refuse at once.

“He is unworthy of being possessed by your highness,” he replied; “for nature has not allowed him the power of speech. But, rather than speak of that matter, let him show you a specimen of his art.”

He then made a sign to me, and I struck up Jack’s favourite hornpipe; the Moors, old and young, black beards and grey, short and long, forming a circle round him. Up he jumped, and, with arms akimbo, commenced his dance. If he had before shuffled, and kicked, and capered, he now redoubled his efforts, snapping his fingers, clapping his hands, turning and twisting in every conceivable way. Scarcely ever before was such a hornpipe danced. It drew forth rounds of applause from even the gravest of the spectators. The chief was delighted. Turning to one of his attendants, he gave an order, which I did not then comprehend. Mr Vernon had kept outside the circle, to be ready for any emergency which,

as Jack hinted, might occur. I, meantime, played away a variety of other tunes, till Jack, jumping up from the spot where he had thrown himself, made a sign to me to begin another hornpipe. This time he even outdid either of his former attempts; indeed, before, I believe that he was only shamming being tired; for my fingers and elbows began to ache before his legs or breath gave any signs of his wish to end the dance.

“Change the tune, Mr D’Arcy. Wallop-ahoo-aboo! I’ll just give them an Irish jig to keep them staring.”

A jig I played, and a jig he danced, with agility enough to win the heart of any Nora Creina in old Ireland. Then I tried a Scotch reel, and he almost outdid the jig: nor did he cease till he saw Mr Vernon rejoin the circle.

“Now if we haven’t bamboozled the old gentleman famously, my name’s not Jack Stretcher!” he exclaimed with a loud laugh, slapping his thigh; an action which was naturally supposed by his audience to mark the *finale* of his barbaric dances.

Exclamations of wonder broke from the lips of all around; and I, having played a few more airs, we were dismissed, graciously, to our dormitory.

Mr Vernon then told me that, while Jack was dancing, he had managed to speak both to Major Norman and his daughter, the chief having sent for the inmates of his harem to witness the strange seaman’s dancing.

It was arranged that we should the following night try to communicate with the frigate’s boats; and if they could manage to send a party on shore, that we should scale the walls of the harem, and carry off Miss Norman—they being ready to support us. She, at at all events, would be prepared for the emergency.

Mr Vernon told me that, from what he heard, there would be no use negotiating, as the old chief boasted that he never had given up a slave he had taken, and never would. He was also subject to fits of fury, so that no time was to be lost in carrying out our plans. The great difficulty was to communicate with the boats, but Jack undertook the task. While employed in the harbour he had observed where some small skiffs lay, and he declared that he could easily steal off with one of them, and should without difficulty fall in with the boats. The next day was to be

spent in marking out our line of retreat, and in settling the spot at which the boats were to land.

In the afternoon Mr Vernon was sent for to exhibit his jewels, and I went with him. The Sheikh laughed at the idea of he himself having any to sell, but he had no objection to buy some; and that the ladies of the harem might select for themselves, we were ushered to the entrance of its sacred precincts. I kept my eyes very sharp about me, and I saw that, by scaling a not very high wall, we could easily get up to the very door of the harem, which was separated from the main building. I at once recognised Miss Norman, though she was veiled like the rest of the ladies. She came forward to examine the jewels, and looked at several which the Sheikh offered her. One after the other she put them back into the box, till at last Mr Vernon contrived, unobserved, to slip a paper into her hand.

“It’s all right,” thought I. “Miss Norman will now be prepared when we are ready to help her to escape.”

A few jewels were bought; but Mr Vernon signifying that he would be happy to return on the following day, should any of the ladies desire to change their mind, they unanimously declared that he must certainly come.

Several times during the day Jack made excuses for coming up from the harbour, and each tune brought his ample pockets full of rope. As soon as it was dark he came cautiously into our chamber, where we all set to work, and in a short time had manufactured a rope-ladder quite long enough to go over the garden wall.

“Now,” said he, “I must be off, and try and fall in with the frigate’s boats. I have a skiff all ready, but I may have some way to pull; so don’t, sir, make a start till I come back and let you know all’s right.”

Several very anxious hours passed away after Jack’s departure, and Mr Vernon and I at last began to fear that some accident had occurred to him, or that he had missed the boats, and that we should have to risk another day within the old Sheikh’s power. Major Norman and his daughter must have been still more anxious, for they were separated from each other, and less able to account for the delay than we were. At

length our anxious ears caught the sound of a light footstep, and Jack poked his head in at the door.

“All right,” he whispered. “The boats are ready to pull in when I signalise them. While you, gentlemen, go and get the young lady, I’ll be off and call the major.”

Eagerly Mr Vernon and I hurried out, carrying the ladder between us. It was a wonder some of the numerous dogs, found in every Moorish village, did not give tongue at us. We reached the part of the wall nearest the harem. Mr Vernon soon clambered up it, and, hoisting up the ladder, secured one end on the garden side, by pegs in the ground, which we had before prepared; while I held down the outer side. I heard him give a low whistle, as he had arranged. While I was anxiously waiting his return, I felt a hand placed on my shoulder. I started with horror, and almost let go the ladder, for I thought it was a Moor come to capture me, and that our enterprise had failed; but, looking up, I saw Jack’s honest face, and Major Norman behind him.

“I think, sir,” said Jack, “if you were to go over the wall, and help the lady up, it would make quicker work, and it won’t take you long to follow.”

His advice seemed so good that I did as he recommended. Fortunately I did so, for I do not think otherwise the ladder would have kept in its place. I found Mr Vernon waiting at the door of the harem, in despair almost at the non-appearance of Miss Norman. At length the bars within were gently removed, and, the door opening, she stepped forth into the garden. There was no time for greeting. Closing the door, Mr Vernon took her hand, and hurried on to the ladder. Climbing up, he had lifted her over the wall, and placed her in safety in her father’s arms, and I was following, when a door in another part of the building flew open, and a bright light streaming forth, I saw the old chief and a number of his attendants, with arms in their hands, rush out into the garden. I was over the wall in an instant, pulling the ladder after me, and not waiting to see which way they came.

“Fly, sir, fly!” I exclaimed. “The old tiger is after us.”

No second warning was necessary, and Mr Vernon and her father, lifting

Miss Norman between them, hurried along the road towards the beach, Jack and I bringing up the rear, to keep our pursuers at bay. Lights now appeared in different parts of the village, and just as we turned a corner we saw the old Sheikh and his people in hot pursuit of us.

“Run, sir! run as fast as your legs can carry you, and bring up the people from the boats,” cried Jack, as he saw our enemies coming after us, and drawing a cutlass with which he had provided himself from the boats, and buckled to his side. “I’ll keep these chaps off from the young lady till help comes to us, I’ll warrant.”

I darted forward as fast as my legs could carry me. I was afraid every instant of being stopped by some Moor who might dart out from his house; but happily at that time the inhabitants of the village were fast asleep, and as yet there had been no noise to awaken them. Fortunately the old Sheikh was too fat to move fast; and his slaves, probably, had no fancy to encounter the formidable Englishman, whose agility of heel had made them fancy him little short of a Gin, or evil spirit of some sort. At last I reached the little creek where the boats were lying, the men resting on their oars, ready to shove off at a moment’s warning.

“Help! help!” I exclaimed, panting for breath. “Help! or Mr Vernon will be retaken.”

In a moment Adam Stallman, and a dozen men from the different boats, were by my side. All had been arranged for the emergency which had occurred. On we ran, in close order, at a double-quick step. Scarcely were we in time. The Moors were up to our friends, but Jack was laying about him in such gallant style, that no one could manage to lay hold upon them. His sword flew round his head like a flash of lightning; and though his opponents cut and thrust at him from all sides, he remained unhurt, while he had drawn blood from several of their sides. He shouted, and shrieked, and leaped about, springing now on one side, now on the other, yet back again in the middle of the road, if they attempted to press too much forward. Stallman, seeing at a glance how affairs stood, divided his people, so that they could encircle Mr Vernon and his friends; and then, coming up to Jack’s assistance, for a moment entirely drove back his assailants. By this time the whole village was aroused, and the Moors, collecting in numbers from the houses, attacked us furiously on all

sides. Our brave fellows, however, kept them at bay, and retreated in good order towards the boats. We had no time to lose, in truth, for they were making for the boats themselves, and, if they got in our rear, might cut us off, and overpower also the party left in the boats. It was with no small satisfaction that I heard the voice of Dicky Sharpe shouting out to us to come on; and then a brisk fire from the men with him cleared the intervening space of Reefians, who had got ahead of us. The old chief and his slaves had hitherto not fired, either for fear of hurting Miss Norman, or because they had no powder or firearms. Now, however, the blood of all parties was up, and pistols began to flash, and sabres to clash, and a hot fight was going on, as we made a dash for the boats, and Miss Norman was lifted safely in. The Reefians now rushed furiously down on us. Adam Stallman and Jack Stretcher were the last men in, they keeping a whole host of Moors at bay, while the boats were being shoved off; then, by a desperate leap, Jack, by Stallman's order, got into one of the boats, while he himself sprang into another. Alas! at that moment a volley came rattling down among us, and before Stallman could take his seat he fell into the bottom of the boat. It was the one I had reached. I stooped down.

"Where are you hurt, Stallman? Oh! tell me, tell me," I exclaimed, taking his hand.

"In my side; lend me a handkerchief, pray," he answered, faintly. "But give way, my lads—give way; never mind me."

The men had stopped in their exertions for a moment, and were leaning forward to discover if he was much hurt. They needed not, however, a second order, for volley after volley came rattling over us; while the foremost and more daring Reefians in their rage rushed into the water, in the hope of seizing us. Some who grasped the gunnel had reason to repent their temerity; for we dealt them such blows with our cutlasses, that they were compelled to let go, every wound they received increasing their fury. Others waded after us up to their arm-pits, firing their pistols, and cutting at us with their scimitars, shouting fiercely at us all the time, and grinding their teeth with rage and disappointment. It was no child's play; for, had they caught us, they would have destroyed every one of the party. By dint of great exertion the boats were at length got clear and into deep water. By the flashes of the firearms I could see the old Sheikh

standing on the beach, and trying to urge his followers to pursue us still further. When they found that all hope of preventing our embarkation had gone, they hurried of to the harbour to launch their own boats for the pursuit. We had a long way to pull, several of our people were hurt, and the boats were likewise full of men; so that we felt we were far from certain of escaping after all. Mr Vernon ordered the gun in the bow of his boat to be fired, to draw the attention of the frigate, should she not have heard the sound of the musketry; and I followed his example. By this time we were a couple of miles or more away from the shore, but the frigate was still some five or six miles from us. Before long, by the light of the dawn just breaking, we could see the Reefian boats stealing out from the land; but we had now no great fear of being caught. Still our enemies pulled very fast, and were animated with every feeling of rage and revenge to excite them to exertion. Hitherto there had been a dead calm, which much facilitated our progress; and as the gloom of night cleared away, we could see, in the grey of the morning, the frigate's topsails hanging uselessly in the brails. I kept anxiously looking back at our pursuers.

"Do they gain on us?" asked Stallman, who sat propped up in the stern-sheets.

"I fear so," I replied; "but the frigate is still not so very far off."

"If they overtake us, I will ask you, D'Arcy, to drop astern a little, and try and keep them at bay, so as to afford the first gig a better chance of escaping," he said, faintly.

This was the boat Miss Norman was in.

"Of course, Stallman," I answered, "every one here will do their best to defend the young lady. Won't you, my lads?"

"Ay, ay, sir; never fear," replied the men, with one voice, at the same time giving a cheer. "Hurra! hurra!"

The enemy's boats were now drawing uncomfortably near, and the headmost ones had begun to fire, though their shot did not reach us. Still it was too evident that they would be up to us before the frigate could come to our assistance. There she still lay, like a log on the water. I did

not much fear the enemy; but I knew if they overtook us, even if we escaped, it would be the cause of much more bloodshed. Presently, as I was thinking of this, I saw a light ripple curling over the smooth, shining surface of the leaden-coloured sea. Another and another cat's-paw followed; the frigate let fall her topsails—they were sheeted home; sail after sail was set; and just then, as the sun rose in a blaze of glory, our gallant ship was seen standing towards us—a magnificent and welcome sight—under a press of canvas, lighted up by the bright rays of the warmth-giving luminary. A simultaneous cheer rose from the boats' crews as they beheld the spectacle; and, with redoubled efforts, they gave way to meet the ship. The Reefians saw that their prospect of catching us was gone; and giving us a parting, though happily harmless volley, they pulled round, and made all haste to the shore, to avoid being themselves in their turn pursued and captured. We were, soon after this, on board, and heartily welcomed. The poor fellows—there were four or five of them who had been badly wounded—were carried to their hammocks, and tended carefully by the surgeon. Adam Stallman was conveyed to Mr Vernon's berth in the gun-room. He was evidently more hurt than anybody else. The doctor gave a very unfavourable report of his case to the captain from the first. Every one on board grieved much to hear of his danger, for he was much beloved; but he seemed calm and contented. When I saw him his looks were cheerful—a smile was on his lips. Few would have believed that he was a person about shortly to die, and that he full well knew it. It was not a stoical indifference to death; not the courage of a man endowed with physical hardihood; but true Christian fortitude and resignation to the will of God, trust in his Maker's promises, hope in the future, which supported him. We were now returning to Malta; for Captain Poynder saw that there would be no use of attempting to punish the Reefians for their late acts, and that we should certainly only be the chief sufferers if we attacked them.

One day Adam Stallman sent for Dicky Sharpe and me.

"My dear boys," he said, "I have sometimes given you good advice, and I much regret that I have not given you more, as you always took it well. I may never have an opportunity of speaking to you again."

"Oh! don't say so, Stallman," sobbed my young messmate. "Don't die! You must recover, and stay with us."

“Life and death are in God’s hands alone,” replied Adam Stallman. “As you have a regard for me, promise me that you will try not to forget what I say to you. Remember always that you were sent into this world as a place of trial—that you have numberless bad propensities existing in you, and many temptations constantly offered to you—that your trial consists in the way you conquer the one and resist the other; but also recollect that you have no power whatever of yourselves to do this—that of yourselves you would not even know how to resist—you would not know that it was necessary to resist. But then you must know that God is just, merciful, and kind; that He has given mankind a guide, not only to tell them that they must resist, but to show them how to resist temptation—how to conquer evil propensities; that if they will pray to Him, He will give them knowledge and grace, and strength sufficient for all their wants. In that guide—that Book of books—He tells them that He sent His only Son, that His sufferings and death might be accepted instead of their eternal suffering and death, to which their sins would most justly have consigned them. Therefore, my dear boys, I want you to study, that book, day after day—never give it up. But, at the same time, do not fancy that you are doing a meritorious act by merely reading it. You must examine it, and treasure it, as you would a precious gift. You should read it with thankfulness and joy that God has given you that precious gift. You are not doing him any service by reading it. The acts alone which result from reading it do him any service; and, after all, those acts are only your bounden duty. Common gratitude demands them from you. Never forget. You must pray daily—pray for grace, and faith, and strength, and knowledge; and be assured that God will give them to you at last. Never cease praying. What I have said may seem hard to you, my dear boys; but it is the truth; and I could not have died happy without saying it, as I felt that it was my duty to say it. Be religious, and never be ashamed of your religion. Hoist your colours in sight of the enemy, and fight bravely under them wherever you go.”

Much more our friend said, but the above was the pith of his discourse. I believe that neither my young messmate nor I ever forgot what he said. By following his advice, we have found a comfort, a joy, a strength, which we should never otherwise have known. Our kind friend’s forebodings were speedily fulfilled; and before we reached Malta he had, in perfect peace, yielded up his life to the God who gave it.

“What! did the good Adam Stallman really die?” some of my young readers may ask. Yes; good and bad, rich and poor, of all ranks and stations in society, are often summoned in their joyous youth, their flowering manhood, by a just God, to render up an account of their mode of life. Oh! my young friends, remember that you, too, may be summoned away from this bright world, and all you hold dear, in an hour, a day, a year—at a moment you think not of; and that you, too, must render up an account of how you have lived on earth before the great, the just, the All-seeing Judge; that every thought of your heart, every action you have performed, will then be laid bare; and that, unless you can say, I did my duty to the best of my power and knowledge, and I trusted to Christ to save me, it were better, far better, that you had never been born. I shall be glad to find that my adventures amuse you, but I should also deeply blame myself if I did not try and make you understand these things; and I should feel that it were also far better that my book had not been written.

Chapter Nineteen.

Return to England—Appointed to the Opossum—The Commander's Oath—How he Kept it—The Gale—Loss of Masts—Old Popples—Death of Commander—The Pirate—End of Myers.

I forgot to say in the last chapter, that before shaping our course for Malta, we ran a little way down the coast, and landed our young Reefian prisoner. It might have been better had Captain Poynder endeavoured, through his means, to treat with the old Sheikh for the liberation of his captives; but, probably, the success of such a plan was considered too doubtful to be attempted. What became of Mr Vernon's jewel-box I do not know: I fancy the contents were of very little intrinsic value. We carried Major Norman and his daughter to Gibraltar, whence they went to England. Mr Vernon did not marry for upwards of a year after this. He and his wife are among my most intimate friends. We met with no more adventures worth recording in the old *Harold*. At length we returned to Portsmouth, and being paid off, I was once more a gentleman at large. I did not long remain so, for my kind uncle took care to get me another ship as soon as possible. In the meantime, I accompanied Dicky Sharpe to the home of his father and mother, Sir John and Lady Sharpe. They were excessively kind, and made a great deal of me; and so did the Misses Sharpe, who, being a good deal older than Dicky, treated us somewhat like little children, petting and humouring our fancies, which did not altogether please me. It made me much more inclined to act like a child, and to join Dicky in any pranks he proposed. I was very sorry, however, to have to go away. It was, at the same time, no little satisfaction to both of us, that we found ourselves appointed to the same ship—a fine sixteen-gun brig, just fitting out—the *Opossum*, Captain Cranley. Dicky, however, got leave for two or three weeks, while I had to join at once. His friends got him the appointment because it was considered better that he should see some service in a small craft, with a smart officer, which our commander was said to be; while I joined because I was not likely to get a better. I had gone to see Larry as soon as I reached England, and found him and his wife flourishing. When I got back to Portsmouth, while the brig was fitting out, I paid him frequent visits, to the old man's great delight; and he used to tell everybody he

met what a first-rate sailor I had become, winding up invariably, with a look of no little pride, “Ay, sir, and ’twas I taught him—didn’t I, Master Neil?”

I must not forget to mention my kind uncle and aunt, and Daisy Cottage, where I was always a welcome guest. He had paid the cutter off, but expected soon to obtain another appointment. Of the Marlows I could only hear that they had gone abroad; but as Miss Alice had promised to write to my aunt as soon as they had settled, I was in hopes of hearing about them. But I must get on with my story. The *Opossum* was at sea, running down Channel, with orders to wait at Falmouth for despatches and mails for Halifax, Nova Scotia. With the exception of Dicky Sharpe, all my brother officers were strangers to me, and mostly to each other, so it took a little time before we became acquainted and shook into our places. Captain Cranley, I found, was somewhat of the old school—very kind-hearted and simple-minded, and not less strict towards himself than towards others—with a nice sense of honour, and very sensitive of rebuke. I was very glad to find that my old friend Jack Stretcher had volunteered, with the hope of one day becoming a warrant-officer. I must also mention the boatswain, who, though an oldish man, had not long taken out his warrant. He was a prime seaman, with nothing very remarkable in his appearance, except that he was tall and thin, and had a long bushy beard, now somewhat grizzled. The aforesaid individual, Mr Popples, was neat and clean, and had really good manners; his great ambition being to rise in the world, though he had begun to ascend rather late in life. We youngsters had a great respect for him, notwithstanding some of his peculiarities, and should never have dreamed of playing him the tricks we did old Chissel and Trundle in the *Harold*. Two days after we left Falmouth, the wind, which had been from the eastward and moderate, chopped round to the westward and north-west, and began to blow very heavily. Our commander, however, was not a man to be frightened by a capful of wind; so we close-reefed the topsails, and lay upon our course as near as we could. The gallant little brig headed the seas bravely, and gave us every reason to hope that we might weather out the gale without damage. Towards the evening of the third day, however, it came on to blow harder than ever; the clouds came gathering up in thick masses, as if hurried one on the other, without the means of escaping, and the sea rose higher and higher. Mr Pullen, the master, kept glancing to windward in a significant manner.

“What do you think of it, master?” asked Captain Cranley.

“Why, sir, the sooner that we up-helm, and run into port, the better for the ship and ourselves,” replied Mr Pullen. “There’s no use straining a vessel till every timber in her creaks and groans with pain,—that’s my opinion.”

“A very just one, master, and I’ll follow your advice,” said the captain. “All hands wear ship.”

The delicate, operation was successfully performed. The helm was put up—the aftersails were brailed up and furled—more headsail was got on her. For an instant she rolled heavily in the trough of the sea; then her headsail, feeling the full force of the wind, carried her head away from it, and, like a sea-bird released from imprisonment, off she flew on rapid wings before it. A number of vessels, driven in by stress of weather, were collected in Falmouth Harbour as we entered. We ran by them, past the flag-ship, for the purpose of bringing up, when we were hailed with—

“What! Captain Cranley, are you afraid of a capful of wind? There’s nothing to hurt you now outside; so go to sea again without bringing up.”

These words stung our old captain to the quick.

“It’s the first time James Cranley was ever taunted for being afraid of anything, much less a gale of wind; and it shall be the last time, too, whatever comes of it, so help me Heaven!”

Fearfully did the old man keep his vow. Accordingly, we forthwith stood out again to sea. When we were clear of the land, we found the gale completely abated, and we had a very fine passage, till within about a hundred miles of our port, when it fell calm. Never do I recollect a more perfect calm. The sea was like lead in colour, but as smooth as glass, though every now and then there came a long, slow, gently-moving undulation, as if there were some unseen power beneath the water. There was something, I thought, very ominous in the whole appearance of the atmosphere. The barometer, the seaman’s warning friend, began also to sink, and each hour the quicksilver got lower and lower. Thus passed two days, but not a breath of wind came. Captain Cranley paced his deck with uneasy steps. The master likewise looked far from satisfied, I thought, with the appearance of the weather, and kept continually

glancing round the horizon, in search of the expected sign of a change. The sails hung idly down against the masts, every now and then flapping loudly, as the vessel rolled slowly in the swell. It would have been more seamanlike had they been furled; but, to tell the truth, our commander appeared seized with a fit of infatuation, which deprived him of his usual clear judgment on professional matters. He had not got over his late unjust reprimand. With a morbid feeling of injured honour, he allowed it to rankle in his bosom. People are apt to have a foreboding of evil; but on the present occasion there were ample reasons for dreading mischief.

“To my mind, if we were to furl every stitch of canvas, and send down our topmasts, we should be acting like seamen,” said old Popples, as I was forward, attending to some duty.

“Why do you say that?” I asked. “The sea is like glass, and there’s no wind, nor chance of any, as far as I can judge.”

“Because I haven’t sailed round the world for the last forty years with my eyes shut, Mr D’Arcy,” he replied. “Be sure, when the weather’s like this, there’s no slight gale coming on; but the commander is a good seaman, and I suppose he’ll give the order soon.”

The commander, however, did not seem to apprehend any immediate change of weather. Not so Mr Pullen. Whenever he went into the cabin, he found that the silver in the barometer had sunk lower than ever; and each time he came on deck, looking more anxious than before. After some time spent in watching the sky to the northward, he walked up to the commander.

“Captain Cranley, sir,” said he, “it’s my duty to tell you that, in my opinion, this weather won’t last many hours longer—not to say minutes, perhaps; and if the squall I look for catches us with all this canvas set, it will carry the masts over the side to a certainty.”

“It’s the custom in the service generally for officers to wait till their opinion is asked,” replied the commander, turning on his heel, and taking a few more turns on the quarter-deck. At last he stopped, and looked out towards the northward and westward, where a thick mass of clouds was banking up, each instant rising higher and higher.

“Mr Fairman,” he said, to the first-lieutenant, “call all hands to shorten sail; put the brig under double-reefed topsails. Whichever way the squall comes, we mustn’t be frightened at it this time, eh?”

The command was quickly obeyed, but the air remained as stagnant as ever. Still old Popples was not satisfied.

“We are better so than we were before, I’ll allow,” he remarked; “but the gale, when it does begin to blow, will, to my mind, be a regular hurricane, and we shall be glad to run before it under bare poles. Mark my words, Mr D’Arcy!”

Boatswains do not always deliver their opinion thus freely about their captain; but old Popples was privileged, at all events with us midshipmen. Mr Pullen shrugged his shoulders and said nothing, though he evidently held the same opinion as the boatswain. The commander had just retired to his cabin, while the master continued his walk, turning his eye every now and then towards the quarter whence he expected the wind to come. Suddenly he stopped.

“Here it is!” he exclaimed. “Up with the helm—square away the afteryards.”

Scarcely had he spoken, than a terrific roar was heard, and down came the gale upon us with unbridled fury, driving before it vast masses of spoondrift, and tearing up the water into huge waves, which every instant rose higher and higher. Off flew the brig’s head, however, before it, and it seemed like a race between her and the dense sheets of spray which careered over the seas, and the clouds of scud which chased each other across the sky. Her course, however, was to be suddenly arrested. The commander made his appearance hurriedly on deck.

“What means this?” he exclaimed. “There’s our port, sirs,” pointing to the north-west. “Bring the ship on a wind—down with the helm—brace up the yards!”

The officers stood aghast, but the order was not to be disputed.

No sooner did the brig feel the full force of the wind, than she heeled over, till her lee guns were buried in the waves, and the spray came flying

over us, fore and aft. Still we looked up to it, and, had the wind not increased, we might have weathered it very well; but it was evident that the gale had not yet come to its height. Magnificently the brave little brig dashed through it; but it was fearful work,—the timbers groaned, and the masts bent, every instant threatening to go by the board. Once more Mr Pullen urged the commander to bear up.

“No, no, master,” he answered, shaking his head; “I’ve sworn that no power shall ever again turn me away from the port to which I am bound; and James Cranley is not a man you would ask to break his oath, I hope.”

“Well, sir, but the brig will hold her own better under closer canvas, you’ll allow,” urged the master.

After some time the commander permitted the topsails to be close-reefed, but not another stitch would he take off her. Still the brig had too much sail set; and wearily and heavily she laboured through the yet fast rising seas.

I had been on deck for some hours, and, drenched to the skin, was shivering with cold, when Mr Pullen, with whom I was a favourite, told me to go and lie down in his berth, our own not being tenable, from the water which the straining of the ship allowed to run into it. All the officers and the watch were on deck. In spite of the heavy pitching of the ship, I soon fell asleep. How long I remained so I know not, when a terrific noise awoke me. I felt the suffocation of drowning, and for a moment saw the water in dark green masses rushing into the cabin. In another instant it was all dark. I uttered a prayer for mercy, for I felt that the brig was on her side and sinking. Still the love of life did not desert me. Through the darkness I discerned one bright spot overhead. I made for it, and as I found my hands grasping the combings of the gun-room skylight, the brig, with a sudden jerk, righted again. I thought it was only preparatory to going down. Still I held on. The water rolled away, and disappeared from above and beneath me, and I was able to obtain a clear view along the deck. What a scene of destruction and horror met my view! Of all those living men who lately peopled her decks, not a soul was there—not a mast was standing—not a boat remained—as if the destroying sword of the Archangel had swept over them. The decks were swept clear of

everything; while the green foam-topped seas, in mountain masses, rose above them, threatening every instant to overwhelm my hapless vessel. A glance showed me all this. Looking forward, I saw another head rising from the fore-hatchway; it was that of old Popples, the boatswain.

“What! are they all gone?” he shouted; “then I’m captain. Lend a hand, Mr D’Arcy, and we’ll try and get the ship before the wind.”

“Captain of a sinking ship you may be, Mr Popples,” I answered, amused, even in that moment of horror, at the old man’s extraordinary ambition.

But there was no time for talking. I sprang on deck, as he had done, and at the same instant a cry reached our ears, and looking to leeward, we saw the faces of several of our shipmates, clinging to the spars and rigging, which still hung on to the ship.

At first, surrounded as they were with the seething foam, their countenances convulsed with terror or agony, as they clung with their death-grasp to the rigging, it was difficult to recognise them; while, one by one, they were torn from their uncertain hold, and borne far away to leeward. Still some clung on. I trusted my friend Dicky Sharpe might be of the number; for even then, strange as it may seem, I pictured to myself the grief and misery his loss would cause at that home where I had lately seen him the hope and joy of a loving mother and affectionate sisters. These thoughts occupied scarcely a second. In a few moments I recovered from the sensation of almost overwhelming horror which the scene had caused; and, as I gazed more attentively, I recognised Dicky himself, with Captain Cranley, and the master, yet clinging to the rigging.

The watch below, whom the boatswain had summoned, joined us without delay; and I must do him the justice to say, that no one could more nobly have exerted himself than he did in trying to save those who would speedily deprive him of his new-fledged honours. The foremast and its rigging, in falling, had torn away the chain-plates and everything which secured it forward; and the whole tangled mass of spars and ropes now hung on by the after-shrouds, and had both served to put the brig before the wind, by holding back her stern, while it allowed her head to pay off, and acted also as a sort of breakwater, which saved us from being pooped. The poor fellows in the water were crying loudly for help as they

caught sight of us on deck. One of the nearest was Dicky Sharpe. Calling Jack Stretcher to my aid, I got him to heave a rope with a bight at the end which I had made. It fell close to Dicky's head. He grasped it with one hand, and slipped it over his shoulders. We hauled on it till we got him near the side. Just then the foreyard came surging up, and I thought would strike him.

"Give me your hand!" I shrieked out.

I caught it barely in time. Stretcher leaned through a port, and we got Dicky in at the moment that the yard came thundering against the side, almost grazing his foot. All this was but the work of a second. Popples had in the meantime, by great exertions, managed to get the master on board; and his next attempt was to save Captain Cranley. He, however, was much further out, hanging on to one of the topmasts. None of the ropes near him which we could reach would come home. There appeared to be no means of saving him. Two other men were, however, got in.

"Come, I can't bear to see our old skipper washed away before our eyes. What will his wife and children do?" exclaimed Jack Stretcher. "I've no one at home to care for me; so some on you clap on here, while I just make a fly out, and see if I can't get hold of him."

The gallant fellow had made a rope fast to his waist, and was on the point of making his perilous attempt by springing into the raging sea, when a terrific wave came rolling up astern. Its curling crest lifted high the spar to which the commander clung. I fancied that I could see his starting eyes take one last earnest glance at the ship, and his lips moved as if imploring us to save him. Then down came the wave; and as the ship was hurried on before it, its broken waters tore away his already failing grasp, and in a moment he was buried from our sight. We had no time to mourn for him then. Mr Pullen instantly took command, and Popples was fain to act as his first-lieutenant; while Sharpe and I did our utmost to make ourselves useful.

The wreck of the masts, as I have said, kept the brig before the wind. While some hands set to work to rig the pumps, others got up a bit of a jury-mast, secured to the stump of the foremast. On this we managed to

spread a topgallant-sail, which helped her along famously. All hands who could possibly be spared were required to work the pumps, spell and spell; and the wonder was, when we found the immense quantity of water she had taken on board, that she had not gone down. As it was, her deck and upper works leaked in every direction; and we all felt that such, even now, might be our fate. I shall never forget the anxiety of that first night, as, amid the raging seas, with the gale howling round us, our near sinking ship, battered and dismasted, ran through the darkness, every sea, as, foam-crested, it came rolling up astern, threatening to overwhelm us. Who but fools would not, on such occasions, feel the utter helplessness of their own arm to help them, or would fail to put their trust alone in Him who is all-powerful to save. Yes; it is amid the raging storm and on the battered wreck that the seaman, if his mind be but directed aright, gains a practical knowledge of the value of religion. But alas! how few—how very few—are taught religious truths; and the very men who wander round the globe, and might act as important pioneers of civilisation and Christianity among the heathen, are allowed, for the most part, to remain ignorant and profane—a disgrace, instead of an honour, to the Christian nation to which they belong. Such a state of things ought not to exist; and I ask you, my young friends, to aid in conveying the blessings of the gospel to our gallant seamen, and, through their means, to the far distant nations of the earth. But to return to the brig. For two days we ran to the southward, without any change in the weather. At length it began to moderate, and in three days more we had run into comparatively a smooth sea.

No one would willingly have blamed our late unfortunate commander; but we all felt that, had he bore up in time, as a seaman should have done, instead of obstinately persisting in holding his ground, he would have saved his own and many valuable lives, and the brig would have escaped the disaster she had suffered.

Mr Pullen had shaped a course for the Bermudas; but, low as they are, it was necessary to keep a very sharp look-out, to prevent running past them, or on to the coral reefs by which they are surrounded. Our landfall, however, was better than we expected; and one of the fine pilot-boats, for which the islands are so deservedly noted, coming off to us, we were safely towed into harbour. The brig was some months in the hands of the dockyard people before we were ready for sea, our despatches, after

some weeks' detention, being sent on to their destination.

During the period of our stay, the merchants, as well as the military officers, were very kind to Dicky and me. The Bermudas are also called Somers' Islands, because Sir George Somers was cast away on them in 1609, since when they have been inhabited by English settlers. Their productions are very similar to those of the West Indies. There are a number of blacks on them, who at the time I speak of were slaves, but are now, of course, free. They consist of four principal islands, the chief of which is called Saint George, and other smaller ones. They take their name from Juan Bermudez, who discovered them in 1522. I have no time to say more about the place.

Before we were ready for sea, a new commander was sent out from England—Captain Idle. His name was very far from appropriate to his character. He brought us the pleasing information that we were destined for the coast of Africa, where some fast cruisers were much wanted to put down the slave-trade.

Captain Idle had seen some service. He had been thirty years at sea, out of which time he had not probably spent two on shore. He had been in the North Seas and West Indies, in the Antarctic Ocean, and on the coast of Africa, in the Indian seas, and in every part of the Pacific. There was not an unhealthy station in which he had not served. He had served for ten years as a first-lieutenant. He had been three times wounded, and had obtained his rank, both as lieutenant and commander, for two remarkable deeds of gallantry; and now, as a special reward for his services, I suppose, he was sent out to the coast of Africa.

A first-lieutenant also joined us—Reuben Spry by name,—and two mates, the senior of whom did duty as second lieutenant—Holland and Waller. The very day we were ready for sea we went out of harbour, and made the best of our way towards the coast of Africa. A succession of easterly winds had kept the *Opossum* more to the west than she would otherwise have been. We were about the latitude of Barbadoes, when, having run on during most of the night with a fair breeze, towards morning it dropped altogether, and we found ourselves rolling away in a tropical calm. As we were already in the seas where slavers are to be found, a bright look-out was kept, in the hopes of our falling in with a

prize, though as yet not a sail had been seen to which it was thought worth while giving chase. As morning broke, of a day I shall not easily forget, there appeared to the southward, not four miles from us, two vessels becalmed like ourselves. One, a large barque, somewhat the nearest to us, was clearly an English merchantman; the other, a low, black schooner, had the wicked, rakish appearance of a Spanish slaver. The look-out from the foretopmast-head gave notice at the same time that he could see two boats pulling from one vessel to the other. The captain and all the officers were speedily on deck.

“There’s some mischief going on there,” exclaimed Captain Idle, after a look at the vessels. “Mr Spry, call the boats away; we must send and overhaul these fellows.”

Three boats, under the command of the first-lieutenant, were speedily in the water, and manned, all hands being well-armed. Waller had charge of one boat, I of the third,—and not a little proud did I feel of the honour. A cup of cocoa and some biscuit being first served out to each of us, to give us strength for the work to be accomplished, away we pulled towards the barque. It was hot enough when we started, but as the sun rose higher it grew hotter still, and the glare on the smooth water became so bright as almost to blind us; but nothing relaxed our exertions, all hands feeling that there was some work before us. The other boats had reached the barque when we were yet three miles off, and very probably had not observed us, although the people from the rigging of the merchantman must have done so. The report of firearms was now heard, and this made us redouble our efforts to get up.

“The merchantman is attacked by pirates; there is not a doubt of it,” shouted Mr Spry. “Fire off your muskets, my lads; it will give both parties notice that we are coming to put a stop to their fun.”

Those not pulling blazed away right merrily for a few minutes, and then watched for the result. It seemed to have encouraged one party and to have disheartened the other, for the boats we had before seen were observed pulling back to the schooner.

“Follow me, Waller. After the boats, my lads!” shouted Mr Spry. “D’Arcy, do you board the barque. See if any assistance is required, and if not,

pull for the schooner."

It took me but a short time to find myself alongside the barque, while the rest of our party were in chase of the strange boats. So eagerly were those on board looking out at the chase, that they did not observe me step on board. Alas! the appearance of the deck showed too plainly that mischief had already been done. One man lay dead, and two more sat on the deck, supported by their shipmates. But there were two persons in a group standing aft, whom I thought I recognised. I looked again. I was sure I could not be mistaken, and running up to them, I found myself shaking hands most warmly with Mr Marlow and his daughter. He did not recognise me; but she did in a moment, and told him who I was.

"Again you have helped to save our lives, Mr D'Arcy," he exclaimed; "for, thanks to our brave captain here, we were able to resist a band of villainous pirates who attacked us, till your appearance frightened them off."

I of course told them how happy I was to be of service, and then, finding that my presence on board the barque was not required, I tumbled into my boat, and gave way after my shipmates. The pirates' boats had gained the schooner about ten minutes before they had. I was not long behind them, and the aid of my boat's crew was very welcome. The deck of the schooner was crowded with men, who were making a desperate resistance. The most prominent of them fought more like a demon than a human creature. With desperate energy he wielded a huge cutlass, with which he kept the deck clear around him. His men, however, a mixture of Spanish, Portuguese, blacks, and a few English or Americans, were falling thick on either side, and several had actually been driven overboard. My gallant fellows gave a loud shout as we scrambled on deck, and, led by Jack Stretcher, they cleared everything before them. Some of the pirates were forced down the hold, others overboard, and several sunk on the deck to rise no more. Still the captain stood at bay. I now had a better opportunity of observing him, and at once I recognised my old enemy, the villain Myers.

"Your time is come at last, Bill Myers," I shouted.

The words seemed to have a paralysing effect. What thoughts they called

up, I know not. Perhaps he had not for long been known by that name. He made a few steps backward, and then, with one bound, cleared the side of the vessel and leaped overboard. There was no land to swim to—no boat to pick him up—but ravenous sharks surrounded the scene of strife, already collected by the taste of blood. In another instant the long-sought-for smuggler, murderer, and pirate was their prey. The remainder of the pirates yielded without another blow. We found that they had shipped for a slave voyage only; but had been induced by Myers, who had lately got command, to commence a course of piracy, which, by our appearance, had happily been cut short. After some hours, a breeze springing up, we brought the vessels together. Waller and I were ordered to take the prize into Barbadoes, where the barque also was bound; while the *Opossum* cruised outside to look out for slavers.

Mr Marlow was going to spend some time at Bridgetown, where he had a house of business. He received Waller and me most kindly, and nothing could exceed the hospitality of the inhabitants generally when they heard of our exploit. Captain Curtis, also, the master of the barque, got great credit for the way he had defended his vessel till we came to his assistance. Miss Alice Marlow had grown somewhat, but still she was very little for her age. She was, however, as kind as ever, and I, for one, was very sorry when the *Opossum* came in with another prize. The survivors of the men who had boarded the barque were hung, and the schooner herself was condemned. This business being accomplished, the *Opossum* once more made sail for the coast of Africa.

Chapter Twenty.

Look out for Slavers in a Boat—Weary of Waiting—A Sail in Sight—Capture her—Attacked by a Larger Slaver—Desperate Fight—Beat her off.

We had been some weeks on the coast without having taken a prize, although we had chased several suspicious-looking craft, which had contrived to get away from us. At Sierra Leone we had shipped a dozen Kroomen, to get wood and water for the ship, a work which Europeans in that climate are unable to perform without great risk. At length Captain

Idle began to grow impatient. One day he sent for Waller, who had been on the coast before with him, and was a very clever, active fellow.

“Waller,” said he, “I want you to go away in the pinnace, and while some of these slaving gentlemen are running away from us, perhaps you may be able to render a good account of them. You will require a companion. Will you like to take D’Arcy with you?”

Waller expressed his readiness to go, and to have my society; and so it was settled. Among his other accomplishments, he was a first-rate shot with a rifle, and it was reported, when he was before on the coast, that he used to pick off the men at the helm, and any of the crew who went aloft or appeared above the bulwarks, and had thus caused the capture of several slavers. I was to see this talent exerted. Jack Stretcher, who was a capital companion, went with us as coxswain. We were all dressed in thick flannel shirts, and had blankets in which to wrap ourselves at night. We had water and provisions for ten days, and a small stove, with which to warm up our cocoa and tea, and to make a stew or a broil on occasion. I do not remember that we had any other luxuries. Towards the end of the afternoon watch we shoved off from the brig’s side, having wished our shipmates “Good-bye!” with a sort of feeling that we might not meet again. While the *Opossum* stood away on a bowline to the northward, we shaped a course for the mouth of the Gaboon river. We arrived at our cruising ground before daybreak. Waller then ordering the men to lay in their oars, which had hitherto been kept going, and lowering the sail, told them to wrap themselves in their blankets, and to lie down under the thwarts. I kept watch while he also slept. The night was bright and beautiful, and the sea, smooth as a mirror, reflected the glittering stars which shone forth from the dark blue heavens, while our boat lay floating idly on its slumbering bosom. So deep was the silence which reigned around, that the breathing of the sleepers sounded strangely loud, and I fancied that I could hear vessels, even though out of sight, passing by, or fish rising to the surface to breathe, or cleaving the water with their fins. At other times my imagination made me fancy that I could hear beings of another world calling to each other as they flew through the air or floated on the ocean; and I almost expected to see their shadowy forms glide by me. About an hour before dawn, Waller got up and told me to take some rest. I was not sorry to lie down, albeit my rest was far from refreshing. I soon began to dream, and dreamed that I was a plum-pudding, and that

Betty, the cook at Daisy Cottage, had fastened me up in a flannel pudding-bag, and put me into a pot to boil. The water soon began to simmer, and I to swell and swell away, till the string got tighter and tighter round my throat, while a thick black smoke arose from some coals which she had just put on. I was looking out of the pot, and meditating on the proverb, “Out of the frying-pan into the fire,” when, being unable to stand it any longer, I jumped out of the pudding-bag, and found myself rolling at the bottom of the boat.

“Why, D’Arcy, I thought you were going to spring overboard,” said Waller. When I told him my dream, he laughed heartily, and agreed there was ample cause for it.

Our blankets were wet through and through, and a dense black fog hung over us, through which it was impossible to discover the position of the sun, which had some time been up, or of any object ten fathoms off; while the sea was as smooth as a sheet of glass, and as dull-coloured as lead. As I awoke I found my throat sore from the unwholesome moisture I had inhaled. We had nothing, therefore, to do but cook and eat our breakfast, and practise patience. There was little use exhausting the men’s strength by pulling, as we were as likely to pull from, as towards, a vessel. Hour after hour thus passed away, till at length the sun conquered the mist, and gradually drew it off from the face of the deep, discovering a wide expanse of shining water, unbroken by a single dot or speck which was likely to prove a sail; while to the eastward arose a long dark line of mangrove-trees, at the mouth of the Gaboon river. The land-breeze came off to us, smelling of the hot parched earth; and we turned our eyes anxiously whence it blew, in the hope of seeing some white sail dancing before it over the bar of the river; but we were doomed to disappointment. The hot sun struck down on our heads, and tanned and scorched our cheeks, and the upper works of the boat cracked with the heat, till a beefsteak might have been broiled on the gunwale. At last the land-wind died away; there was again a dead calm, in which we roasted still faster, till the sea-breeze set in and somewhat cooled our parched tongues. Now we looked out seaward, in the hopes of finding some slaver, unsuspectingly standing in, either to ship the whole or the portion of a cargo, having already, perhaps, taken some on board at another part of the coast. Nothing is more trying to the temper than to have to sit quiet and do nothing; yet such was our fate from day to day, as we lay like a

snake ready to spring on its prey. The sun rose, and roasted us, and set, leaving us to be parboiled, and rose again, without a sail appearing. We ate our breakfasts, and dinners, and suppers, and smoked our pipes, and sat up, and went to sleep again, in the same regular manner for several successive days.

At length, one morning, a light breeze sprang up; and, as the fog was blown off in dense wreaths, the topsails of a schooner were seen rising above them.

“Out oars, my men, and give way with a will!” exclaimed Waller, in an animated voice. “We are not yet seen, and may get alongside before they find us out.”

The men, in their delight at the prospect of having something to do, would have cheered, but he silenced them. We hoped that she was a slaver; but she might, after all, be only an honest Liverpool trader. When first seen, she was little more than a mile off, to the south-west of us, running in for the land with the wind, which was from the northward abeam.

“What do you think of her, Jack?” asked Waller, after Stretcher had been eyeing her narrowly.

“Why, sir, to my mind, those topsails have only been cut by Spanish fingers; so I make pretty sure she’s nothing else than a nigger passage-vessel.”

This announcement made the men give way still more heartily, for, though the wind was fair, we did not make sail, as we should thereby have been more quickly seen. Away we pulled, the water bubbling and hissing under our bows as we cut through it. When we got within a quarter of a mile of the chase, she saw us, we judged, by hearing a musket fired and seeing a bullet strike the water near us.

“That proves he has got no guns on board. Give way, my lads!” shouted Waller.

The men cheered, and bent to their oars with greater vigour. We then hoisted the British ensign, and fired a musket to make the fellow heave-to; but, taking no notice of the signal, he held on his course. The wind

continued so light, however, that we were overhauling him fast; but there were signs, both on the sky and water, that it might again get up, and afford him a better chance of escaping. At all events, he was evidently not inclined to give in.

“I must teach the fellow that the British flag is not to be trifled with,” said Waller, taking up his rifle. “I have no compassion on these slaving villains.”

Scarcely had he spoken, when a man, whom we both took to be the captain, jumped into the netting abaft the main-rigging, and made some very significant gestures to us to be off; and directly afterwards, seeing that we continued our course, several of his crew let fly their muskets at us.

“You’ve brought it on your own head,” exclaimed Waller, loading his rifle. He fired. The next moment we saw the man fall back upon his deck. There was then a great deal of shouting on board the schooner; her helm was put up, and, the breeze freshening, she began to pay off before the wind. She had not got round, though, before we were under her quarter.

“Hook on to her main-chains, my lad,—hook on fast!” cried Waller.

Unfortunately the bowman missed his aim; and the schooner, falling off, brought the stern of our boat in contact with her counter. Without a moment’s thought, Waller had sprung over her low bulwarks, followed by Stretcher and me. In an instant we were attacked by the whole of the slaver’s crew, who, with loud shouts and ferocious gestures, rushed aft, fully hoping, as they saw that the pinnace had dropped astern, to make us an easy prey.

The mainsheet of the schooner had been eased off, the foreyards had been squared, and, with the now strengthening breeze, the schooner was running fast through the water. Waller took one glance over his shoulder, and that showed him that there was scarcely a chance of the boat overtaking us. Our fate was sealed: no mercy could we expect from the slaver’s crew. One hope only remained,—Waller had thought of it.

“Knock down the man at the helm, and jam the tiller down hard!” he sung out to Stretcher. “We will keep the other fellows at bay in the meantime.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” answered Jack, as coolly as if he had been merely ordered to give a pull at the main-brace.

There was a cry, and the next moment the body of the helmsman dropped on the deck. Jack had literally cut his head off with a sweep of his cutlass. The sight had the effect of making the Spaniards hang back for a moment, when Jack, putting the helm hard down, made the sails all shiver, and finally got her fore-topsail aback. Seeing what had occurred, the crew of the pinnace cheered, and, giving way, were soon clambering over the counter, while we made a dash at the Spaniards, few of whom attempted to oppose us even for a moment; most of them, indeed, throwing away their arms, made their escape to the forecastle. The rest followed their example; and in two minutes the schooner *Zerlina*, with a hundred and fifty slaves on board, was ours. Besides the captain, and the other man who was killed, there were twenty stout fellows, two or three only being out of fighting order with their wounds. We had difficulty enough to keep the rest quiet. They were, in truth, very sulky, and inclined to revolt, when they had recovered from their fright, and saw to how few they had succumbed. Curses, loud and many, escaped their lips, and showed that, if they had an opportunity, they would murder us, and retake their vessel, without scruple. We therefore kept four of our men as a watch over them, with loaded muskets, with orders to shoot the first who showed signs of proving mutinous. Having made these arrangements, we turned our attention to the living cargo crowded between her decks. It was a sickening sight, as we got the hatches off and looked down upon the mass of black faces which, with their white eyeballs rolling and mouths agape, gazed up at us, wondering what was next to happen. There sat a hundred and fifty human beings chained down to iron bars running across the deck—men and women of all ages, their chins resting on their knees, without space to stretch out their limbs, or to alter their position in any way; a rag round their loins being their only covering. They were in good health, not having been out many days; and there was a good supply of water and farina on board. We did our best to make them understand that we were friends, and would set them on shore again, and make them free, as soon as we could.

During our examination of the schooner, we had discovered a number of spare handcuffs. Jack Stretcher brought them from below, and threw them on the deck, with a significant look at the Spaniards, who, in

defiance of orders, had made several attempts to come out on deck.

“I think if we was to clap ’em on to them Spanish lubbers, it wouldn’t be amiss, sir,” said he to me, holding up a pair before me.

I mentioned the suggestion to Waller, who at length agreed that it would be safe to follow it, taking one-half at a time, while the rest remained in their berth under the forecastle. Jack received the necessary orders.

“Ay, ay, sir,” he answered. “Senhor Dons, understando, move forewardo instanto, or I’ll drive the pointo of my cutlasho into vostros sternosos.”

The prisoners understood his actions more than his words, for he fully suited the one to the other, and they showed no inclination to dispute them, he having evidently made them respect him, from his strength, and the daring he had displayed on boarding. Some we confined forward—some in the after-cabin; and most fortunate it was that we did so.

It was some time before all our arrangements were made. About an hour before dark we tacked, to stand inshore again, Waller intending, should we not fall in with the brig, to shape a course for Sierra Leone. We tacked again about midnight; but when daylight came, not a sign was there of the *Opossum*; and, accordingly, towards the above-mentioned place we steered. We had the pinnace in tow; but we had taken the gun out of her, and placed it amidships on the deck of the schooner. Overcome with fatigue, Waller had thrown himself down aft, wrapped up in his blanket, while I stood near him, with my eyes winking, and trying in vain to be wide awake, when I was startled by the cry of “A sail on the weather-bow!”

“Which way is she standing?” asked Waller, springing to his feet.

“Right down for us,” answered Jack, who had gone aloft. “I was hoping she might be the brig, at first; but she’s a large square-topsail schooner, and, by the cut of her canvas, she looks like a Spanish or a Portuguese slaver.”

As the stranger drew near, no doubt as to what she was remained on our minds. Waller took his measures accordingly, with perfect coolness. Seeing that the prisoners were thoroughly secured, we got ready all our

arms, and supplied ourselves with ammunition. The gun amidships was also loaded to the muzzle, and covered with a tarpaulin. With the calm courage which British seamen on all occasion display, our men waited the approach of the stranger. As she drew near, we made out that she had three guns on each side, and that her decks were crowded with men. Notwithstanding this overpowering disparity of force, our men looked at her in no way daunted; and I felt sure that what men could do they would for our defence. Waller, however, judged that it would be as well to animate their courage with a few words.

“Now, my men,” said he, “we are but ten of us on board this craft, but we are true and honest; and though there are probably fifty or sixty Spaniards in yonder schooner, they are a set of slaving scoundrels, who cannot stand up a moment before British seamen. They will not attempt to hull us with their shot, because they will wish to get back the schooner uninjured; so they will try to take us by boarding. I hope they may, that we may show them that they have caught a Tartar. All we have to do is to blaze away with our muskets till we can give them a taste of our cutlasses. Our big gun we’ll keep for a last dose; so now, my boys, trust in a righteous cause, and huzza for Old England and victory.”

Our men cheered long and lustily, and the sound must have reached the ears of the Spaniards, and at once showed them, had they before doubted it, that the schooner was a prize to a British cruiser. They forthwith began to blaze away with their guns; but, as we had expected, they fired high, in the hope of cutting away some of our rigging, that they might the more easily lay us aboard. We replied with our musketry as soon as they got within range, and Waller picked off several of their people with his rifle, so that they probably fancied we had some good marksmen concealed under our bulwarks. When they drew nearer, however, they could not have failed to discover the smallness of our numbers. As they sailed faster than we did, all we could do to prevent their raking us, which more than once they attempted to do, was to keep away when they endeavoured to cross our bows, and to luff up again when they threatened to pass under our stern. Seeing, therefore, that the quickest way of deciding the engagement was to run us on board, they bore right down upon us; and, unable to avoid them, the fluke of our anchor became hooked on to their fore-rigging. At the same instant full thirty swarthy figures were seen crowding into the Spaniard’s riggings

and nettings, brandishing their swords, with fierce cries of vengeance, thinking to terrify us into surrendering.

“Now, my lads! give them the dose I spoke of,” shouted Waller.

The enemy leaped down on our deck, and were already in possession of the forecastle. The tarpaulin was cast off from the gun, and the muzzle, loaded as it was with missiles of all sorts, was turned towards them, and fired right in among them where they mustered the thickest. Scarcely a man escaped being hit; five were killed outright; and so astonished were the rest, that, thinking probably that the vessel herself was blowing up, they tumbled, scrambled, and clambered back into their own schooner in the greatest confusion.

“On! my boys, on!” shouted Waller; and, making a dash at the fellows, we much expedited their movements. In an instant not an enemy was left alive on our decks.

“Up with the helm!” sung out Waller; and at the same time Jack and another man cutting away at the fore-rigging of the enemy, we sheered clear of him; while he, backing his fore-topsail, dropped under our stern without firing a shot. We therefore hauled our wind, and kept on our course, and soon afterwards he filled his sails, and stood away to the southward. He had enjoyed a sufficient taste of our quality. Not one of us was hurt, while a quarter of his people must have been killed or wounded.

Our men gave a loud huzza as they found themselves free. To me it seemed like a wild dream. A few minutes before we were engaged in a desperate struggle for life; and now, uninjured, we were sailing gaily over the calm water, victors in the strife. Had it not been for the dead bodies of our foes remaining on the deck, we could scarcely have believed our senses. This action is considered one of the most gallant that has occurred on the coast.

The next day, to our great satisfaction, the *Opossum* hove in sight. Captain Idle, having taken our prisoners out of us, ordered us to proceed forthwith with the negroes to Sierra Leone for adjudication.

Chapter Twenty One.

Blown off the Coast—Waller's Kindness to the Negroes—Run Short of Provisions and Water—Vessel Leaking—American Hard-heartedness—Waller's Noble Resolve—Beach Bahia—Audacious Trick of Brazilian Slave-dealers.

We had parted from the *Opossum* about a couple of days, when we observed signs of one of those terrific easterly gales which sometimes blow off the coast of Africa. Waller, from his previous experience, knew them, and remarked them in time, so that we were able to get all snug to meet the wind when it came. On a sudden the hitherto calm leaden water was covered with a foam-drift, like the fine sand swept across the stony desert. The only sail we had set was a close-reefed topsail and storm-jib; the helm was put up, and away she flew before the gale, swift as the albatross on its snowy wing. Away, away we sped, and soon, leaving the African coast far astern, were ploughing the water of the South Atlantic. The *Zerlina*, though a beautiful model, as are most of her class, was flimsily built, and far from a good sea-boat, speed only having been cared for in her construction. As we got away from the land, we met a good deal of sea, in which she laboured much; and Ned Awlhole, one of the carpenter's mates, who was acting carpenter, came one afternoon with a very long face into the cabin, where Waller and I were sitting at dinner, to inform us that she was making far more water than was satisfactory.

"Get the pumps rigged, then, and we must try and keep her clear till we can manage to beat back to Sierra Leone," said Waller, as coolly as if it were a matter of slight importance.

"It is rather a serious thing this, is it not?" I observed. "I wonder you make so light of it."

"Very serious; and on that account it behoves us, as officers, to keep up our own spirits, and to cheer up the men," he replied. "I am sorry to say also, that I very much fear we shall fall short of water before we get into port, if this wind continues; and, with all these poor blacks on board, that will indeed be a very serious thing. Good seamanship may enable us to keep, the ship afloat, but God only can provide us with water."

“What must we do, then?” I asked.

“We must place all hands on short allowance, and we may fall in with some vessel which may supply us; or showers may come, and we may collect enough for our more pressing wants,” he replied. “We must keep the poor negroes on deck as much as possible—with fresh air they may exist with less water.”

Waller had speedily won the confidence and affection of the negroes, by his kindness and considerate conduct. At first, when we had taken possession of the vessel, they looked upon us as enemies, for the Spaniards had told them that we should cook and eat them; but Waller, who could speak a few words of their language, soon tranquillised their fears on that account. He then got upon deck the sick, and those whose limbs were chafed or bruised, and gave them medicines, and dressed their wounds with his own hands. He told them that they should be set free to go where they wished, and should, if possible, be enabled to return to their own country. Few, however, had any hope of being enabled to do the latter, for they had mostly all been taken in war, or kidnapped from districts away from the coast, the wars being undertaken by the chiefs nearer the sea for the express purpose of making prisoners to sell into slavery. Two or three of those who had been kidnapped had already been at Sierra Leone, or other British settlements, and as they understood a good deal of English, we were able to communicate pretty freely with them. We found them, poor children of Ham, very intelligent fellows, and as capable of receiving instruction as the people of any other race I have ever met. Waller’s good example was followed by the crew, and at last each man vied in showing kindness to the poor wretches, so that they learned to look on us truly as their friends and protectors. We did but our duty. They were our fellow-creatures, and we were soon to be fellows in suffering. At first I own it was very trying, and more than once, as I was dressing their wounds, I turned sick; but I recollected that they were fellow-beings, with human feelings, and souls to be saved, like ours, and I returned to my duty with renewed strength to perform it. At length we found that we could, with perfect safety, allow all the blacks to come on deck as they liked. Whenever Waller appeared, they shouted after him —“How do, Masser Waller? Bless ’um, Masser Waller!” And some would come and kneel down, and put his hand on their heads, with a look of affection which was unmistakeable.

“I believe, sir, it’s all very right with these poor fellows, and there’s no harm in them,” said Jack Stretcher to me one day. “But, to my mind, it doesn’t do to trust these strange niggers too much. They sometimes, I’ve heard, rises and cuts the throats of their friends.”

I agreed with Jack that it was necessary, in most cases, to be cautious; but in the present instance it was evident, as things turned out, that it was owing to Waller’s judicious treatment of the negroes that all our lives were preserved.

All this time the wind was blowing so strongly from the eastward, that we found it impossible to beat up against it, so we had nothing else to do but to continue running before it. Every day matters were getting more and more serious; our own provisions were growing shorter. Of anything like luxuries we had none—salt beef and pork, hard biscuit and rice, and a little tea and sugar, with a cask of rum—none of the best either, by-the-bye. Waller called me into the cabin for a consultation.

“To get back to the coast is now impossible,” he remarked. “If this wind holds, and we can keep the craft afloat, our best chance is to try and make the coast of Brazil. The port of Bahia is the nearest, and I propose steering for that place.”

I agreed with him; but we neither of us had any very strong hopes of being really able to make it in time to save our own lives and those of the negroes. On carefully examining our stock of provisions, we found that only by the most economical expenditure of them, and with the most favourable weather, should we be able to reach our destination in time. A foul wind, or a day or two of calm, would ruin us; and a gale would in all probability send us to the bottom. The blacks, of their own accord, took their spell at the pumps, and finally relieved our men entirely of the labour. Had they been compelled to continue pumping, it would, I am certain, have worn them out. We most dreaded a want of water. Not a cloud appeared from which we might draw it forth, and scarcely could we expect a shower. Though constantly on the look-out, not a vessel could we see, from whence we might get provisions. At length, one morning, as Jack Stretcher had gone aloft—

“A sail on the weather-bow!” he sung out, in a cheery tone, which gave

hope to all our hearts. “She’s standing across our course, so we can speak her without altering it.”

In about two hours we were up to her. She was a good sized brig, and the ensign, with the stars and stripes, which flew out at her peak, showed that she hailed from the United States. We had a signal of distress flying, in addition to the British ensign.

“Hillo! what are you?” sung out a man in her main-rigging.

“A prize to His Britannic Majesty’s brig of war *Opossum*,” answered Waller. “What are you?”

“The *Go-along*, from Baltimore, bound for Rio,” answered a person on board the brig, through a speaking-trumpet.

“Heave-to, if you please, sir, and I will pay you a visit—we are in great distress,” said Waller.

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the reply from the brig, as she was speedily brought up on a wind and hove-to.

So soon as we could get a boat in the water, leaving Jack in charge, Waller and I went on board the brig. The master, a tall, thin, sallow man, with a pointed beard, no whiskers, and a hooked nose, with a huge cigar in his mouth, a straw hat on his head, loose nankeen trousers, and a gingham swallow-tailed coat, received us at the gangway.

“Walk into the cabin, gentlemen, and let’s liquor a bit,” said he, as we stepped on board, showing us the way before we had time to reply.

The cabin, to our eyes, looked luxuriously furnished, and not unwelcome was the repast of cold beef and ham and fine biscuits which the steward placed speedily before us, not forgetting a spirit-stand with four tall bottles. We did ample justice to the good things placed before us.

“And now, what’s your pleasure, Mr Lieutenant?” laid the master of the brig.

Waller explained exactly what had occurred. “And now,” he continued,

“we are in a sinking state; we have neither provisions nor water to last us till we can reach a port; and the destruction of all these poor people is sealed if you do not help us.”

“What! take all them dirty niggers aboard my craft?” exclaimed the skipper, with a look of ineffable disgust. “You Britishers have rum notions, I calculate.”

“No, pardon me,” said Waller. “I only ask you to preserve from almost certain destruction a number of our fellow-creatures; and any remuneration which you may require will certainly be paid you.”

“What! do you call them black niggers fellow-creatures, master? That’s a rum joke, I guess,” exclaimed the skipper. “I should be happy to be of service to you, but you are so unreasonable,—that you are.”

“Scarcely unreasonable, sir,” urged Waller, mildly. “Can you not name a sum for which you could land all the people I have on board at Bahia, or the nearest port we can make.”

“No, sir; I guess no sum would pay me to defile my vessel in the way you propose,” said the Yankee. “I’ll take you and your own crew with pleasure; but the niggers are out of the question.”

“What! would you leave the poor wretches to perish in the most horrible way, with thirst and starvation?” exclaimed Waller, shuddering at the thought.

“They are niggers,” said the Yankee, coolly puffing forth a cloud of smoke, and leaning back in his chair with a self-satisfied look.

“Hear me, sir!” exclaimed Waller, rising, a flush mantling on his brow. “I have six thousand pounds of my own in this world. That sum I will make over to you, by every legal means you can devise, if you will take these poor people on board your brig, and land them in a place of safety. This shall be over and above what my Government may award you. I entreat you, as you hope for mercy here and hereafter, to do as I ask.”

“Not if you were to go down on your knees and pray till to-morrow morning,” replied the Yankee, slowly. “Niggers are niggers, and they can’t

be otherwise. If you and your people like to come aboard, you are welcome. You've got my answer, Sir."

"Then, sir," exclaimed Waller, rising from his seat, "I'll trust to the negroes' God, to mine, and to yours, for that help which you deny them. May you never be in the same strait and seek in vain for help. Good day, sir."

The Yankee looked at us with an expression more of surprise than anger as we left the brig's deck.

"Stay! you are not a bad chap, I guess. Here, just take these things; you are welcome to them."

Saying this he ordered a cask of water, some beef and biscuits, and a few little luxuries, to be put into the boat. We were not in a position to decline the gift; and, to do the Yankee full justice, he would receive no remuneration. We thanked him sincerely; and assured him that we regretted deeply our opinions on the nature of negroes did not coincide; at which he shrugged his shoulders, and we pulled back to the schooner.

We again made sail for the westward.

When I told Jack Stretcher what had occurred, he slapped his hand on his thigh, and exclaimed:

"Mr Waller was right, sir, that he was, not to think of deserting the poor niggers; and there isn't a man of us but would gladly stick by him to the last."

I told Waller what Jack had said, and he replied that he was sure all our people would have refused to have deserted the poor blacks, even if he had proposed so cruel a proceeding to them. We husbanded to the utmost the provisions we had brought from the brig; though, divided among all the people, there was scarcely more than enough to sustain life for a day. Still, not a seaman grumbled. Far from so doing, he willingly shared his own scanty allowance with any negro who appeared more particularly to require sustenance. It was amusing to see the weather-beaten, thick-bearded men carrying about the little black children, whose mothers were too weak to bring them on deck.

Though these Africans had hitherto been taught, with good reason, to look upon white men as incarnations of devils, they began to consider our gallant fellows as something approaching to angels; and, like savages in general, always in extremes, they were ready now to worship us. Providentially the easterly wind continued, and the sea remained calm, so that we made very good way, and were able to keep the leak under. It was with a sense of deep gratitude that we at length made the land, when we had not a drop of water remaining, and with scarcely food enough to sustain life for another day. We fondly believed that all our troubles were over. The negroes shouted, and clapped their hands, and laughed with joy: some of them fancied, I believe, that they had got back to Africa. The next morning we dropped our anchor in the harbour of Bahia. Waller proposed to get the schooner repaired, to take in a supply of provisions, and to return to Sierra Leone, intending, if necessary, to bear all the expenses himself. Now I am going to relate a circumstance which may seem very strange, but is, nevertheless, perfectly true. As soon as we brought up, Waller went on shore, intending to report all that had occurred to the British Consul, and to get his assistance in carrying out his intentions. I was in the meantime left in charge on board. Waller had been gone a couple of hours, and I was looking anxiously for his return, hoping that he would bring some provisions and water, when, as I was walking the deck, I observed three boats pulling off towards us. As they came near, I saw that one of them contained several men in uniform. They stepped on board without ceremony; and one of them presented a paper, in Portuguese, which looked like an official document, though, of course, I could not make it out. I shook my head to signify this, when he commenced explaining in broken English that he and his party were sent by the Governor to convey the negroes on shore, that the vessel might be the more speedily hove-down to be repaired. I was somewhat surprised that Waller had not first returned; but it never occurred to me to suspect a fraud in the matter.

While the Portuguese were speaking, three more boats came alongside, and in a very few minutes all the blacks were transferred from the schooner into them. Without an instant’s delay, the boats left the schooner’s sides; but instead of making towards the town, they pulled away to a spot some distance from it, where the negroes were landed, and I lost sight of them. About an hour after this, Waller returned.

“I have settled with the Consul, who will have a large store, where our poor blackies can be housed comfortably while the schooner is repaired; but he says we must keep a strict watch over them, for the people here are such determined slave-dealers, that they will kidnap them before our eyes.”

My heart sunk as I heard these words, and I felt like a culprit.

“Why,” I exclaimed, “the Governor has sent and had them all conveyed on shore.”

Waller could scarcely believe his senses when he found all the negroes gone. He hurried back to the Consul, who went with him to the Governor. The Governor knew nothing whatever of the matter, nor did any of the officials of the town. The Consul and some of the British in the place made every inquiry in their power, but no information whatever could they obtain. There could, however, be no doubt that some slave-dealers had carried out the nefarious plot, while, by the employment of bribes, they easily contrived to escape detection. Waller felt the matter very severely. To have the poor negroes, in whom he took so great an interest, carried into slavery, after all the toil and danger he had gone through, was almost heartbreaking. For long afterwards he could scarcely bear to speak on the subject.

It was not without difficulty that we got the schooner repaired; but at last she was ready for sea, and without further delay we made sail for Sierra Leone. We had a very fine run across. Within a day’s sail of the coast, we fell in with a slaver, which, supposing us to be of the same kidney as herself, allowed us to ran alongside; so that, without the slightest opposition, we took possession of her. Although she had no slaves on board, she was in every respect fitted to carry them. She had but a small crew, it being evidently intended to take more men on board when the slaves were shipped. Waller thought it best to remove them into the *Zerlina*, while he sent me and three hands, with Jack Stretcher as my first-lieutenant, to navigate the prize into port. As may be supposed, I felt very proud of my new command, and pictured to myself the satisfaction I should have in reporting my arrival at Sierra Leone.

Chapter Twenty Two.

My new Command—A Heavy Squall and Capsize—Saved on the Bottom of the Schooner—Taken off by a Slaver—Chased by the Opossum—The Spaniard's Threat—A Hurricane—Shipwreck—My Friends the Marlows—Conclusion.

There is a common saying that "there's many a slip between the cup and the lip." I experienced the truth of it on the present occasion. Scarcely had I got on board my new command, when one of the thick fogs I have before described came on. The *Zerlina* was leading, and being by far the faster vessel of the two, was already a mile ahead of us. However, I was pressing on all sail to keep up with her, while Waller shortened sail to enable me to effect this object. The fog grew thicker and thicker, and at last night came on, and we lost sight of our consort. The fog lasted two days. When at length it partially cleared, we saw a sail hull down to the southward; but not another speck was visible in the whole circle of the horizon.

"We must pack on her, and try and overtake Mr Waller," said I to Jack Stretcher. "He will heave-to for us, probably, when he finds we are so far astern."

Pack on her we did, in truth. If Jack had a fault as a seaman, it was a too great fondness for carrying on to the last. We neither of us took warning from our misfortune in the *Opossum*. The faster the little schooner ran through the water, the greater was our satisfaction.

"If we continue to make as good way as we do at present, we shall soon overtake the *Zerlina*," said I to Jack.

"She's got a clean pair of heels of her own, I'll allow; but we have taught our little craft to go along too," he answered, looking up with no small amount of pride at our well-set canvas.

A true sailor has a pride in the good behaviour of any craft he happens to be on board. Thus a couple of hours passed, and we certainly were gaining on our consort. I own that I had not been keeping that look-out to

mark any change in the weather which I ought to have done. In a tropical climate, especially, a seaman cannot be too careful—the changes are so very sudden. I had gone below to dinner, that meal consisting of some cold salt beef and hard biscuit, washed down with rum-and-water drunk out of a tin cup. I had been off the deck rather more than half an hour, and was just putting my head up the companion-hatch, when I heard Jack Stretcher sing out, “Let go the fore-sheet!—down with the helm!—down with the—”

Before he could finish the sentence, there came the rushing sound of a heavy squall. Down bent the schooner to its fury—over, over she went. To spring on deck and to clamber up to the weather-bulwarks was the work of a moment. Still the vessel rose not: the helm had lost its power; the sheets remained fast; her sails reached the water.

“She’s gone!—she’s gone!” shouted my crew.

I still had a faint hope she might right herself again; but when she made the attempt, the furious wind beat her back, the sea washed over her sails, and in another moment she turned completely over. I can scarcely describe my sensations. I had no time, I fancy, to experience any; at all events, I do not remember what they were. I never lost hope; for, bad as things were, I did not expect to be drowned. In the meantime I had clambered to the outside of the bulwarks.

“Give me your hand here, sir!” I heard Jack Stretcher sing out, and looking up, I saw that he was hanging on to the main-chains. With his assistance, as the vessel went over, I managed to climb up on her keel, and there we together sat for the moment in comparative security. Like a true sailor, he had caught hold of a rope, and brought the end up with him. Our first thought was to look out for our shipmates. One had, unhappily, been below; the other two had been washed off the deck. They were, however, supporting themselves in the water, at no great distance from the vessel. When they saw us they shouted to us to help them, for neither of them were good swimmers.

“Keep up, my lads!” cried Jack, in return. “Get a little nearer, and I’ll lend you a hand.”

Meantime he was hauling in on the rope, and coiling it up ready to heave to them.

Just then I saw something dark moving under the water close astern of the vessel. Jack saw it also, as I guessed by the glance of his eye.

“What’s that!” I asked, a thrilling sensation of horror creeping over me, for I knew too well.

“One of those sea-devils—a shark, sir,” he answered, in a low tone. Then he shouted out, “Strike away, my lads!—strike away! you’ll soon be within reach. Never say die! Strike away! Hurra!”

Inspirited by these words of encouragement, one of the men at length got within reach of the rope. Jack hove it to him. He made a spring and grasped the end, and without difficulty we hauled him up, he little suspecting the terrific danger he had for the present escaped. The strength of the other poor fellow was evidently fast failing. The dreaded monster of the deep was not far from him. Still, happily, he did not know of its presence, and the exertions he made kept it at a distance.

“I’m afraid poor Sandy will never reach us, sir,” said Jack, looking at him compassionately. “Just do you, sir, and Jim Dore, lay hold of the end of the rope, and I’ll try and carry it out to him. There isn’t much fear of Jack Shark as long as one keeps moving; and I see a bit of a stick down there, which I’ll catch hold of, and give him such a rap on the nose if he attempts to meddle with me, that he’ll remember it for many a day to come.”

He said this as he was coiling up the rope again. I could not dissuade him from his gallant resolve, and yet so dreadful seemed the risk of his being destroyed by the shark, that I almost wished he had not thought of it.

Jim and I caught hold of the other end of the rope, and seizing it without another word, he plunged into the sea, encouraging Sandy to perseverance with his loud shouts. He first grasped the piece of wood he had seen, and with it in his hand he swam towards Sandy, every now and then stopping to strike the water vehemently with it. Although the foam was flying over the tops of the waves all the time, and the sea was washing up the sides and almost sweeping as off from where we sat,

under the lee of the vessel it was comparatively calm. Anxiously indeed did I watch my brave shipmate's proceeding. Every moment I expected to see the shark make a dash at him, but his splashings and kickings kept the monster at bay. He was almost up to poor McTavish, when the latter threw up his arms and disappeared from our sight. Jack was after him, though; and, diving down, in another instant appeared holding him by the hair. Throwing the bight of the rope under his arms, he sang out to us to haul away on it. We did so, while he supported the man with one hand, and kept slashing the water with the stick which he held in the other.

Meantime I saw the fin of the shark as the monster kept swimming about in his neighbourhood, eager evidently to make a dash at him, yet afraid of approaching. At length we got the almost drowned man up to the side of the vessel, and were hauling him up, Jack still being in the water, when some feeling, I scarcely know what, prompted me to look in the direction where I had just before seen the shark. The monster was no longer there. I instantly cried out to Jack. The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when he made a spring and scrambled out of the water by the main-chain-plates. Then, turning round, he dealt a tremendous blow at the tail of the shark, who had closely followed him.

"I'll teach you to play such a sneaking trick as that, my boy!" he shouted, as the greedy fish swam off discomfited.

I breathed more freely when brave Jack was once more seated alongside of me on the keel of the vessel Sandy McTavish, whose life he had thus so gallantly preserved, now came to his senses, and in a short time was sufficiently recovered to take care of himself. Our position, however, was far from enviable. Here were we, four human beings, seated on the keel of a vessel which might any moment go down, with neither land nor a sail in sight. For some time, after all our exertions, we sat silent, collecting our thoughts.

"Well, Jack," said I, "what are we to do?"

"Wait patiently, till God sends us help, sir," he replied. "We can't help ourselves. It's fortunate we've just had our dinners. We shall hold out the longer."

We scarcely exchanged another word for some hours, but kept wistfully glancing our eyes round the horizon, in the hopes of a sail appearing. Shortly before darkness came on, and the hour of ten passed by, I began to feel rather hungry. At the same time I happened to put my hand into my pocket, and there I found the greater part of a ship's biscuit, which, as I was quitting the cabin, I had mechanically thrust into it. I almost shouted for joy as I found the prize—though it was not much to be divided among four men. The discovery made the rest fumble in their pockets. McTavish had a tobacco-box, which he had only just filled, and Jack found a huge lump of grease, which, though not very savoury, was not to be despised. How it had come there he could not recollect. These treasures, however, we determined not to begin to consume till the following morning, for that night we had no hopes of being taken off the wreck. The squall had rapidly passed off, and the ocean was now as calm as before. The sky was clear, and the sun went down in a blaze of glory, shedding a bright ruddy hue over the wide expanse which surrounded us. Night came on, and the stars burst forth from the blue vault of heaven, and cast their reflection on the smooth, mirror-like water, as we sat on, hour after hour, afraid of going to sleep, lest we should slip from our hold, yet longing for repose. At last it occurred to me to have the rope passed from one to the other, and secured round our waists, so that if one fell asleep and began to slip, the rest might support him. Thus we got through the longest night I had ever then passed.

The grey dawn came at length, and as the light rapidly increased, we looked anxiously around the horizon, but nothing but the smooth glassy sea met our sight. Oh, then, well do I remember it! There came over me a deep sense of our utter helplessness, and of the palpable necessity of dependence on a higher power. Of what use was our strength? Of what use was our seamanship? Our strength without food would quickly leave us; while all we could do was to sit still. I spoke my thoughts to my companions. They listened attentively, and we all knelt down together on our unstable support, and prayed to God for preservation from our great peril. After this act we felt refreshed and encouraged; and I observed that the voices of my companions assumed a more cheerful tone than before. Our trials, however, were but commencing. As the sun rose in the sky, his beams struck down on our undefended heads and scorched us dreadfully, till Jack bethought him of fastening his handkerchief over the top of his, and we followed his example. Instead of breakfast, we each of

us took a quid from Sandy's box, and that had the effect of staying our appetites for some hours. This, however, did not satisfy our stomachs entirely, and a short time after noon we could no longer resist attacking our scanty store of provisions. My biscuit I broke in two, and returning one-half to my pocket, I divided the other into four parts, Jack treating his lump of grease in the same way. We ate it with a relish I can scarcely describe. It was the only food we consumed for the whole of the day. Again the sun went down without a sail having appeared. That night passed away as had the former one, though each of us got rather more sleep. The next morning there was the same dull calm. Noon came, and with a heavy heart I served out the remainder of our provisions, but none of us seemed to care much for food. Water was what we craved for. A thimbleful to moisten our tongues would have been worth its bulk in gold. A raging thirst was growing on us. I urged the men to abstain from drinking salt water, for I well knew that if they did, it would only increase their sufferings. Earnestly did I pray that we might not have to endure another night on the wreck, for I thought that we could never exist through it; but the night came, and we passed it, how, I scarcely know, for, though not asleep, I was certainly not fully awake, except to a sense of some overpowering misfortune. The day came, a day which we must pass without food or water. Our sufferings hitherto had not been great, but this morning they became very intense. Hope, which had till now never deserted us, began to grow faint, and alas! even trust in God's providence to wane. I tried to pray, but my thoughts were confused. I could not for two consecutive minutes fix them on the same subject, and I experienced practically the folly of attempting to wait for a death-bed repentance, for sickness, or for such a moment as the present, for reconciliation with God. I speak of my own feelings, and I believe that they were not far different from those of my men. Hour after hour we sat gazing stupidly at each other. The hot sun rose and scorched us as before, while the bright glare his rays cast on the smooth ocean almost blinded our eyes. Several times I tried to rouse myself to talk to my men, and to encourage them; but I own that I failed miserably in the attempt, and, from weakness, I was scarcely able to refrain from giving way to a flood of tears. It was some time past noon, when I saw Jack's countenance brighten up.

"What is it?" I asked.

He pointed eagerly to the southward. I turned round, and looked, and there I saw in the horizon a long, thin, well-defined, dark blue line, and in the centre of it a white speck.

“A breeze! a breeze!” I cried.

“Ay, and a sail, too,” added Jack. “She is standing this way. Huzza! my lads.”

Jim and Sandy cheered faintly. They were the first words they had uttered for some hours. We now all found our tongues, a fillip had been given to our spirits, and we thought scarcely of our hunger or thirst. The dark blue line advanced, and grew wider and wider, till it spread itself over the ocean; and the white speck grew higher and higher, till the topsails of a vessel were seen rising out of the water. Oh! with what intense anxiety did we watch her, fearing every moment to see her alter her course, or pass by without noticing us.

“Can she be the *Zerlina*?” said I to Jack. “I think when Mr Waller found that we were not following him, he would have put back to look for us.”

“No, sir; she has too wide a spread of canvas, to my mind, for the *Zerlina*,” answered Jack. “I’m doubtful what she is.”

“Maybe she’s the *Opossum* hersel’,” remarked Sandy. “I ken she ought to be found hereabouts.”

“No, no, my boy; that craft is a square-rigged schooner, and a big one too,” said Jack, positively.

Less than an hour showed us he was right, and a long, low, black, rakish-looking schooner, with a wide spread of canvas, everything set alow and aloft, to catch the breeze, came sweeping past us.

“She’s a slaver,” I exclaimed, with dismay.

“Ay, and has as wicked a look as I ever wish to see,” said Jack.

He was right in his description, and as she glided by us, a villainous set of ruffians of every shade of colour, of every variety of costume,

appeared looking at us over her bulwarks. Still, ruffians as they might be, it appeared better to be taken off by them than to remain and perish where we were. We waved to them to come to us, and Jack and Jim Dore sung out, “*Misericordia*! *misericordia*!”

They appeared, however, to take no notice, either of our signs or our cries, and our hearts sank within us. Happy would it have been for us had they left us where we were (so it seemed a short time afterwards). However, directly they had passed us, their studding-sails were taken in, the yards braced up, and in fine seamanlike style the schooner was rounded-to, close to leeward of us. A boat was instantly lowered, and pulled up alongside the wreck. Her crew did not improve in appearance on a nearer inspection. As they made signs to us to get into the boat, we slid off the bottom of the schooner, when they hauled us in, and placed us in the stern-sheets.

While they were pulling on board their own vessel I saw them eyeing my uniform with suspicious glances, and they made remarks which I did not understand. Our condition was sad enough to excite the compassion of anything human. When we were lifted on deck we could scarcely stand, and even Jack, with drooping head, had to support himself against the bulwarks, and little would any of those who saw him have supposed the gallant deeds of which his brawny arm was capable. Our lack-lustre eyes and parched lips showed what we most needed, and at last some of the crew brought us some water in a bowl, which speedily revived us, while others came with a mixture of soup and beans. I never ate anything I thought so delicious, in spite of its being redolent of garlic, and containing no small quantity of grease. While we were being fed, the boat was hoisted in, the schooner put before the wind, and the studding-sails again set. She was a powerful vessel, and, from several unmistakeable signs, I perceived that she was full of slaves. I had done eating, and was beginning to look about me, when a little, dark, one-eyed man, who by his dress I saw was an officer, came up to me, and taking me by one of my uniform buttons, asked—

“What for this?”

“It’s the button of my coat,” said I, in a simple tone.

“I know. You officer, then?” asked my friend. “English ship?”

“I have that honour,” I replied.

“What ship, then?” he inquired.

I told him.

“How came you, then, there?” he asked, pointing to the wreck, which we were fast leaving astern.

I told him the truth.

“What say you, then, if we cut your throats, and heave you overboard?” he asked; and as I looked at the twinkle of his one eye, and the expression of his lips, I thought that he was capable of any act of atrocity; but I determined to put a good face on the matter.

“I do not see why you should murder us,” I replied, calmly. “We neither wish to harm you, nor can we; and as you have just preserved our lives, it would be something like destroying your own work.”

“We will see about that,” he remarked. “You might find us sometimes in a humour when there would not be much doubt about the matter. Your men are safe enough, as they will doubtless join us, and three stout hands will be welcome. You may think yourself fortunate, if you ever set foot ashore alive.”

I saw Jack, who was listening, put his tongue in his cheek, as much as to say, “Do not reckon on my joining your villainous crew.” I had remarked that the captain of the slaver, for such I guessed the little man to be, improved in his way of speaking English as he proceeded, and I therefore warned Jack and the others to be careful what they said, lest they should offend him. After this conversation we were left alone, and sitting down on deck, I was very soon fast asleep. I was awoke by a man bringing me a mess of some sort to eat, and when I had devoured it I should have fallen asleep again, but the captain came up and told me that I might turn into a spare cabin on deck. Taking off my clothes, I threw myself on the bed, and slept without moving till the grey light of dawn came in at the scuttle. I was awoke by a loud jabbering and swearing, and presently the

sound of a gun came booming over the water. There was then the noise of blocks creaking and ropes rattling, denoting that more sail was being made on the vessel. I dressed quickly and opened the door of my cabin, but scarcely had I stepped out on deck when my shoulder was roughly seized by the captain of the slaver, while with his other hand he pointed to a large brig about three miles off, under all sail, standing directly for our larboard quarter.

“What craft is that?” he asked, fiercely. “Your men say they do not know her. Do you?”

I looked again. I had no doubt she was the *Opossum*. “If I am not mistaken, she is the ship to which I belong,” I replied, calmly.

“Is she fast?” he asked.

“She is reputed so,” I answered. “But I doubt it she is so fast as this vessel.”

“For your sakes, as well as for ours, it is to be hoped not,” he observed, with a grin which I thought perfectly demoniacal. “If she overhauls us, we shall be obliged to put into execution a trick we play at times, when too hotly pursued by your cruisers; only, instead of expending our negroes, who are valuable, we shall be compelled to make use of you and your people. It will be happy for you, if there are no sharks ready to grab you before your ship lowers a boat to pick you up. You understand me?”

I did, too well. The slavers, when hotly pressed by a cruiser, will throw overboard some of their blacks, one by one, lashed to something to float them, trusting that the humanity of the British commander will induce him to heave-to, and to pick them up, although thus delaying him in his chase.

I felt very sure my one-eyed friend would put his threat into execution; and though it certainly afforded us a way of getting back to our ship, the risk in the interim of being caught by a shark was far too great to be contemplated with equanimity.

“If you do throw us overboard, I only hope that you will provide us with sticks, or some weapons with which to defend ourselves against the

sharks," said I.

"You are a brave boy," said he, "and deserve a better fate; but it cannot be helped."

There was a fine breeze, but nothing more; and by the time the schooner's sails were trimmed, as I looked over the side I saw that she was making good way through the water. I doubted whether the *Opossum* could go faster; and I saw, at all events, that, like other stern chases, this would be a long one. It very probably would last two or three days, perhaps longer. I scarcely knew what to wish. Were it not for those dreadful sea monsters, we all of us might be able to get on board the brig, and help to capture the schooner afterwards, I thought to myself. We were allowed perfect liberty to walk about the decks as we liked; so I went up to Jack, and asked him what he thought about the probability of the brig overtaking us.

"Why, sir," he replied, after contemplating her, and looking over the schooner's side for some time, "this craft has got as clean a pair of heels as any vessel I was ever aboard; and though our brig, I'll allow, is no laggard, I doubt if she'll overtake her, if the wind holds steady, before we reach the West Indies, where, I take it, we are bound."

Jack was right, with regard to the relative speed of the two vessels, at all events. As I kept my eye on the brig, I could not but acknowledge that we were slowly but surely increasing our distance from her. This put the captain in good humour.

"Ah! my young friend," he said, tapping me on the shoulder, "you have escaped the sharks this time, I believe." At night I turned in and went to sleep, for I had not yet recovered from my want of rest and unusual anxiety. The next morning, there, however, was the brig, right astern of us, though we had much increased our distance from her. When I appeared, the captain gave me no friendly look; and it was only towards the evening, when we had brought her topsails beneath the horizon, that his good humour was re-established. Another night passed, and the brig was out of sight. I thought it more than probable, however, that Captain Idle was still following, in the hopes of finding us becalmed, or in some other way falling in with us. I cannot stop to describe the scenes of

gambling and fighting continually going on among the schooner's lawless crew, though their outbreaks of fury were generally repressed, before arriving at extremities, by the energy of the little captain. We got on tolerably well with them. Jack danced his hornpipe, I sang, and the other two men made themselves generally useful. I, therefore, no longer had any great fears about our present safety.

A dreadful doom was, however, prepared for most on board. One night I was awoke by a terrific noise, and, rushing on deck, I found that one of those fierce hurricanes which occur at times in the tropics had just commenced. Amid a mass of spoondrift the schooner drove helplessly before it. The night was dark as pitch, except when vivid flashes of forked lightning darted from the clouds and shed a bright blue glare on our decks, exhibiting a scene of horror and confusion seldom surpassed. The seamen ran to and fro shrieking with terror, calling on their saints to help them, and vowing candles and other offerings at their shrines, the fiercest and most quarrelsome generally showing the most abject fear. The little captain, to do him justice, kept his presence of mind, and endeavoured to restore order, but he had lost all control over his crew. Jack found his way aft to where I was standing, and I was truly glad to have him near me.

"It's to be hoped there's no land under our lee, or it will fare ill with us," said he. "But I'm not quite certain. Just now, when there was a bright flash of lightning, I thought I saw something very like it right ahead of us. We must be ready for the worst, I'm thinking, Mr D'Arcy."

I felt this to be the case, and prayed earnestly to God to stretch forth His hand to save us. Scarcely a minute had elapsed after Jack had spoken, when the tempest, thundering down on the accursed slave ship more violently than before, the lightning flashing more vividly, a terrific shock was felt, which made her tremble as if about to part asunder; the tall masts bent like willow wands, and fell with a crash into the sea; and the voracious waves came curling up, foam-crested, astern, and sweeping everything before them. The howling of the fierce hurricane overpowered the agonised shrieks of the drowning crew, as they were carried overboard; while from the hold arose the heart-piercing cries of despair and terror of the helpless negroes who were confined there, deprived of even a chance of escape. Our two shipmates had found their way aft, to where Jack and I were holding on for our lives, sheltered partly by the

raised poop. Still we drove on. We had evidently been forced over a reef, and we hoped that we might reach smooth water. The sea no longer broke over us.

“What say you, lads? Let’s try to give those poor fellows down there a chance for their lives,” cried Jack.

All agreed to the proposal. There were scarcely any Spaniards left to stop us; and had there been, I do not think they would have ventured to interfere. I had observed some axes hung up inside the cabin-door, and seizing them, we tore off the hatches, and leaped down among the terror-stricken wretches below. Sandy had bethought him of securing some lanterns, for in the dark we could do nothing. As soon as he had brought them, and we had got them lighted, Jack singing out, “*Amigos*!—*amigos*!—have no fear, my hearties!” we set to work with a right good will, and knocked the fetters off a considerable number of the unfortunate negroes. The operation was nearly completed, when we felt another terrific shock vibrate through the ship. Again and again she struck. We had just time to spring up the main-hatchway, followed by the howling terrified blacks, when the sides of the ship seemed to yawn asunder; a foaming wave rushed towards us, and at the same moment a vivid flash of lightning showed us the shore, not a hundred yards off.

“There’s hope yet,” I heard Jack exclaim.

There is, after that, a wild confusion in my mind of shrieks and groans; of foaming, tossing waters; of pieces of plank driven to and fro; of arms outstretched; of despairing countenances, some pale or livid, some of ebon hue, lighted up ever and anon by a flash of lightning. I was clinging, I found, to a small piece of timber torn from the wreck. Now I was driven near the sands; now carried out to sea; tossed about on the tops of the foaming waves, rolled over and over, and almost drowned with the spray. Still I held on convulsively, half conscious only of my awful position. It seemed rather like some dreadful dream than a palpable reality. How long I had been tossing about in this way, I knew not. Daylight had been stealing on even before the final catastrophe had occurred. At length I know that I felt myself carried near the sands, and while I was trying to secure a footing, some black figures rushed into the water and dragged me on shore. My preservers were, I discovered, some of the negroes

who had escaped from the wreck. I was too much exhausted to stand; so they carried me up out of the reach of the waves, and laid me on the sands, while they returned once more to the edge of the water. Their object was evident. By the increasing light I saw several figures clinging to the rocks, against which I concluded the vessel had struck. Full twenty negroes were on the beach, which was strewed with bits of plank and spars, and coils of rope, and other portions of the wreck. Presently I saw four or five of them plunge into the water together, holding the end of a rope. They struck out bravely, and though more than once driven back, they still made way, till they reached the rock, up which they clambered. The people on the rock helped them out of the water. There were several negroes, a few of whom were women, and three white men. One of the white men held a black infant in his arms, and as the light increased, I recognised my friend Jack Stretcher. “Just like the gallant fellow!” thought I. At that dreadful moment, when most people would have been thinking only of their own preservation, he looked out for the most helpless being, that he might try and save it, even at the risk of his own life. I hope the mother of the infant has escaped to thank him; but, at all events, he will have his reward. The other two men were my shipmates. Of the slaver’s crew, not a man had escaped. After this I remember nothing; for, from exhaustion, consequent on the blows I had received in the water, I fainted. I had a dreamy notion of being lifted up and carried along some distance, and of the hot sun scorching me; and then of entering the cool shade of a house, and of hearing a voice which I fancied I recollected, and thought very sweet, say, “Why, papa, it’s that little officer again. Poor, poor fellow! how ill and wretched he looks!” I tried to open my eyes to look at the speaker, but had no strength left to lift even my eyelids. How long I had remained in a state of unconsciousness I could not tell, though I afterwards found it was some weeks. The next time I recollect opening my eyes, they rested on the features of Miss Alice Marlow, and by her side was a young man in a lieutenant’s uniform while at the foot of my couch stood Jack Stretcher. “Where am I? How’s all this?” I asked, in a faint voice.

“You are in Mr Marlow’s house, in the island of Barbadoes,” said the young officer. “As to the rest, it’s a long yarn, and we’ll spin it another time.”

“Ah, and now I know you. You are Waller,” replied I. “Well, old fellow, I’m

glad you've got your promotion."

"But the doctor says we must on no account have any talking; so come away, Henry; and here, Jack, is the fruit for Mr D'Arcy. He may eat as much of it as he likes," said Miss Alice.

I recollect this scene; but I fancy after it I got a relapse, through which, however, I was mercifully carried, after a tough contest with death. Oh! how tenderly and kindly I was nursed; every want was attended to—every wish gratified, almost before expressed—by an old black woman, who, day or night, scarcely ever left my bedside. I quite loved her good, old, ugly face—for ugly it was, without the possibility of contradiction, according to all European notions of beauty, though some of the descendants of Ham, in her own torrid land, might at one time have thought it lovely. She was assisted in her labours by a damsel of the same ebon hue, who had been saved out of the slave ship; and I believe that the attention of the two women was redoubled on account of the way I had treated their unhappy countrymen on board that vessel. Jack Stretcher had been obliged to rejoin the brig, and had gone away in her. I was, however, frequently favoured by a visit from Miss Alice Marlow and her kind father, in whose house I remained for many months, treated as if I had been a well-loved son. At length I was one morning riding down by the seashore, when the wide-spread canvas of a man-of-war caught my sight, standing in for the land. I recognised her at once as the *Opossum*, and was therefore not surprised when, some hours afterwards, Waller walked into Mr Marlow's drawing-room. Captain Idle and the doctor followed soon afterwards, and a consultation having been held, I was pronounced fit for duty, and compelled, with many regrets, to leave my kind friends, and to go on board. The brig soon afterwards returned to the coast of Africa, where we took some slavers, went through various adventures, and lost several officers and men with fever; and I again fell sick, so that my life was despaired of. Now, entertaining as these sort of things may be to read about, no one was sorry when, one fine morning, another brig-of-war hove in sight, bringing us orders to return home. "Hurra for old England!" was the general cry, fore and aft. "Hurra! hurra!"

At length I once more found myself an inmate of Daisy Cottage, and many happy weeks I spent there—perhaps the happiest in my life—in the society of my uncle and aunt and young cousins. I there slowly, but

effectually, recovered from the effects of the African climate, and the hardships I had lately gone through, and was ultimately pronounced as fit as ever for service. When Larry Harrigan heard that I was ill, he came over to Ryde, and could scarcely be persuaded to leave me for a moment, till assured by the doctor that I was in no danger whatever, but even he seemed much to doubt the judgment of the learned disciple of Galen. Afterwards he allowed very few days to pass without coming to set me, till I was strong enough to return his visits, which I did not fail to do. The good, kind old man! He never went back to Ireland, but lived on at Southsea, in perfect comfort, till he and his wife reached a green old age. He used to tell me, confidentially, that there was an honest navy agent, who had found him out, and insisted on paying him a wonderful interest for a certain share of prize-money, which he had fortunately neglected to claim in his younger days. It was, in truth, a way I took of contributing to maintain the old man in comfort, without his feeling that he was a pensioner on my bounty.

Some time after I had been at home, I heard from my gallant friend Waller, who had gone back to Barbadoes. He gave me a piece of information, at which I own I was not very much surprised, namely, that he was on the point of bringing Miss Alice Marlow to England as his bride. “I hope that she will prove worthy of him, for a finer fellow does not exist,” said I.

A short time before I left Daisy Cottage to join my next ship, I was sitting in the drawing-room, when Sir Richard Sharpe was announced, and in walked Dicky himself. We almost wrung each other’s hands off before we could speak, and then we did indeed rattle away. His father was dead, he told me.

“I have been compelled to deprive the navy of my services,” said he, with perfect gravity. “But you see that I have my estates to look after, and my mother and sisters’ welfare to attend to; and I could not fulfil my duties in these respects were I to remain afloat. Do you know, D’Arcy, I am very glad indeed that I went to sea,” he continued, more seriously. “It made me think much less of myself, and cured me of many faults; for I am very sure that I should have been spoiled had I remained at home. They always let me have too much of my own way, and that is bad for the best of us. Now in the service I got cobbed and mast-headed, and made to do

what I was told; and I'm all the better for the discipline, though I did not like it at the time. Then I learned a very important lesson,—that every man, whatever his position, has his duties to perform; and that, if he does not do them to the best of his power, he must certainly expect to be disrated."

"You mean to say that you learned this out of the man-of-war's Homily-book,—the Station Bill," said I, smiling at my own conceit.

I must explain that this Station Bill is a book in which is entered the place which every man on board is to occupy, as well as the duties he is especially to attend to, though at the same time he is expected to do his very utmost in performing any other work which may be necessary.

"That's just it," replied Sir Richard. "I used to think that the captain of a man-of-war had a good deal to do to keep his ship in good order; but I can tell you that I feel that the owner of a large estate has many more and multifarious duties; and that in a great degree every soul upon it is committed by God to his care, and at his hands will they be required."

I fully agreed with my old messmate in these matters, and was rejoiced to find that he had really discovered the true object of life. I am happy to say that he was after this a very frequent visitor at Daisy Cottage, and that ultimately one of my cousins became Lady Sharpe. They, the Vernons and the Wallers, are among my most valued friends; and at the houses also of Admiral Poynder and Captain Idle, and most of my subsequent commanders, I am a welcome guest.

I must not forget to mention, once more, my gallant companion in so many adventures, honest Jack Stretcher. He volunteered into the next ship to which I was appointed, to my very great satisfaction; and afterwards taking out his warrant as a boatswain, he was with me for several years, and a better boatswain there is not in the service. I have never revisited my ancestral halls since I left them with Larry to go to sea; and, to say the truth, the Encumbered Estates Court knows more about them than I do. The ocean is my only heritage; my ship is my wife, and I look on my crew as my children. I went to sea again as a midshipman; then, after passing, I spent four years as a mate, and six as a lieutenant; during which time I saw a good deal of hard service. At length I got my

promotion as a commander, and have still to look for my post step.

Every career has its trials. A naval life has many; but we must always bear in mind that we were sent into this world for the express purpose of undergoing them, and that while some persons are proved by hardships and poverty, others are so by abundance of ease and wealth. I, for my own part, feel that I have much for which to be grateful; and though I have neither rank nor riches, I do not consider myself unfortunate nor ill-treated. And once more I say, that, had I to begin my career again, I should prefer to every other a life on Salt Water.

The End.

| Chapter 1 | | Chapter 2 | | Chapter 3 | | Chapter 4 | | Chapter 5 | | Chapter 6 | | Chapter 7 | | Chapter 8 | | Chapter 9 | | Chapter 10 | | Chapter 11 | | Chapter 12 | | Chapter 13 | | Chapter 14 | | Chapter 15 | | Chapter 16 | | Chapter 17 | | Chapter 18 | | Chapter 19 | | Chapter 20 | | Chapter 21 | | Chapter 22 |

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