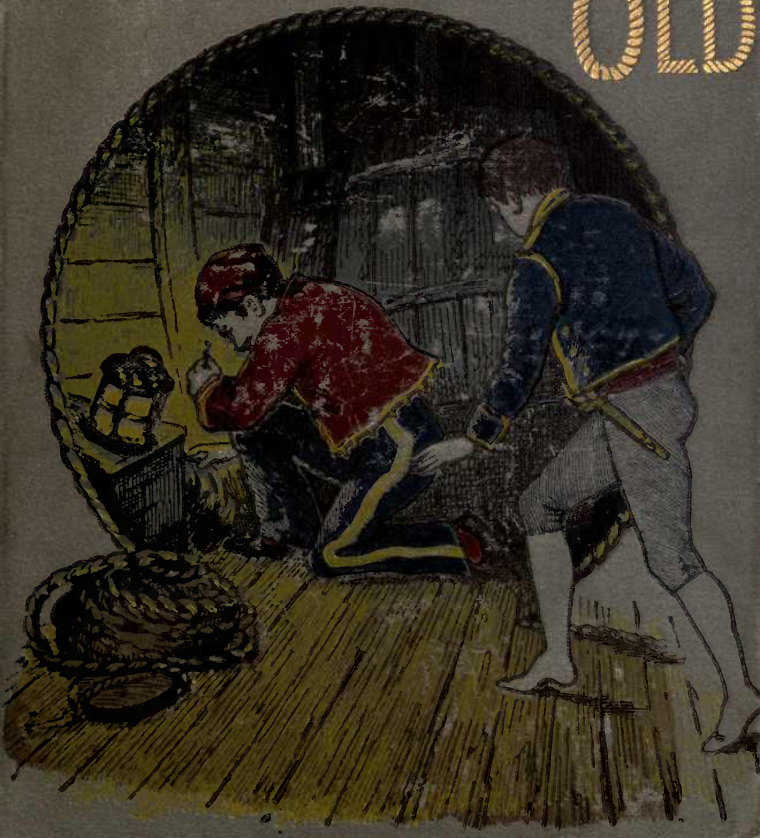
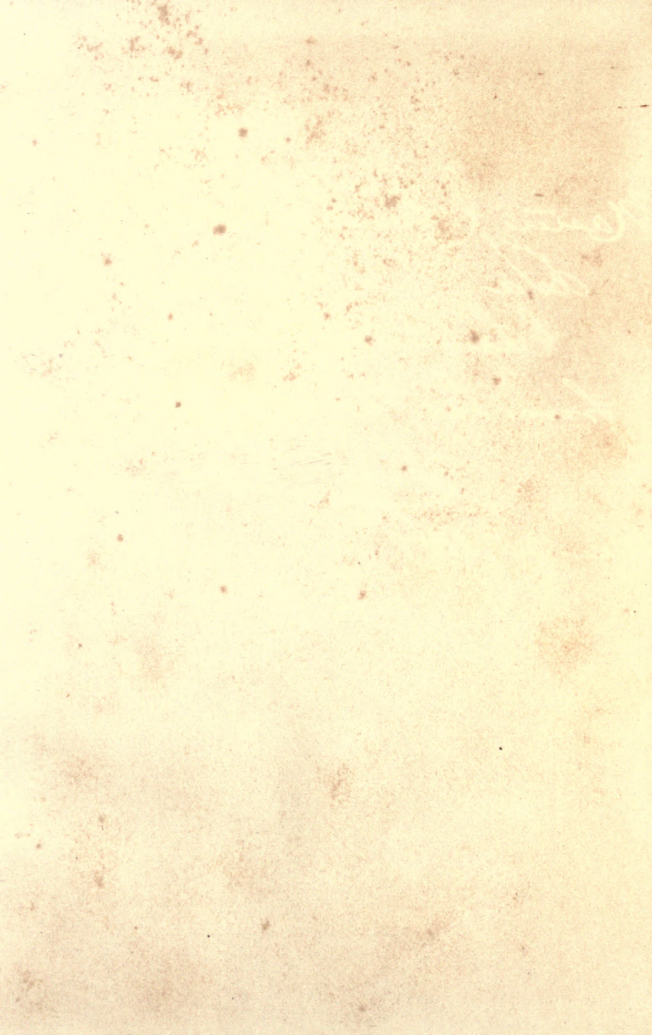


IN THE
DASHING DAYS
OF
OLD







"Now the axe, Josh!" cried Willie Grant.

[Page 319.]

IN
THE DASHING DAYS
OF OLD;

OR,

The World-Wide Adventures of Willie Grant.

BY

GORDON STABLES, C.M., M.D., R.N.

AUTHOR OF "ON SPECIAL SERVICE," "THE CRUISE OF THE SNOWBIRD,"
"WILD ADVENTURES ROUND THE POLE," ETC., ETC.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS BY M. IRWIN.

NEW YORK:
THOMAS WHITTAKER,
2 & 3, BIBLE HOUSE.

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5775

TO HIS GALLANT FRIEND AND BROTHER OF THE PEN,

CAPTAIN PERCY GROVES,

(LATE INNISKILLEN DRAGOONS),

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED WITH

KINDLIEST WISHES,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

961678

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Dramatis Personæ, etc.

I. *Time*—From 1806 till close of the war in 1815.

II. *Scenes*—Here and there in many lands.

III.—*Principal Characters in the Story*:—



WILLIE GRANT:

One of Nature's gentlemen, who knew his duty and did it.



DEM RUTHERFORD:

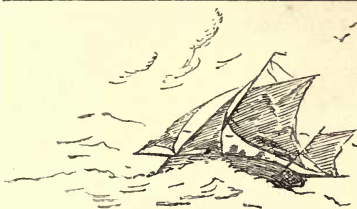
An Anglo-Indian, full of Indian fire and English independence.



POODAH: a man with a mystery.



CAPTAIN OLDREY,
Of the *Castile*: a "heart of oak."



DR. CURVER,
his surgeon: a man who loved
Nature and hated the "cat."

**FIRST LIEUTENANT
HAYES:**
Full of zeal for the service.

SECOND LIEUTENANT BUCHANAN:
A brave Scot with a grave failing.

CAPTAIN BUCKRAM,
of the Marines: as stiff as a poker and as hard as steel.

PAYMASTER PERKINS:
A fussy wee purser.

PLAIN JACK WILLIAMS:
A midshipman.



THE HON. DE GREY:
A midshipmite of the real old type.

MR. HARNES:
Mate of the *Dardanelle*, a scoundrel of the
old school.

IV. Ordinary Characters:—

Jack-Tars and Joe-
Marines; cooks,
clerks, and stewards;
dogs, mates, monkeys,
and loblolly boys;
a few old women and a
girl or two, etc.



LONG TOM THUMWOOD:
Something like a signalman.

LITTLE BOY JOSH:
A waif from the wilds,



ILLUSTRATIONS.



A Wreck and a Fire.

Schoolboy Life in Scotland.

Keeper McGregor and the Apparition.

Boy Bedouins.

Under the Pennant.

Joining the Service.

The Great Snapping Turtle.

A Flag of Truce.

A Fair Companion.

In the Far West.

A well-deserved Punishment.



Book I.

Schoolboy Life
In
Scotland.


CHAPTER I.

IN A LONESOME LAND.

“My heather land, my heather land!
Though fairer lands there be,
Thy gowanie braes in early days
Were gowden ways to me.

Must life's poor boon go dark'ning doon,
Nor die where it had dawned,
But seek a grave beyond the wave?
Alas! my heather land!”

—*Thom.*

“E are not too late yet, at all events,” said Willie Grant to his friend and companion. “We are not too late yet, are we, Dem?” Dem did not reply at once. He was a cautious boy. But he grew suddenly serious. He threw down a flat stone that he had been just about to make skip across a wild-duck pond, and gazed for a moment at the distant school-house near the larch-tree wood, on the other side of the glen. Between the school and the place where the boys were standing, there was first and foremost a long expanse of flat, heathy moorland.

The heather here was still green, and the moor was dotted over with low-lying bushes of bright golden gorse, for the summer was still very young. Beyond this, and stretching miles upon miles from east to west, was a rocky and densely wooded ravine. Here grew the tallest pine trees and the highest, darkest, and thickest spruce trees in all the country side; but tall and high though they were, they did not obscure the view, for their topmost branches or tapering points alone were visible above the moorland. Beyond this wood was a series of beetling rocks and precipices, then fields, and then the school.

Dem took all this in and judged the distance at a single glance. Then he turned round and had a good look at the sun and the distant mountains that bounded the south-eastern horizon, after which he addressed his friend as follows,—

“Well, Willie,” he said, “we *can* do it. It is half-past nine by the sun. If we are not in by five minutes after ten, you know what we’ll catch. But I think we *can* do it, if we cross the burn and don’t mind wetting our feet.”

“Because you know, Dem,” added Willie, “we never yet have played truant; and I wouldn’t like to begin, would you?”

“No,” said Dem. “So come on, let us run.”

They had to go all round the wild-duck pond that Willie had been skipping stones across. But they kept as close to the water’s edge as possible, even splashing

through the water itself sometimes, in order to cut off corners, and jumping high over the rush bushes.

“Hurrah!” cried Willie, rushing on in quite a reckless kind of a way, “hurrah! my feet are wet already. This is a regular steeple-chase.”

“So are mine,” echoed Dem. “Hurrah! for a hop, step, and jump.”

The hop and the step were right enough, and dry enough, but the jump landed him in a pool which took him up over his knees.

Willie laughed, and stopped a moment to help his friend out, when, from some rush bushes not fifteen yards away, up started a wild drake.

“Whirr—rr, whirr—rr!” went the drake, flying heavily and with outstretched neck, as ducks do.

“Oh, look, Dem, look!” cried Willie, mad with excitement. “Let us search for the nest,” he continued, clapping his hands with joy. “It is bound to be here, you know. I always did feel sure the wild ducks built about this pond, though we never yet found a nest.”

Dem gave one more glance at the distant school-house, then,—

“Yes,” he said; “we’re bound to find it in about five minutes. You go round that way, and I’ll go this; the duck is sure to lie close, so don’t miss a single likely bush.”

The five minutes soon fled away, and so did five minutes more, and five to that, but at last,—oh, joy! “Whirr—ack, whirr—ack, whirr—rr!”

Up flew the duck, and off; and next minute Dem and Willie stood in ecstasies gazing down upon the large and lovely eggs that the nest contained.

“One, two,” cried Willie, counting, “six, seven, nine, eleven eggs. Oh! aren’t we in luck, Dem? Why, I never had a nest like this the whole of last summer.”

Dem was deep in thought. No; I am sorry to say it was not school he was thinking about, but simply those charming eggs.

To rob the poor duck was wrong, he knew, and yet to do so was a sore temptation.

“When Miss Wilson,” he said slowly, still gazing at the eggs, “met you and me, Willie, last summer, carrying a nest of gaping thrushes, she stopped us, and told us it was very, very cruel. She is the minister’s daughter, and ought to know. Well, I think she was right; and when you and I carried back the nest, and put it in the same place in the same spruce tree where we found it, we did right.”

“We did, Dem.”

“But here, I think, is a different case. Very likely the duck, having seen that we have found the nest, will ‘forhooit,’* and build somewhere else; so I think we may as well call these eggs ours. Besides, they are good for food.”

“Yes,” assented Willie, “so long as there aren’t birds in them.”

* Scottice=desert it.

“Right, Willie,” said Dem, “so long as there aren’t birds in them. Now just let us try one.”

Dem took a long steel needle from a pocket-book as he spoke. It was the same pocket-book he kept his gut and his flies in, for fishing purposes. He very quickly drilled a hole in an egg, and lo! a tiny drop of pure, translucent albumen.

“Hurrah!” cried Willie. “Now, Dem, I’ll empty my bag; you shall carry all the books, and I’ll pack the eggs in grass and carry them.”

The two boys set off now to walk schoolwards. They ran no more; they were silent and moody.

They saw the poor bereaved duck running half-distractedly about among the sedges and grass. There was grief in her every movement, and grief in her very eyes.

The boys looked the other way. They felt and knew they had done wrong.

Dem spoke at last.

“It is a kind of pity, after all,” he said, “we took these eggs; I shan’t enjoy eating them much. If we had only taken two, now.”

“Yes,” said Willie, “two as specimens, as we did of the hawk’s and the owl’s and the magpie’s.”

“It can’t be helped,” said Dem. “But oh! Willie, we’re late for school.”

“We can’t go to-day,” Willie remarked doggedly.

“No, that is impossible,” said Dem, in the same frame of mind.

“And after all, you know, it isn’t more than other

boys have done, and often do. But it is our first time, we couldn't really help it."

"Ah! but won't we catch it, Willie!"

"Yes, we *will* catch it," said Willie, "sure enough."

Willie sat down upon one stone and Dem sat down upon another.

"I'm going to pull off my stockings," Dem said, "and wring them. Then they will soon dry when I put them on again."

"Well," said Willie, "I shall do the same. Here goes."

"But yours are not wet, are they? You didn't jump into a hole."

"Oh! but I did, though," replied Willie, with a long, earnest face. "I did jump into a hole on purpose. Do you think I was going to go with dry feet when yours were wet. No!"

Were these boys brothers? it may be asked. Brothers in a thousand ways, and more than brothers in some, but not brothers by consanguinity, no, nor even blood relations.

Orphans we might almost call them, for their mothers had died when they were very young indeed, and their fathers were away in foreign lands. Willie Grant had been living in the Highland parish where we first find them, for over five years, during which time his father had come but twice to see him. A merchant skipper he was,—rough enough, in all conscience, but probably right enough for all that. He did not speak much; perhaps,

like the Irishman's parrot, he thought the more. But one promise Willie had elicited from his father the last time they had been together, and just before they parted. What it was may be gathered from the following scrap of conversation.

"I will, I will," said the father; "I'll take you with me to sea when you are thirteen years of age. Ah! lad, perhaps you'll be glad enough to get back here again after a bit. If I could live in the bonnie place, catch me go to sea. Ha! ha! I'd know a trick worth ten o' that. But look, see lad, all you have got to do for the present is to eat and read and learn. I hope they give you plenty to eat?"

"Oh, yes, father; plenty, father, plenty."

"And you are coming well on at school, your teacher says. I'm glad o' that, lad. Well, I'll send you more books. One is a natural history book; you like that?"

"Yes, father."

"Tells you all about every bird and beast and tree and flower that grows in these same British islands."

"And what else, father?"

"Why, lad, I bought a whole lot of novels in a box at a sale, for next to nought. Sea stories some of them are, my boy. Aye, and there is the right ring about them too. If there is a bit o' imagination about you, you'll hear the wind roaring through the rigging and shrouds as you read them, and see the vicious, angry seas curling higher than the maintop, or breaking in over the bows, and rushing aft with the force of a

cataract. Then I've got you voyages and travels; and something better than all, boy,—something better than all."

"What is it? What can be better, father?"

"The 'Arabian Nights,' lad."

"What are they, father?"

"What are they! Let me see, I can't well tell you. You've never seen a pantomime, nor a tragedy, else I'd say that the 'Arabian Nights' is better than a hundred pantomimes rolled into one, with fifty tragedies thrown in, to keep them well together. But mind, boy, these books are only for reading in your idle' time. Mind your Latin, lad, and your Euclid, and your logarithms, lad,—and read your Bible too, boy. Heigho! I wish I was a boy again."

"Father, I wish I were a man."

"Ha! you think so now. But wait till you get older."

"Father, I do miss companions very much. I have plenty at school, but no one comes this way; and Miss McBride isn't a companion, you know."

"What, the lady that keeps you? Well, no, boy; but she minds your socks, and sees to your shoes, and takes care you have good clothes, and puts you to bed at night."

"Oh, no, father! I was twelve last birthday. I always say 'good-night' to Miss McBride, and go to bed myself."

"Well, well; only, I pay her plenty of money for you,

and I believe she does you well. But stay, I had almost forgotten, lad. I've something else to tell you before I go."

"Yes, father."

"There is a gentleman, a Colonel Rutherford, I have taken out to India and back twice now. He has a son. His mother is dead, poor boy, as your dear mother is, and if I can persuade him—the Colonel—he shall send his son James here to McBride's. He is not so strong as you, though a year or two older. He is an Anglo-Indian, so you'd need to take care of him."

"Oh, father, I should be so delighted!"

"Mind, though, I don't promise; but I do promise to take you to sea at thirteen, if you're good and make bones, and mind the teaching o' the good Book, and attend well to your Latin and your logarithms."

After Willie's father had gone, the boy thought the time very long indeed waiting for the promised box; but the old carrier that jogged twice a week betwixt Inverinch and Abergair brought it at last, and to Willie's joy it contained all his father had promised, and a good deal more. Willie made up his mind that he would not devour the contents of those valuable books too quickly; for he argued, "I cannot have my cake and eat it too." So he stuck harder to his studies than he had done before, and only took a book out for a treat when he thought he deserved it, or when he felt very lonely indeed.

It was a lonesome country in which Willie lived, and

Miss McBride's house was a good mile from any other. Miss McBride does not figure much in our story, so it is sufficient to say that she was the pensioner sister of a general, who had taken Willie as a boarder partly because she knew his father, and partly perhaps because it added a trifle to her income.

Miss McBride was a martyr to rheumatism, or thought she was; she lay long a-bed of a morning, and retired very early at night, so that Willie's sense of freedom was unbounded.

The house was a better-class farm-house or cottage; and the only other inmate was old Tibbie, who cooked the food and milked the two cows, and in fact did all the work, out-doors and in. Old Tibbie was Willie's particular friend. Not that she was *very* old, either; but she had roughed it in life, and at fifty was wrinkled and grey. But stout and strong she was, as a five-year old Shetland pony. Oh! the tales she used to tell Willie in the long forenights of winter, as they sat by the kitchen fire,—she at one side with her cutty pipe, Willie at the other, and the cat between.

She had seen fairies in her time, had old Tibbie, at least she averred so,—and ghosts too; and she believed in boddachs and brownies and water kelpies and spunkies, yes, and in witches and warlocks as well. It was of these she spoke, it was to tales about these that Willie was fond of listening. And the wilder the nights without, the cosier it seemed within, beside that old-fashioned hearth, with the wind "howthering" round

the chimney, and the snow perhaps sifting in beneath the door or through the key-hole.

It was a lonesome country in which Willie lived, and it was wild as well as lonesome. Here were mountain and moorland, streamlet and tarn, rocks and glens and waving forests, and not very far off the great wide ocean itself, the roar of which among the broken boulders that formed the beach ceased not day nor night; for even in calm weather, as the tide rose and fell in ebb or flow, each wave hurtled forward, or sucked back with it, millions of stones worn smooth and round by the motion of the ever restless waves.

Down near the beach, where a mountain stream that inland was noisy and brawling enough, glided quietly into the sea, dwelt a solitary fisherman. He was a good friend to Willie, because he often took him out in his boat; and he taught him how to row, and told him many a strange story of the long-forgotten past, stories that had never been in print, but were handed down from sire to son.

It was no wonder that, dwelling in such a country as this, with no other companions save those two and his books, Willie had become a dreamy and imaginatively speculative boy.

No other companions, I have said, but must correct myself; for there was hardly a bird or beast that lived, or a shrub or flower that grew, that Willie did not know all about the habits of; so he really did not feel very lonely.

One evening he had been out fishing with Saunders the recluse. They had been to an island which lay about three miles from the mainland, a favourite resort of theirs, because among its rocks the fish were never shy, even mullet were abundant, and you had only to sink a creel for a few hours, to be sure of a splendid haul of lobsters.

On this particular evening they had had particularly good luck. They had caught more fish than they really wanted, and the blue pilot jacket that Willie always wore on these occasions was as white with the dried slime off the fish, as though it had been snowed upon.

Well, they were late, and night had fallen and the stars had come out while they were still far away at sea, their wee boat rising and falling on the smooth round waves. Suddenly Willie cried, as he pointed shorewards,—

“Oh! look, Saunders, look! Look at that bright star shining right out in the midst of the mountain. I never saw it before. What can it be?”

“You may never see it again,” said Saunders, resting on his oars and looking towards the strange mountain star.

No planet in all the blue vault of heaven shone with a brighter effulgence than did that star at this moment. It was of a greenish hue, sometimes changing to light yellow or blue, and anon to crimson. Willie gazed entranced, and a feeling akin to awe came over him as the fisherman went on with his story.

“You’ll know,” he said, “the old castle ruin of Carrickareen?”

“The old castle where the wild cats scream so awfully on moonlight nights?” said Willie. “Yes, yes, I know it well.”

“Trees have grown up now in the very centre of it,” continued Saunders, “there is broom and moss growing on its crumbling walls, but hundreds of years ago the castle of Carrickareen was in its glory. The McDonalds had held it for centuries. All up and down the glen, and in the adjoining glens around the country, the houses or huts were as thick as the nests that hang in the rookery in the woods yonder. They held their rights by the sword, did the McDonalds, and many a bloody fight they used to have with the McLeods of Stroma, their bitterest foes. A McDonald never met a McLeod in those days without drawing dirk or sword, and fighting to the grim end. It was a McDonald and a McLeod that met together on the plank bridge across the roaring waterfall of Upper Foyers. The bridge was composed of only two tree trunks thrown rudely across, and far down beneath were the roaring rapids and the cataract. It was a bridge on which the bravest men might have turned giddy and fallen. There was not room on it for even two children to pass; and yet on this dreadful bridge a McDonald and a McLeod, both in their war-dress, with claymore, skean-dhu, dirk, and shield, with bonnet plumes and belted plaids, met.

“Neither would return. They fought. The very wild birds fled screaming farther into the woods, at sight of men fighting in such a position. The McDonald fell

stabbed to the heart, but not before in his dying agony he clutched McLeod, and both went headlong to death.

“As long,” continued the fisherman recluse, “as the McLeods fought unaided against the McDonalds of Carrickareen, they seldom gained an advantage. But there were wise old grey-beards in the clan, and these laid a plot—which, alas! was only too successful—to exterminate the McDonalds. They formed an alliance with a wandering tribe, the gipsies of the ancient Highlands, and in their thousands the two together invaded the glens where dwelt the McDonalds.

“In the castle was wealth untold, the accumulated riches of centuries. Forewarned some hours before the attack, of the great danger to his castle and clan from the hosts that were marching against him, the chieftain sent ten of his trustiest men to yonder mountain, to hide the gold in a cave known only to them.

“Before morning light there was not a McDonald left alive in the glen, nor a beast of kine, nor even a dog, that had belonged to the unhappy clan, and the castle itself was a smouldering ruin.

“It has been a ruin ever since, the home of the wild cat, the weasel, and founart; but up in a cave they say the gold still lies hidden, and will lie there till the crack of doom. For they tell me it is watched over by an ogre or demon with one eye. It is that evil eye you see shining down on us now.

“Do you believe all this?” said Willie. “How my father would laugh at so silly a story!”

“No,” said the fisherman; “I do not believe *all* of it. The story of the murder of the McDonalds is true, the hiding of the gold is probably true also, the watching demon is only believed in by the very superstitious.”

“And the star?”

“The star,” said Willie’s friend, “is believed by some to be a real diamond. It is only on clear, starlit nights like this that it can be seen.”

“And no one has ever tried to find it?”

“Many have, and failed, and others have been frightened. Perhaps, Willie, it is nothing but a bit of glass after all, or a small crystal of quartz.”

Willie Grant was very young in years, but he was wise nevertheless. He glanced rapidly towards the mainland. The peak of Dungrat was barely visible above the top of the hill where the strange star shone. He looked behind him. The beacon on Trooma rock was in a line with the distant lighthouse. These facts Willie stored up in his memory.

CHAPTER II.

IN WOODS AND WILDS.

“WILDLY here, without control,
Nature reigns and rules the whole ;
In that sober, pensive mood
Dearest to the feeling soul,
She plants the forest, pours the flood.”

—*Burns.*



IN his first appearance at Miss McBride's cottage, young Rutherford had received as cordial a welcome from Willie Grant as one boy could expect from another.

Willie had been in his room when the carrier's hooded cart stopped at the cottage door, and he watched till the new arrival alighted, or rather till he was helped down. For it was an evening in winter: snow was lying on the ground, and the wind came sweeping down from the hills from a dozen different points at once; so at least one would have thought. It moaned and howled round the chimneys, and whistled through every chink and cranny that it could find in door or window. It blew the snow into all sorts of fantastic wreaths and hillocks, some of which were higher than the horse's

chest, so that the wonder was that the carrier ever arrived at all.

Willie had taken a good look at the boy, and made up his mind at once not to like him.

“He’s only an Anglo-Indian, and I’m a Scot,” he said to himself. “Well, and for that very reason I must go and bid him welcome, though I’d much rather sit by the fire here and read ‘Arabian Nights.’”

So Willie had marched bravely down and shaken young Rutherford by the hand. It was a hearty shake enough; only when giving it, Willie stood as far away from the Anglo-Indian boy as possible.

Large, dark, wondering eyes had the latter, but with nothing timid in them, and a pale, shapely and refined-looking face.

He gave Willie his hand to shake, but he didn’t shake Willie’s.

He seemed somewhat astonished at Willie’s sturdy and robust appearance, so entirely different from his own.

Willie felt a kind of pity for him. He couldn’t help retaining his hand for a moment while he said,—

“Are you very cold? How funny your fingers feel! Do you know, it is just like shaking hands with a dead duck.”

The other looked and smiled, then they both laughed. “Off with you!” cried Miss McBride, “and get ready for dinner. I see you’ll be good friends.”

When they were both ready, and waiting till old Tibbie

should call them, Willie asked his new companion a question, one that had been uppermost in his mind since the carrier's arrival.

"Can you fight?" he said.

"Yes, with knives," was the reply.

"Oh! but you must learn to fight with fists, they wouldn't allow knives. I have gloves, I'll teach you; for ours is a fighting school, and I dare say we'll have to hang together for a bit."

"Thank you, much," said the Anglo-Indian.

The dinner and the warmth made the new-comer as happy as could be wished, although he shuddered slightly whenever he looked towards the snowed-up windows, or when, in a pause of the conversation, he heard the wind howling like starving wolves around the house.

The boys were friends before bedtime. Their cots were placed in the same room, and not far apart. There was a splendid fire on the great old-fashioned hearth, and oceans of wood with which to replenish it whenever it burned low.

It was two if not three o'clock before they thought of sleeping, for Willie's conversation was intensely interesting to the Anglo-Indian; and the tales the latter had to tell of the strange land in which he had spent his young life, Willie felt he could have listened to for ever and a day.

I think about the last words that Willie spoke that night were these,—

"Don't you trouble thinking about anything that may

happen to you at school. The boys will certainly bother you at first; but I'll be there. I know where to hit them to make the blood spring. Good-night."

James Rutherford was the Anglo-Indian's name; before a week was over James became Jem, and before a fortnight Jem became Dem, and so remained.

The boys had bothered Dem considerably when he first appeared at school.

Boys of his own height challenged him to fight first, then smaller boys, and smaller still.

Willie cuffed the tiny ones, and knocked the bigger down. But the biggest were more than his match; at least he thought so, although he himself was strong for his age, his muscles were like steel and his fists of iron, and he had all the agility of a wild cat.

Willie tried to explain—he spoke in the Gaelic, so that Dem could not understand—that his friend was unused to fight, and ailing and sickly; and that he himself would have to do all the fighting, if there must be fighting, till Dem grew strong.

The boys only laughed at this. They put Dem down in their own minds as a coward, only they were good-natured enough, and determined to take but little notice of him. But when Dem turned story-teller to a select assortment of the oldest among them, then he became a favourite.

They used to retire in conclave to an old churchyard to hear and to talk.

The teacher was one of the old school, still common

enough in some parts of Scotland. His word was law, his word *must* be law. He was a pedagogue in every sense of the term, and a most strict disciplinarian. The tawse—that leathern instrument of torture—was never out of his hand, unless it were doubled up and reposing, like a sleeping snake, on a handy corner of the desk. If one boy complained of another, that other boy had a very short trial indeed, and a short shrift. A drum-head court-martial was nothing to it, and execution followed sentence with a celerity that was truly wonderful.

One day our Anglo-Indian boy was telling some story or another in the churchyard, when a lad, one of the listeners, gave him the lie direct. Every one started up, expecting a fight; but Dem sat sullen and silent.

“Leave him alone,” cried the boy who had given him the insult, “he’s only a foreigner. He looks too cold to fight.”

“He could warm you if he tried,” said Willie, quietly.

“No, nor you,” was the defiant answer.

Willie struck out at once, and the lad fell with bleeding teeth and nose.

As fast as he could stand up, Willie could knock him down; but Willie was presently tripped up from behind. About two minutes after, when the schoolmaster, suspecting something was wrong, raised himself by his hands and peered over the churchyard wall, much to his horror he witnessed the following tableau:—

One boy lying doubled up over a grave, his companions shrinking back affrighted beside a tree; Willie Grant

prostrate on the ground, and his friend Dem standing at bay over him, his long dark hair floating on the wind, his eyes as wild and wide as a panther's, and an upraised dagger gleaming in his hand. Had the pedagogue not sprang over the wall at that moment, that dagger *might* have tasted blood. Who knows?

Dem said in school that he had merely drawn the knife to frighten the coward who had struck his friend such foul blows, but his punishment was none the less severe.

From that day, however, no boy ever dared to give Dem the lie. Willie and he became faster friends than ever, and they were known at school by the name of "The Inseparables."

* * * * *

We now go back—or is it forward?—to the time when they were introduced to the reader. We left them sitting on two stones in the middle of the moor. Dem looked at his companion amusedly for a moment, then laughed.

"It was foolish of you, Willie," he said, "to wet your feet simply because mine were wet."

"Wouldn't you do the same for me, Dem?" asked Willie innocently.

"I would do anything for you, Willie, that there was any sense in."

"Ah! but look, you see," said Willie, "there is sense in this; because if you catch cold with having your feet wet, so will I, and we won't be separated."

There was a pause for a few minutes in the conversation, then Dem spoke again,—

“You have been exceedingly good and kind to me, Willie; you have taught me ever so many things all about this wild and beautiful country of yours. I have not been here quite six months, and I feel as if I could stay for ever—never to leave it.”

“Don’t talk about leaving,” said Willie; “I should cry my eyes out. No, though, I wouldn’t cry at all, I would go with you all over the world. Wherever you went, I would be with you. Wouldn’t it be nice to be always together?”

“It would,” said Dem.

“But I know what would be even nicer,” continued Willie. “It would be nicer if there were nobody at all in the world but just our two selves. Oh! wouldn’t we have fine times of it? Eh? We could go where we liked and do what we liked, and have whatever we had a mind to.”

“Yes, Willie, it would be nice. But mind, I am two years older than you; that is a great deal, you know.”

“Yes, true, Dem, it is.”

“Well, and I shouldn’t let you speak like this. We have fathers, haven’t we?”

“Ye—es,” assented Willie.

“Well, if there was nobody in the world but you and I, where would our dear fathers be?”

“Oh!” said Willie, as if he could easily see his way out of that difficulty, “they would be always abroad, you

know, as they are now ; only they might come home just now and then to see us. Halloo ! look, did you see that bird ? It's a rose-lintie. On with your shoes. I know the very whin-bush it came out of."

Perhaps he did know the very bush, but it took both of them fully half an hour to find that rose-liunnet's nest after all. It was hidden in such a cosy nook of the yellow-blossomed whin-bush. There were four eggs in it, sweetly streaked with carmine and brown.

They marked the spot by counting the number of steps between the bush where the nest was and another one. Then they set off to look for more nests ; in fact, it was quite evident they meant to make a day of it, bird-nesting—a day in the wilds. No other schoolboys came in that direction, or crossed the moor at all, so they had it pretty much their own way.

In less than an hour they had found a tit-lark's nest, a heather-liunnet's, a peewit's, and better than all, a water-hen's nest. They marked the position of them all, so that they might know the places again, for they were studying natural history ; at all events they made themselves believe they were. Then they left the moor and made their way to the forest, or pine-wood, that grew in the glen between them and the school-house.

They stalked through this forest as silently and cautiously as if they had been a couple of red-skin Indians ; for other boys, when playing truant, often came here to look for nests.

The forest was very still and silent, and even dark. The shafts of the great trees looked like the pillars that supported the roof of some mighty cavern. There was not a single bit of undergrowth of any kind, and the ground was all brown and bedded with the pine needles that had fallen from above the year before.

The only sound that broke the stillness was the mournful croodling of the cushat, far down in the darkest corner of the spruce thicket. But sometimes they heard a twig snap; then they hid at once behind tree-trunks, for they did not know who might be coming. Indeed, they were not at all certain that the schoolmaster might not send out a party of the bigger boys, to scour the wood in search of them.

Presently they came to a large, very large, spruce tree. The broad green branches were so thick and close that they could not see any distance up. As the tree was situated among larches and pines, and quite away from any other spruce, they hardly expected a nest of any consequence, only they kicked the trunk of it to cause any bird that might happen to be there to fly out.

Flap—flap—flap—flap—went the wings of a great grey-blue cushat, and off flew the bird with that rushing sound that boys in the country know so well.

“A cushie!” cried Willie. “Up I go.”

“Hist!” cried Dem, with a finger on his lips.

They both listened. Yes, sure enough, there was the sound of voices, and it came nearer every moment.

“Up! up!” whispered Willie; “but shoes off first, so we shan’t mark the tree.”

You see Willie was a far better savage than Dem. In a few seconds they had divested themselves of their shoes, tied them together by the laces, hung them round their necks, and mounted high up out of sight of any one below.

It was well they did so. Hardly were they seated among the higher branches ere they heard the voices at the very tree foot.

“No nest up there,” said one. “Shoo!” he cried, kicking the tree till it quivered all over.

“No, never a nest,” said the other; “nor the tree hasn’t ever been climbed. Look, there isn’t a mark on the branches.”

They were two of the worst boys in the school, boys who played truant once at least in every week of their lives. They sat down beneath the tree and laid their plans. They meant to do the forest first, then go to the hills and fields.

So Willie and Dem thought they had best stop up where they were for an hour or two, till the other lads took their departure quite away out of the forest.

While sitting aloft up there, Willie tried to amuse his companion by telling him many of his bird-nesting and fishing adventures. Then all at once it suddenly occurred to him to tell Dem about the mountain star of Carrikkareen. So he told him all the story of the supposed diamond, and the buried treasure, precisely as the fisher-

man had related it to him. Dem was more than interested; he was spell-bound.

“Oh!” he said, at last, “if this be only true, and if we can only find the diamond! I know well what diamonds are, and it must be a large one to burn and shine like that. It must be worth tons and tons of gold. Willie, we must find it; then we shall be so rich, we can do anything in the wide world we wish to. Oh! we shall find it—we must and shall find it!”

Willie was astonished to see his companion so excited, but he himself was not so sanguine. He sat silently thinking after that, so did Dem; and presently back came the wild pigeon and her mate, and had a look at the nest of sticks and the two white eggs.

“Troubled-with-you! troubled-with-you!” they both seemed to say. Then Willie coughed, and away flew the birds again with more noise than ever.

“The boys must be gone,” said Willie, “or the birds wouldn’t have come back. Let us go down.”

There was a stream ran down through the wood, in which was many a round-nosed, dark, crimson-spotted trout. Willie knew every pool in it, and where the best fish were, and the pools where only eels lay, and the places where great frogs hid, and the banks under which voles or water-rats lived, and under which it would be dangerous to put your arm, for fear of getting a nasty bite.

Willie proposed spending the rest of the day “guddling;” that is, damming the stream with turfs, stripping

off jacket and vest, rolling up sleeves and trousers, and catching fish with the hand. Oh! guddling is rare good sport, and many a pleasant, happy hour Willie and Dem spent at it.

“But not to-day,” said Dem; “no, not to-day, Willie. I have that diamond on the brain; let us go towards the mountain. At all events we may find the cave and the buried treasure.”

The boys betook themselves to the hill where was the mysterious cave. It was wooded at the foot, but the trees soon gave place, as they ascended, to heather and stunted birches and myrtle, with here and there a small, weird-looking pine-tree, clinging, as if in a death-struggle, to the rocks. Then came bare, and in many places, inaccessible rocks, among which they toiled and struggled for hours, to the no small danger of their necks; but perhaps still more to the danger of any human being or creature that might be below them, for boulders often became detached by the slightest touch, and went hurtling down the mountain's side, dividing into a hundred pieces ere they reached the wood.

But no cave or sign of a cave could they find, and tired, hot, and jaded, they returned about sunset to their cottage home.

Old Tibbie, the servant, met them at the door.

“Come in, quick,” she said; “there's a letter for one of ye. And Miss McBride has had a letter from the schoolmaster. Bad news in that, I'll warrant.”

“Bad news indeed!” thought the boys.

Dem shook his head to Willie, and Willie shook his head back to Dem, and together in silence and sadness they followed Tibbie into the parlour.

CHAPTER III.

ARRIVAL OF A STRANGE STRANGER.

“THAT very morn
From a far land I came,
Yet round me clung
The spirit of my own.”

—*Mrs. Hemans.*



MISS McBRIDE received the boys in the parlour. She seemed full of importance—swelling with it.

“We have had no less than two letters to-day,” she said. “One, Master James, is from your father in India—to me, and he incloses one to you, which being open, as it ought properly to be, I took the liberty of reading. The other letter, boys, concerns you both. It is from your teacher, and you will be sorry to hear the contents of it.”

Dem and Willie clasped hands beneath the table and waited in breathless suspense.

“The purport of your schoolmaster’s letter,” continued Miss McBride, “is to convey to us the disagreeable, not

to say alarming, intelligence that two of the pupils are down with fever; that the complaint is spreading in the district, and that therefore the school will be closed, and not re-opened until after the harvest holidays."

Both boys gave a heartfelt sigh of relief.

"I feel sure you are very sorry, my dear boys."

Miss McBride was not looking in their direction as she spoke, else she could hardly have helped noticing that the expression on their faces was quite the reverse of that of grief.

"There, Master Rutherford, is the letter from your dear papa, only one portion of which is not quite clear to me. He says in the postscript, 'I enclose a letter from my dear friend, Captain Grant, to his son, which will no doubt be thankfully received.' That is what he says, but no letter came enclosed."

"I'll come back in a moment," cried Dem, almost snatching the letter from the hands of Miss McBride in his joyous eagerness. "I'll merely glance at the letter all by myself first, then come back and read it to you, Willie."

"Good boy!" said Miss McBride.

As soon as he was gone, Miss McBride turned round to Willie and addressed him,—

"We are about to receive the visit of a stranger," she said, with a very grave countenance, "a stranger, Willie, and what is more, a very strange stranger."

"Indeed!" said Willie, not knowing what else to say,

for Miss McBride sat for fully a minute gazing out at the window, but evidently seeing nothing, for her eyes had a far-away look in them, as if she were deep in thought.

“A very strange stranger!” she kept muttering.

Then she turned slowly round to Willie again.

“I lie under a very deep obligation to your dear father, Willie,” she said, “an obligation I shall never be able to repay, and of which some day or other we may talk. If it were not so, I would not receive this stranger.”

“But who is he?” Willie asked anxiously; and he added, “I’m sure, Miss McBride, my father would not like to do anything to annoy you.”

“Dear boy, I know that,” was the reply, “and it is so thoughtful of you to speak thus; so young too. No, your father would do nothing to annoy me, nor, Willie, must he ever be told that the thoughts of the coming of this strange creature or man did annoy me. I have not an antipathy exactly—Heaven forbid that I should have an antipathy to anything that God made, far less to any creature—but I have a strange fear of foreigners, almost amounting to a horror.”

“Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!” cried Dem rushing into the room and waving the letter wildly aloft. “My dear Miss McBride! O Willie, what glorious news! Poodah is coming! Poodah will be here in a few days! Shake hands, Willie. I shall be happy now.”

“But who is Poodah?” said Willie.

“Is it the strange stranger?” said Miss McBride.

Willie was sitting at one side of the hearth and Miss McBride was at the other, and Dem, who had a good many Oriental ways about him, squatted down on the rug, Turk-fashion, between them, and turned his beaming face first towards the one and then towards the other.

“Poodah is,” he said, “why, Poodah is—Poodah, don’t you know?”

“That is hardly definite enough,” said Miss McBride smiling.

“Well, no, of course not, of course it isn’t. But what I wanted to say was that Poodah is everybody; that is, he has been everything and everybody to me, nurse and guide and tutor and all. And, O Willie, he has been everywhere and done everything, and such stories he can tell. He can keep you spell-bound for hours together. Poodah, Miss McBride, is the best swordsman that ever waved a sword.”

“Oh! dear me!” exclaimed Miss McBride, “I do hope the foreigner won’t wave any swords while he is here.”

“Oh, no!” from Dem, “that I’m sure he won’t, Miss McBride. I was only going to say that though he is such a very, very clever swordsman—he could cut a horse’s head off, Willie, with one blow—he is also such an excellent cook.”

“That is better,” said Miss McBride with a sigh of relief.

“Yes,” continued Dem, “the soups and omelettes and

curries and coffee he makes, would make you get up and eat and drink, even if you were dying. And here is papa's letter. It is such a long, delicious letter. But you won't care to hear much of it; only he says in one part: 'Your friend and favourite, Poodah, has never ceased to speak about you since your departure. He told me at last he should die if he could not come to you. But I found out that at the very time he made this remark to me he was packing up his few traps to go to you, whether I gave him leave or not. So you see I had to make a virtue of necessity. There always was some mystery about Poodah!'"

Here Miss McBride sighed slightly, and muttered something that sounded like "a man with a mystery about him, of all things!"

"Dear me! dear me!" continued Miss McBride aloud, but wringing her hands in a kind of a nervous, distracted sort of way. "I'm sure I hope it will be all for the best, boys, and that it will all end aright. But I don't know, and I can't tell. And this creat—— I mean, this man with the mystery, may come any day or hour. I must go at once and see about the spare bedroom."

"Mind, Miss McBride," said Dem, "no feather-bed for Poodah; no bed at all, only a rug on the floor, and one pillow."

"No bed!" exclaimed the old lady. "No bed! Oh, the heathen!"

Miss McBride had hardly finished speaking, and was

just turning to leave the room, when in rushed the big tabby cat with his tail like a bottle-brush, and made a wild plunge to get up the chimney. About the same moment a shriek, that seemed to well up from the very heart of someone in dire distress, resounded from the neighbourhood of the kitchen. It died away in a kind of moan of terror, like what a person in a fearful nightmare gives vent to. Almost immediately afterwards hurried footsteps were heard in the corridor, and poor old Tibbie, with blanched face and staring eyes, ran into the room, and it took the united strength of both Willie and Dem to prevent her from falling flat on the carpet.

“The spirit! the evil spirit!” was all she could say. “The spirit! Look, look, there it comes again!”

Tibbie went off now into a dead faint, and Miss McBride took up the screaming.

And no wonder! The apparition that now stood in the parlour doorway was quite frightful enough to scare the senses out of any two old women who lived in so wild and lonesome a country as this.

He, the apparition, was tall and well though not stoutly formed, arrayed from shoulder to ankle in what appeared to be a long white nightdress. Around the waist was a girdle of scarlet silk, in which jewelled knife and pistols were stuck. On the feet were ornamental sandals, on the head a splendid gilded turban. The face was of a dark copper colour, but beautifully formed in every feature; and from beneath the turban behind,

there escaped and flowed down, as far as the waist, heavy ringlets of grey-white hair.

The apparition stood smiling and bowing in the doorway, and on his shoulder was a small but lovely jet-black Persian cat. She, too, was trying to appear amiable. She had her back up and her tail curled, and was singing aloud and rubbing her head against her master's turban.

Willie was startled, but it was very different with Dem. He rushed to meet the apparition.

"Poodah!" he cried, seizing his arm and fairly hugging it. "Poodah! my dear friend Poodah! Miss McBride, this is Poodah himself, Poodah we were talking about, Poodah that we were all expecting."

Poodah's eyes were filled with tears. He took his young master's hand, bent reverently over it, and placed it to his brow, a very beautiful form of salutation common in many parts of the East Indies.

"Come in, Poodah," continued Dem. "I daresay you are cold."

Poodah kicked off his sandals and advanced.

Tibbie recovered sufficiently to make her exit, and Miss McBride so far as to tell Poodah he was welcome.

Dem thanked her with his eyes.

"He is my tutor, you know," he said.

It was not long before Poodah settled down and made himself thoroughly at home at Gowan Lodge, as Miss McBride's cottage was named. He even ingratiated

himself into favour with old Tibbie; and Miss McBride candidly acknowledged that in every way Poodah was a gentleman, and quite unlike any negroes she had ever heard of or read of before. Even Poodah's black Persian cat became a pet of the household, and was graciously permitted by the old tabby to recline in front of the fire, and at times to repose on the footstool.

The only thing that Miss McBride could not quite forgive Poodah for, was his sleeping on a mat on the floor, in what she was pleased to term a heathenish way, instead of going to bed like a Christian.

If the truth must be told, Dem was at first very much afraid that his friend Poodah would be relegated to the kitchen, and that was the reason why he told Miss McBride so pointedly, on Poodah's first arrival, that he was a tutor to him.

But Poodah knew well how to behave at table, and though an East Indian, he did not eat rice and curry with his fingers, but was an adept with the knife and fork.

He would never touch meat, however—nothing, as he himself expressed it, that had ever had blood flowing through it. His curries were therefore vegetable ones, but he did not hesitate to cook curries of meat for the rest of the household, never commencing to do so, however, until he had engaged in some mysterious devotions on a little morsel of carpet in a remote corner of the kitchen.

Poodah's own room was in a gable of the house or

cottage. This gable abutted on to a green lawn surrounded with hedges, that now in summer time were all a-smother with wild roses and honeysuckles. There was a large French window looking on to the lawn, and as often as not Poodah used this for a door.

The lawn itself was seldom cut, it was rank with the white blossoming gowans—the wee, modest, crimson-tipped flowers of the immortal Burns; clover, white and red, bloomed there too, and the blue and yellow crow-pea, and the blazing celandine. There were many trees on it as well, one enormous yew tree in particular. The lawn ended in a pine-wood, but so quickly did this wood slope downwards to the bottom of the deep glen beneath that the view of the lovely strath that stretched away for many miles westward was not interrupted.

The bed had been taken out of Poodah's room, all the furniture therefore in it consisted of the sofa or lounge, a rocking-chair, and a few other chairs and Poodah's bookshelf, which was a very small one indeed; but Miss McBride had done everything she could to make this room look bright and cheerful by means of a carpet, skin mats, curtains, and pictures on the walls.

And bright and cheerful it was, especially in the summer evenings, when the casements were thrown wide apart, and the glorious light of the glowing west shone in. Dem and Willie made themselves very much at home here, and many were the strange wild stories they listened to from Poodah's lips.

Three whole weeks passed away, and during all this time neither Dem nor Willie once thought about the mountain cave and the strange star, both of which they had previously made up their minds to spend their whole lives, if that were necessary, in trying to find. For both boys put implicit faith in the story of the hidden treasure.

But one evening they were all three together as usual in Poodah's room. It was shortly after sunset, and the Indian had been telling them story after story of his strange life and wild adventures in many lands.

"The young sahib must tell a little story now," said Poodah at last.

"I haven't got one to tell," said Willie. Then he corrected himself and said,—

"Oh, yes! by the bye, I have though."

So he began, and told Poodah all the story of Carrickareen Castle, the murdered McDonalds, and the tale of the buried gold and the star sometimes seen on clear nights, and supposed to mark the site of the cavern.

Willie was astonished at the amount of interest he seemed to have awakened in the breast of Poodah by his simple story. As soon as he had finished, Poodah jumped up, "The night is fine," he said; "let us get a boat and pull out to sea; perhaps we may behold this strange star. I would fain feast my eyes on its beauty."

"Saunders, 'the hermit fisherman,' as people call



“Right in his pathway stood a strange apparition, black in face, white as to raiment, and with arms erect in air.”

him," replied Willie, "has gone to the south. He left the very day after your arrival, Poodah."

"But the boat?" said Poodah. "He did not take the boat."

"No," laughed Willie; "but would it be right to borrow it? He would forgive me, though, I know," continued Willie after a moment's consideration. "Yes, let us go at once."

The fisherman's little cottage looked very lonesome to-night, with no smoke curling up out of the chimney, and no light in the window.

They found the boat easily enough, and had no difficulty in launching it. Willie was surprised at Poodah's expertness with the oars. He made the boat bound over the waters. Willie himself took the tiller, and Dem did nothing but sit and look around him. He was the passenger, he said, and meant to enjoy himself.

Willie was not much of a sailor, or he might have found the place from which alone the star could be seen, without the trouble of going all the way round to the island.

He thought he would make sure, however, so oars were never taken in until the boat rasped on the beach of the only possible landing-place in all the island.

The long twilight of these northern regions had not yet given place to night, but stars were beginning to appear in the east, and more and more came into sight every minute, for the sky was beautifully clear. They

wandered about the little rocky island for quite an hour. There was grass thereon, a few sheep, and a shepherd's hut, but no shepherd. They managed to scare the rabbits; after one glance at the intruders these timid creatures cocked their little white flags, and went scurrying away to their burrows in the stony soil.

They scared the wild birds too, the gulls and puffins and majestic solan geese. The gulls flew round them in flocks, screaming in terror and anger, and apparently making attempts to frighten them away from the place. They embarked at last, and as soon as they had gone a little way, the gulls settled once more on the rocks, the coneys came peeping out of their holes, and the island resumed its wonted calm.

Keeping the beacon on Trooma as much as possible in a line betwixt the boat and the distant lighthouse, Willie steered straight for the shore about a mile to the north of the fisherman's cottage.

Right over the white rocky peak of Dungrat, which lay many miles in'and, shone a bright planet. By that planet Willie steered. Now the distant peak begins to sink and sink behind the rugged mountain that overhung the sea-beach, the mountain in which was the mysterious cave.

"Pull easy," cried Willie, glancing behind him; "we are near the spot now."

His heart was beating and thumping against his side with anxiety. Would the star be visible to-night, he

wondered? Fifty times, if once, he glanced behind him, to make sure he was steering aright. Yes, the boat and beacon lighthouse were still in a line, and yonder was the peak of Dungrat barely showing above the hill.

This was the place. But where was the mountain star? Gone!

CHAPTER IV.

ON INDIAN SHORES.

“KNOW ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine,
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom,
Where the tints of the earth and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of ocean is deepest in dye ?
'Tis the clime of the East—the land of the sun.”



FOR a brief space the scene of our story changes. We stand on Indian shores. Here no purple heather clads the hills, no scarlet poppies peep up through rising corn, no dewy-eyed bluebell or modest primrose glints through the grass's green, by covert or hedgerow. But a bluer, brighter sky gleams over us, above us burns a fiercer sun ; the groves of orange and citron and plantain look to us foreign ; the forest trees themselves are strange ; strange forms of insect life fill the air with musical hum ; brilliantly plumaged birds flit, mostly in silence, from bough to bough. Those birds we think are lovely ; but why so mute ? why do they not awake the

woodland echoes, as do our mavis, linties, and laverocks at home in bonnie Scotland? Because up in yonder dark trees hide many a hideous hawk and bird of prey, and so those little bright-winged birds must tell their love in whispers—for even the snakes and reptiles that lurk beneath the fairest flowers would find them out did they not woo in silence.

Out yonder, towards the south, if we cast our eyes, we may look upon an ocean far brighter and more pellucid in its waters than any we have ever dreamt of, and in tiny ripples its wavelets are breaking on a snowy beach of coral sand. Were the brightness of the day to tempt us to bathe, we might swim or wade a mile from land without getting beyond our depth; and if naturalists, or even lovers of nature, we might never tire of being lapped by the warm, soothing waters of that sunlit sea; for down there beneath lie submarine gardens more beautiful far than an Arab's dream of Paradise.

Describe them? Would that I were able to. But they rise up before my eyes, even now as I write; I have but to pause and shut my eyes, to see them once again, see them with their brightness hardly dimmed by the lapse of years, see them as I used to see them while leaning over my boat and gazing entranced for hours. Surely the English language is singularly destitute of words descriptive of beauty. I at least can find none capable of giving the reader an idea of one half the loveliness that waves on coral sands 'neath Indian seas. "Waves" is just the word, for every branchlet, every

twig, every stem and flower, are clothed with a rainbow brightness of colour, sparkle with light, and seem instinct with a half animal power of life and motion, and even in weather so calm that there is not so much as a ripple on the ocean's breast, you may see them gently waving to and fro,

But beautiful though these gaily-tinted coral algæ be let us hasten back to the beach, nor be tempted to swim in the deeper water; for where the shore suddenly shelves, where we lose sight suddenly of our sea-flowers, and the waves get black around us, we may perchance catch glimpses of monsters whose shapes, even should we escape their slimy, deadly embrace, would haunt us in our dreams for aye.

Let us hasten back to the shore then, and there in some cool grotto await the day's decline.

And now comes the gentle breeze, fans our heated brows, and almost woos us to sweetest slumber. But scenes of beauty still surround us. Look away over the ocean yonder towards the distant horizon, at that solitary light gently rising and falling on the billows. It is a vessel homeward bound,—a little world in itself afloat on the deep, filled with its own fears, cheered by its own hopes. Care and sorrow, joy and gladness, all are there—a little city on the sea. Let us pray God speed her; then turn our eyes to the east. Yonder, from an emerald sky, gleams out the evening star, the star of love, the bright-eyed, happy, gloaming star. Behind us, if we glance, we shall be surprised to see many other stars, less bright it is

true, but restless, moving, gliding, flitting, dancing round every bush, and wheeling in fiery flight around the feathery palm trees. Need I say they are fire-flies?

But there! we have stayed long enough out on the beach; for sweet and cool as is the evening, the night winds in these latitudes often bear clammy death upon their wings. Let us walk inland then, for from above the distant forest-covered mountains the moon is already shedding her silvery beams over the land and over the seas.

Up the path that leads through the jungle we take our way. The road is broad, but brown, not green as our woodland walks at home are. There! we stop to wonder what lies yonder right in our path. It is as large and round almost as an ordinary footstool, dark and glistening in the moon rays. We have room to avoid it, and we do so, for its bite is deadly. It is the common black snake coiled up and asleep. By-and-by it will measure its length on the ground, creep off to find a frog, and thence back to its evil cave in some black corner of the jungle or forest.

Yes, there are sounds enough in the forest to frighten any novice. The yelping bark of jackals, the sullen roaring boom of wilder beasts than they.

Hark! what was that spirit-like shriek? Was it a warning cry? Nay, it is but the voice of a harmless bird. And many strange birds emit more terrible hair-stirring sounds by night in the woods than all the beasts contained therein. The sudden, ear-splitting yell close

in the bush beside us is not the war cry of Indians, but the voice of a bird ; so is that wild, unearthly laugh that ever and anon rises and swells on the night air. The silence of a few minutes may be suddenly broken by screams and shrieks from some dark thicket, as of some poor mortal in agony—shrieks loud, prolonged, most mournful ; the sounds come from some birds holding nocturnal revel.

But here we are, out in the open plain. We can see the mountains better now, and they do not seem so very far off in the glimmer of this joyful moon. But what are those lights we now see twinkling not far ahead ?

It is the bungalow of Colonel Rutherford, Dem's father.

We pass the white-frocked sentry who paces slowly up and down, as silent as a cat, before the gates, and enter.

In a lofty-roofed room, whose many windows were wide open that the evening breeze might steal in and cool the atmosphere, at a table on which burned a great oil lamp, sat two gentlemen discussing dessert, while over it waved a great punkah, set in motion by a little nigger boy, who crouched like a white-robed sprite in a corner of the apartment.

What a luscious feast of fruit that was ! What splendid sun-tinted mangoes, rich and delicious looking bananas, and piles of fruit that a stranger from England could not even have named ; while the very air seemed oppressed with the perfume of the lordly pine-apples, mingling with

the scent from beautiful flowers that filled and trailed over a magnificent *épergne*, chief among them orange blossoms. The table itself was large, the cloth was white as mountain snow, and the glass shone like diamonds, rivalled only by the brilliancy of the silver itself.

Both gentlemen were smoking great hookahs, or hubble-bubbles, that stood by their sides on the floor. It was the colonel and his friend, Captain Grant—Willie's father—that sat here in comfortable *tête-à-tête*.

"Well, Grant," the colonel was saying. "I'm glad I took your advice, and sent my lad home, though I can tell you I miss him badly enough."

"So you will, for a time."

"Yes, and I've half a mind to go home with you next time you go."

"Six months hence?"

"Yes. I've sailed with you so often, I don't care to go with any one else."

"Well, Rutherford, I needn't say I'll be delighted to have you; the *Queen of the Waves* is as good a ship as when you first came on board of her; what is it—five years ago?"

"Ay, it is six, my friend."

"How time flies to be sure! But never mind; the hurricane never blew that I was afraid of in the old *Queen*, that is when I have plenty of sea room."

"But," said the colonel, "is it perfectly safe to sail as you do, without convoy?"

"It is the cheapest and quickest way, anyhow; and I

think I could show a clean pair of heels to any Frenchie that ever left the dock."

"You have been chased?"

"Ay, my lad, more than once."

"Poodah."

"Yes, sahib," said Poodah, advancing from the window.

"Another bottle of yellow seal claret;—or would you rather have brandy-pawnee, Grant?"

"No brandy-pawnee for me, thank you. Brandy digs British graves, and claret is the only safe drink for India."

"Do you know," said Colonel Rutherford, "I've thought more than once about that strange story you told me of the supposed diamond and hidden treasure of the mountain of Carrickareen."

"So do I think of it, Rutherford. Yes, oftener than I ought to, for it may be all a myth. But if there be a diamond, and if there be buried treasure, it belongs by rights to me."

"Certainly; for as you say, your wife—who has no relations alive—was the only descendant of those unhappy murdered McDonalds."

"Yes, and often and often I lie awake building castles in the air about it. Can you wonder?"

"No, Grant, I can't."

"There are few lives harder than that of the sailor's, Rutherford, much though I love it; and there is myself, toiling away on this ocean wave, when if—— But what

is the use of 'when's' and 'if's'; no, no, my lot is cast, and I'll have to be content with it. But there is my poor boy. Heigho!"

It was not the first time that Grant had told his friend about the supposed diamond and the buried gold of Carrickareen; and strange to say, there had been no more attentive listener than Poodah, the faithful valet of Colonel Rutherford.

The friends sat to-night and talked of home and of long ago, till past midnight.

A day or two after this Poodah, when he brought his master's shaving-water, appeared gloomy and depressed. He had been to see his priests, and his brow was bedaubed with a spot of yellow clay.

"Why, Poodah, old man," said the colonel laughing, "you look about as happy this morning as a bull-frog in a rat-trap. Wife been pitching into you again?"

"No, sahib, not dis time; p'r'aps in a day or two she break my head again with the box iron, same's before. Same, sahib, as she do ebery moon. But I not care much now," he added with a sigh.

"Why, Poodah? why?"

"'Cause I going to die. Oh, surely, surely I die. I not care to lib now, since young sahib he go away."

"I'm sorry, truly sorry, Poodah, to hear you talk so."

"Yes, and suppose I not die quick, I jump into de great well. Die plenty soon. 'Croak-croak-croak,' I cry, down below de water, like de frogs; den lie quiet and still."

Colonel Rutherford considered the matter well. He did not forget that his boy was just as fond of Poodah as Poodah was of him.

When Poodah appeared with the tray and breakfast, the colonel addressed him.

“Suppose I say to you, Poodah, ‘Go and remain with my boy till I return,’ what then?”

Poodah’s eyes got wider at every word; then he rushed tablewards and deposited the tray in its place, and next minute he had fallen at his master’s feet, hugging his very legs in the exuberance of his joy.

There were real tears trickling down his cheeks too. He rose next to a kneeling position, placed the colonel’s two hands on his head for a moment, and then springing up, rushed headlong out of the apartment.

“He has taken it for granted that he is going,” said Colonel Rutherford to himself, “so go he must. Perhaps it is best.”

In three weeks more Poodah was afloat on the ocean, and we know the way he appeared at Gowan Lodge, to the joy of Dem and the discomfiture of poor Miss McBride and old superstitious Tibbie.

* * * * *

Keeper McGregor was late out one evening, not long after the arrival of Poodah at Gowan Cottage, and before the boat cruise described in last chapter. McGregor was oftentimes abroad after dark, even in summer, for poachers were rife in these old days. To snare or shoot the hares or rabbits, or even the deer, on another man’s

property, was considered no sin. They—the poachers—were but “killing God’s own cattle on God’s own hills.” Only when they came across sturdy keeper McGregor, he put matters in a very different light for them.

On this particular night the moon was shining “as brightly as day,” and although very superstitious, McGregor marched boldly along the footpath that led along round by the wooded foot of the hill of Carrickareen, a favourite Gordon setter following closely at his heels.

His gun was over his shoulder, both barrels loaded, with the triggers at half-cock.

He was making his way homewards, for there was no trace of poachers to-night, and hitherto he had heard no noise which he could not easily account for.

But suddenly a sound came from the woods close by, that made his heart thump against his sides, the blood run cold along his spine, and his very hair feel rising beneath his blue bonnet. The very dog stood still, and *his* hair stood up from crown to tail.

A long drawn, quavering, unearthly shriek!

McGregor quickly crossed himself and essayed to go on.

But next moment, right in his pathway stood a strange apparition, black in face, white as to raiment, and with arms erect in the air.

McGregor fingered his gun. The apparition stood stock still, and the man’s hands refused duty.

Another yell rent the air; then the keeper—a man

who, single-handed, had fought ere now against half a dozen sturdy poachers—fainted and fell.

When he recovered, the dog was licking his face, but there was nothing to be seen or heard, only the moonlight bathing the hills and the woods and the distant sea.

CHAPTER V.


THE MOUNTAIN CRUSOES.

“VERILY, I think
Such place to me is sometimes like a dream.”

—*Wordsworth.*

“Here, with no thirst but what the stream can slake,
And startled only by the rustling brake,
Cool air I breathe.”

—*Idem.*

“I isn't a bit of use,” said Willie Grant, that same night on which they had been to look for the diamond-star; “I can't sleep, I've been trying for half an hour, and all to no purpose. Dem, are you asleep?”

“No; I've been thinking, Willie.”

“Just exactly what I've been doing, Dem, and you know a fellow can't think and sleep both.”

“Quite true, Willie.”

“Well then, I'll tell you what I propose. It is this: let us get up and talk it out.”

“I'm ready!” cried Dem, jumping on to the floor.

“There is no need to dress, is there?”

“No; light the candle.”

“Shall we both lie in bed and talk across to each other?”

“No, I think not,” replied Willie; “we should have to talk too loud, and you know what kind of ears Miss McBride has.”

“Oh! for an old lady they are wonderful.”

“But I say, Dem,” continued Willie, “I know how to light the fire. Here are all the bits of dry wood old Tibbie left for the morning, and the morsel of peat as well. And here are all the dry peats. You just watch for a minute, and see how nicely things can be done when you only know the right way.”

As he spoke, with deft and lissom fingers he arranged the wood on the fireplace, and with his mouth blew up the kindling peat, and in a minute or two they all began to burn. Crack, crack, went the blazing wood, and little vicked sparks flew all over the room.

“What a noise the wood makes, Willie!” said Dem.

“Yes,” replied Willie; “but the peats are caught now. It will soon be all right. Now get up.”

Willie went to the back of the door and got a great Highland plaid that hung there. Then he arranged the bolsters for a seat, and down in front of the blazing fire, well rolled up in the Highland plaid, sat Willie and Dem.

“Won’t it be jolly!” said Willie.

“It will be everything that is romantic and delightful,” replied Dem.

“Of course we must furnish the cave.”

“Yes; we must have seats, anyhow.”

“And a fireplace.”

“Well, yes—a fireplace, but—a——”

“I know what you are thinking about, Dem,” said Willie.

“Tell me then.”

“You are thinking that if we have a fireplace the smoke might discover us to some of those roving brats of bird-nesting boys.”

“That is just it, you see,” said Dem.

“Ah, but,” said Willie, “I have thought of a plan.”

“Well?”

“Do you know, Dem, whom that mountain belongs to?”

“No; the King, perhaps.”

“So far, the hill does itself, but the woods and game—rabbits I mean—belong to Miss McBride’s cousin.”

“Well, what of that?”

“Only this,” said Willie, “we will go and ask permission to make that cave our study, then the other boys will have no business there at all.”

“Capital!” cried Dem.

“And if they dared to come, after a fair warning, then we could pretend to roll down stones on them. They couldn’t roll them back again, you know.”

“No,” said Dem, laughing. “You are very wise, Willie.”

“Oh,” said Willie, carelessly, “I was brought up in the wilds, you know.”

From the above conversation, the reader will be aware that the boys had found the cave, or a cave at all events,

on the mountain side. The disappearance from the hill of the mysterious shining star had not deterred the boys, in company with their friend Poodah, from instituting a search for the cave.

They had done so very scientifically. They had taken their bearings from sea as well as they could, then on the very next day had started their search expedition.

Far up the mountain brow they clambered, as light-footed and as nimble as so many cats, but Willie was quite surprised at the agility displayed by Poodah. He bounded from rock to rock and from crag to crag as if he had been a wild deer. Across and across the mountain the trio went, and up and down, and this they continued until all were tired and weary. Then they sat down to eat their modest luncheon, for the sun was already beginning to decline in the west.

"If there is a cave, we'll have it," Dem had said doggedly.

"We sha'n't give in," said Willie.

"No," from Dem; "we shouldn't leave a stone unturned to find it."

Now this expression of Dem's about not leaving a stone unturned was purely figurative, but no sooner had the words escaped than Poodah sprang up.

"I have it!" he cried. "Come with me, come! Dere is a loose stone not far from where we sit. I touched he, moved he, but never thought to roll he back. Come!"

He led them a little way down the hill. Here was a patch of furze and myrtle, and near the bottom of it lay

a great stone. It took all Poodah's strength to move it aside.

No sooner was it moved, however, than both Willie and Dem uttered exclamations of delight: the entrance to the cave lay before them!

They crawled in, and as soon as they got accustomed to the dim light, they found themselves in a large though not spacious room. At one side or corner light glimmered in from the top. There had evidently been a fireplace and chimney, and they were not a little astonished to find evidence that a fire had been burning here at no very remote date.

Young as he was, Willie could not help connecting this new discovery with the disappearance of the mountain-star and with the hermit fisherman and his sudden departure. He said nothing to Poodah about that at the time, but he mentioned his thoughts to Dem as they sat by the fire in their bedroom that night.

"Well," said Dem, "never mind. We've found the cave, and we have a good right to make use of it. The hermit, I suppose, doesn't pay any rent."

"What if he comes back and tries to turn us out?"

"Roll down stones on him," said Dem, laughing.

Old Tibbie had to knock and re-knock and finally enter the boys' room next morning, before she could get them to awake.

"My dear bonnie laddies," said Tibbie, "the sun has been shinin' o'er Dungrat for mony and mony an hour."

But the truth is the sun had begun to shine over

Dungrat before the boys had gone finally to bed, only they didn't tell Tibbie that.

"Now, boys," said Miss McBride at breakfast, "I'm sure you miss school very, very much."

Neither spoke. So Miss McBride, said pointedly, "Don't you?"

"We don't, Miss McBride."

The lady looked disappointed, but said, after a pause:

"I'm glad, at all events, you so frankly tell the truth about it."

"Poodah is teaching me Hindoostance," said Willie.

"And I'm learning Sanscrit," added Dem.

"Well, well, boys, I hope it will do you good; but I could never see any use in these *dead* languages."

Both the boys laughed heartily, and then Willie proceeded to tell her all about the cave, and their intentions and hopes and wishes about it; and though there was nothing at all romantic in Miss McBride's nature, she did not see that any harm could come to her boys by letting them have their own way in the matter. So an hour or two after, Willie and Dem were making their way to Harthill House, the residence of the landed proprietor mentioned in this chapter, and they carried with them a note from Miss McBride.

The gentleman was old and an invalid. He kept Willie and Dem to lunch, laughed and chaffed with them about the cave, told them they were going to turn troglodytes, and finally sent them off very happy boys indeed.

They had not the slightest idea what a troglodyte was, but they soon turned up the word in a dictionary, and then they knew.

They called on the keeper in the evening, and explained to him that they had taken possession of a cave nearly at the top of the mountain, where they could get a lovely view of the sea, and where they would be able to study natural history and Hindoostanee.

McGregor, the keeper, knew not what either of these studies represented, but he turned up his hands in astonishment and his eyes in horror.

“Go not near the hill,” he said, “nor near the cave, if there be one. An evil spirit haunts that hill and wood.”

“Have you seen it?” Willie asked him.

“I have seen it once,” said the keeper, “and many others have seen and heard it. And the wilder the night, the more fearfully and mournfully that spirit howls. Go not near the hill, boys; be advised by me, lest harm befall you.”

“Well, anyhow,” said Willie stoutly, “we have liberty to go there from the proprietor. And mind, Mr. McGregor, no other boys have.”

“No other boys would dare to go to the wood or hill, even by day. One went once to seek for a white owl’s nest. His mangled body was found at the foot of the crag, a fortnight after.”

Now, although he had lived so long in the wilds of the Scottish Highlands, Willie Grant was not superstitious. He believed not in the supernatural, and so

as the keeper told him the story about the evil spirit, he could not help thinking of what the hermit fisherman had also told him. Dem and he talked it over that same evening.

"There is something in it, Dem," said Willie.

"That fisher fellow," replied Dem, "is at the bottom of it."

"That is just what I think myself," Willie said; "but time will tell."

Even Robinson Crusoe did not set himself more earnestly to get his house in comfortable order than did Dem and Willie to furnish their cave; and Poodah assisted them, and like a good fairy did ten times more work than either of them.

The big stone was rolled on one side; then, by means of some picks and spades they had brought from Miss McBride's cottage for the purpose, they proceeded to enlarge the entrance to something like the size and shape of a real doorway.

"It wouldn't be difficult to make a doorway, I think," said Dem; "then you know, we could have a lock or a bolt to it, and nobody could come in."

"Capital!" said Willie, looking at Poodah.

Poodah shook his grey ringlets and smiled. The work, he knew, devolved on him.

So the door was made at home, and carried to the cave in pieces, and finally put up.

It fitted beautifully, but Poodah was not content until he had planted bushes on each side, in such a way as to

entirely conceal the doorway. The next thing was to thoroughly clear out the cave; this was not a difficult task, for the walls and floor were of solid stone, and the marks of tools on the rock gave ample evidence that the place had either been entirely excavated, or at all events enlarged, by human hands. It might have been a smuggler's den, or a prison-house, or a hiding-place of some of the chiefs of the clans in by-gone troublesome times.

Several great bats were dislodged from the roof, and many strange creeping things had to take the hint and betake themselves to other quarters. Then a great fire was lighted, and the boys were astonished to find that every particle of smoke found its way up the rude chimney.

"This is first-rate!" said Willie. "Now, in order to be thoroughly comfortable as troglodytes, we must furnish our cave."

"Oh, yes!" cried Dem, "we must furnish, and the more rudely it is furnished the better, I think."

"So long as it is reasonably comfortable."

"Yes, to be sure, it must be that."

"I know," said Willie, "that Miss McBride would let us have a few chairs."

"But I know we won't have them," said Dem. "Let us make the seats."

Once more the services of Poodah, the good fairy, were called into requisition; tools and nails were borrowed from home, there were any number of branches of trees

to be had, of all sorts and sizes, to say nothing of whole fir trees that had blown down years ago, and lay lumbering the ground. So Poodah set to work in right good earnest, and before a week was over he had made not only three good rough but useful chairs, one of which was a rocking one, but a light if not graceful kind of a lounge as well.

They went to the cave now every day, but they did not always take the same route: they wished to avoid making a beaten track, as they feared this might discover their *sanctum* to the many bands of predatory—bird-nesting—boys who were almost daily on the prowl along the sea-shore, and even in the wood at the foot of the hill.

They spent nearly all the day at or about the cave, taking luncheon with them when they left in the morning, and returning to dinner in the evening as hungry, and quite as happy, as hunters. Miss McBride knew they were safe, and that they were enjoying themselves, so her mind was at ease.

While Poodah was making the chairs and the dais, Dem and Willie busied themselves manufacturing a bookcase. The construction of this was simple in the extreme. They got a large flat box from Tibbie, and a quantity of old wall-paper, and this they carried in triumph to the cave. Then they shaped two shelves and fitted them into the box; next they lined these shelves and the whole of the inside with the wall-paper. When set on one end now, it really looked a very respectable little bookcase;

but Willie got hold of another idea, which he forthwith proceeded to carry out. He stripped pieces of rough elm bark from trees, and shaped them with his knife, and nailed them with tacks all along the exposed edges and sides and top of the case. Dem was surprised at his ingenuity, and when the thing was finished even Poodah confessed that it looked most artistic; and so indeed it did. Thus encouraged, Willie got more wood and made pretty shelves for the walls, and little brackets for the corners of the cave, covering them all in the same way with rough bark.

The furnishing of the cave was rapidly approaching completion.

“What a pity,” said Willie one day, “that we can’t have a carpet. The floor seems so cold and hard, doesn’t it, Dem?”

“It does feel rather bare,” Dem replied.

Poodah smiled.

“We shall have one carpet,” he said quietly.

The very next day, much to their delight, Poodah despatched Dem and Willie to the distant village to make some purchases.

All that Poodah had told them to get was a kettle, a coffee-pot, some cups and saucers, and the requisite groceries.

But the boys didn’t stop at this. Going shopping was a treat that did not come in their way very often.

“Who knows,” said Dem, “but that we may catch a rabbit, and get Poodah to curry it.”

“A grand idea!” said Willie. “So we want a stew-pan.”

“To be sure,” said Dem, “and some plates and things.”

“Then we can always catch fish.”

“Yes,” cried Willie. “What fun! We shall want a frying-pan.”

And so they went on, buying and buying, until their money was all done, and the old carrier had quite a number of packages to leave at Miss McBride's. When they went with Poodah next day to the cave, they could hardly believe their eyes; the floor was covered with a carpet as soft as any Turkey mat, and far more fragrant. It was most ingeniously woven from the smallest branches of the spruce fir.

The cave was far away up on the mountain brow, and as they determined to spend whole evenings there, and it would be cold after sunset, they laid in a store of nice dry wood and peats to burn.

One of the purchases consisted of a huge lamp, which they managed with some difficulty to affix to the wall of the cave, and when it was lighted, it made all the place as bright as day.

Now during the time the furnishing and doing up of the cave was going on, books and reading had been quite forgotten. This was not right; both Willie and Dem knew that; so they determined to get up early every morning, and devote a few hours to study, after which they could have all the golden day to themselves, and be

as free as the wind to do as they pleased. The plan answered admirably, because having done their work, they could enjoy the rest of the day with easy minds.

Now, all about the mountain where the cave was, the rabbits ran in thousands.

Seldom or never did the keeper or any one else come to shoot them, because the ground was so stony that however many you might see at a time, no sooner was one shot fired than all the bunnies disappeared into their holes, as if by magic. Rabbits were vermin here, and the keeper McGregor could have all he killed to sell or to give away. Yet McGregor much preferred not to trouble about them. But Poodah proved himself quite an adept at snare-work. So every other day Dem and Willie took to the keeper's house in the wood some rabbits.

The keeper's little boy, Josh, brought back the skins, and he used to bring to the cave both milk and butter as well; so upon the whole the troglodytes were not badly off.

The rabbits' skins were cured, and lined with red flannel, and thus made very delightful rugs for the chairs and the sofa or dais.

I don't think any boys were ever so truly happy before, as Dem and Willie were in their strange abode in the wilds. And Poodah was never tired ministering to their wants and comforts. Oh! the delicious fries and stews and curries he used to prepare for their luncheon and supper!

“It is delightful, isn't it, Dem, to catch one's own fish and have them cooked in one's own cave? I would rather be a troglodyte than anything else; wouldn't you, Dem?”

“Yes,” replied Dem.

There is no doubt it was all very romantic, but—a storm was brewing that they little thought of.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ATTACK ON THE CAVE, AND HOW IT ENDED.

“OH, aid me then to seek the pair,
Alone I dare not venture there,
Where walks, they say, the shrieking ghost.”

—*Scott.*



THE parish school of Glengair was one of the best on all the western coast of Scotland, and boys were sent from far and near to this Highland seat of learning.

The pedagogue—who ruled as king and priest therein, the rattan cane or leathern tawse being his sceptre—was really clever, and his heart was *in* his work and *with* his boys. In these bygone times it was usual to conduct the services of the school in Gaelic—although English had to be used when addressing the master—on every day of the week except Friday. But Dominie Reed reversed the order of things, and with the exception of Saturdays, the whole week was devoted to study in the English language.

The teacher did not consider that his duties were ended when school was over. No; for almost every

evening all the year round, he visited the home of some boy. The parents were invariably glad to see him, especially as he always brought his fiddle with him, on which instrument he was a most excellent performer; so that Dominie Reed's appearance at any house was always the signal for a dance in the barn, or even out on the green in summer evenings. But always before the old fiddle was taken out of the green baize bag, the Dominie had his tea with the old folks, a prayer having been previously offered up and a chapter in the Bible read.

So it may well be conceived that this old-fashioned schoolmaster was a favourite. As before hinted, however, he was a most strict disciplinarian. And Dominie Reed was like Goldsmith's curate, surpassing rich—not on forty, but on thirty pounds a year. To be sure he had his firing free, and house-rent was paid for him.

The firing was thus procured: every day one half of the schoolboys had to bring each a nice dry peat in his hand. And sure enough, if any one forgot his duty in this respect, he was likely to be reminded of it *in modo flagellante*, a method of improving the memory which was exceedingly common in Scottish schools of the olden times, when, if a boy escaped a caning on any one day, he was very much astonished indeed, and quite sure in his own mind that the teacher would make up for it on the next by administering to him a double dose.

One good custom in those days—still kept up in many country schools—was that of making the Book of books a subject for everyday study; the Psalms, and many

chapters of the New Testament having to be got by heart and repeated on the Saturdays. The duties of the day were always ushered in by prayer, and closed in the same way.

With all this much-to-be-admired religious feeling, there were practices customary at those schools which we cannot now-a-days read of without a feeling akin to horror. It is only because I desire to tell the truth and hide nothing, that I mention one of these, namely, cock-fighting. On a certain day—the first of the year usually—nearly every boy was supposed to bring a cock to school with him, and that day the inhuman sport commenced. The slain birds and the beaten and cowed birds all belonged to the teacher, while the cock that was declared victorious was taken home by his owner, the owner himself being dubbed king of the school for a year to come.

We must not, however, think too hardly of the teachers and pupils of those schools of long ago, for remember, that in the matter of cruelty to animals, people err for

“ . . . want of thought,
As well as want of heart.”

Let us rather be thankful the times have changed, and that we no longer regard our pet animals, whether bird or beast, as creatures to be tormented or even made fun of, but as creations of that great Being who, even in the beginning of the world, looked upon His work and saw that it was good.

Now at this same school of Glengair, I am not going to aver that there were not bad boys as well as good. There always have been the good and the bad at schools, just as there is in that great school called the world, which every one has to enter when the days of his pupilage are over, and he would be a false chronicler or historian who should describe the good only, and leave the bad alone, or to be inferred.

Archie Clark and Tom Sinclair, then, were the two most daring and mischievous boys in all the parish school, though strange to say there were in the inmost hearts of these lads a kernel of virtue which I sincerely hope, for their own sakes, was more fully developed in after-life. But for all that I am bound to say, that you might have searched all the parish, and not have found another pair to match them in mischief.

I have given the names by which they were entered on the school register, and by which the teacher and pupil-teachers always designated them. But their schoolmates had manufactured other and shorter names for these lads, with which, whether they liked them or not, they were obliged to be content:

Archie came, or had originally come, from the far-off town of Peterhead, celebrated not only for its herring boats and its fleet of splendid ships, that year after year leave the port to try conclusions with seals, whales, and Arctic bears in the stormy regions around the Pole, but for a species of very hard, reddish stone, beautifully ticked and flecked, and capable of taking the finest

polish imaginable. The stone is known all over the world as Peterhead granite. Well, Archie Clark had hair of a fiery red, his face was also red, and like the stone of his native town, well ticked and flecked. No wonder then that the other boys called him "Granite."

His head was like granite in another way, it was dreadfully hard; but there the similitude ended, for Archie's head was not capable of taking the finest polish. Clever in a good many ways, you might have called Archie, but polished—no!

Hard? Yes, indeed, that head of his was hard. His schoolmates, or rather the very few among them who were bold enough to try fisticuffs with Granite, hurt their knuckles on his head, and made no impression on it either. You might as well have tried to box with the village pump.

Granite had a method of fighting that was peculiarly his own. He used to run in against his antagonist with his head down, and his arms whirling round on each side like two flails. Few boys could stand such an onslaught. Even if they hit him from under, it did not stay the charge, though it might bleed his nose. Granite cared nothing for a bleeding nose. His nose was as often bleeding as not, and he seldom wanted a black eye. I think he preferred it.

He was a naughty boy; but a plucky one for all that. He was caned every day of his life, and sometimes twice, but he was never known to cry.

Granite was guilty of about half the mischief that was done within the school walls and within a radius of half a mile around it; and Tom Sinclair was guilty of the other half. There is no mistake about that, for even the tricks they did not play themselves, they incited or led on other boys to perform.

Tom Sinclair and Archie were always together. Tom was a "long" boy. I use the adjective "long" in preference to "tall," because Tom spent nearly as much of his existence on all fours as erect. This earned for him the name of Foumart.* During school hours you might very often miss Tom out of his place, and look around in vain for him. Tom would be down under somewhere. Possibly he might be merely lying asleep under a desk, but more likely he would be creeping around among the legs of the other lads, pinching calves, sticking pins in ankles, spilling ink, sketching the schoolmaster, or carrying on a conversation with some boy nearly as bad as himself, relative to mischief to be transacted after school hours.

I don't think that either Granite or Foumart shed any tears of regret when they found that the school was to be closed for months. To their way of thinking, indeed, it was a piece of unheard-of luck; for would they not have all the long, glorious days of summer before them, to roam through the country, to bird-nest, to fish, to climb trees, to dig for rabbits, for foumarts and whitte-

* *Scottice*, foumart = polecat.

rits,* and to enjoy life in their own wild way, free and unfettered!

To be sure they would not have so many companions; but they knew where several boys of their own stamp lived, and if they wanted assistance, they could always make *certain* of it.

Granite and Foumart lived in the same small village or "clachan," and of course they met every day.

"Oh, I say, Grannie!" cried Foumart, one morning, "I've such news for you. Such rare news!"

"Go on, tell us."

"Well, young Grantie and that Indian boy have made a house of some kind near the top of Carrick Hill."

"They wouldn't dare, they'd be afraid. There's the boddack, you know."

"Yes, I know; but I saw them go up, both of them, with books in their hands, and I followed them and watched them, and saw the smoke. Oh, they've got a regular nice place, I feel quite sure."

"Well," said Granite, "what right have they up there any more than we? I don't like that Indian chap,—you mind he drew his dirk at me?—and I never liked Grant. Hurrah! we'll rouse them out. I feel all over full of fighting."

"So do I," said Foumart. "I can guide you to the place. But we better make sure, we'll get Bob and Benjie and Webster to go with us."

* Whitterits - weasels.

The boys named were like themselves, Bedouins. The five lads met at the riverside that very evening, and held a council of war, at which it was determined to storm the cave, to thrash Dem and Willie, and occupy their house.

Benjie was the smallest, and he was sent up the hill to reconnoitre. He got near enough the cave, without being discovered, to see the smoke curling up through the bushes, and to hear the sounds of talking and laughing in the cave itself; but he could see no doorway.

Benjie returned, and duly gave in his report to Granite, and next day, about noon, was appointed as the time for the attack.

“For,” said Granite, “about that time they will very likely be having something to eat. Don’t I wish it were to-morrow, just.”

Then they went away along the shore, and each cut for himself a stout hickory stick, and filled his pockets with small round stones.

“I wonder what mischief they can be after now,” said wee Josh, the keeper’s boy. “I expect somebody’s going to catch it, else they wouldn’t be cutting those sticks and gathering stones. I’ll creep a little nearer and hear what they say.”

Josh was a strange little fellow; perhaps no one has ever seen before or since so perfect a little waif of the wilds. He was very tiny, never wore a cap, his yellowish sun-bleached hair was all the protection his head required. He had a face like a ferret’s, clothes the colour

of the dun earth he was always creeping in, and bare legs and feet, usually torn and bleeding with thorns. He was small enough to get into a rabbit's burrow; or if he could not quite get in, he enlarged the hole with a long-shafted little mole-spade he seldom went without.

The conspirators did not perceive Josh, or it might have been bad for him.

Now Josh dearly loved Dem and Willie, in his own way, and no sooner had he found out what was going to happen, than he sought them out in the cave and told them all about it.

"Forewarned is forearmed," said Willie.

Dem's eyes shot fire.

"The scoundrels!" he said, "we'll give them a warm reception, anyhow."

Next day, Josh, peeping over the edge of a rabbit's burrow, saw the five Bedouins advancing through the wood to attack the cave, and hurried up by a short cut to give warning.

For some reason of his own, Poodah remained inside the cave, while Dem and Willie had gone a little way down the hill and hidden behind a bush. Here they determined to defend themselves. But this after all turned out to be but a *reconnaissance*, in force; the real attack was postponed.

"I move," said Granite, "that we go home now, and meet again in this very place as soon as gloaming falls."

"I say, though," said Foumart, somewhat doubtfully, "I shouldn't like to meet the evil spirit, you know."

"Bother the evil spirit," cried Granite impatiently. "If you're afraid, Foumart, you can stop at home with your auntie."

"Afraid, no!" said Foumart boldly. "I never feared aæ of clay; but a spirit—an evil spirit, and we do know there is one—haunts these woods at night. Ah! Granite, that is another thing."

"Well," said Granite, "I might be afraid myself of the awful creature that has been seen here so often, but to get revenge I'll risk it."

"Well, then, so will I," said Foumart.

"And so will I," said Benjie and the others.

"Look! look!" whispered Foumart, "what was that? Something moved in the bush yonder. I caught a glimpse of it. It was like a hare."

A simultaneous rush was made for the bush that had been seen to move, but nothing was found. Twenty minutes after that Josh appeared at the cave again, and was gladly welcomed in.

"What news?" said Dem and Willie, both in one breath.

"News!" replied little Josh; "oh, such news! They are going to burn you all out as soon as it is dark."

And then Josh told the boys every word he had heard uttered by the five conspirators.

"We must fight them, Willie," said Dem.

"And it will be worse at night," said Willie.

"No, children, no!" exclaimed Poodah. "To-day, I

stayed in the cave; to-night, *you* shall. I will go and meet them alone."

Poodah then explained his plan, and the sequel will show how it was carried out.

Miss McBride missed her boys at dinner that afternoon, but little Josh dropped in and gave Tibbie a letter for her mistress, and she presented him with a very large piece of cake; so Josh hurried back again to his friends in the cave, as happy as a king.

Then gloaming began to fall, and the stars to peep out in the east. It would be a clear night, and towards nine the moon would rise. The Bedouins would hardly dare to attack the troglodytes before then.

But as soon as the stars began to shine, Poodah, accompanied by Josh, had left the cave and disappeared in the wood beneath.

The hill was nearly inaccessible at all parts save one. This was a kind of inclined plane that rose from the centre of the wood, and reached to within a hundred yards of the cave. The ground was in a great measure composed of small, loose shingly stones, that were displaced by the feet, making walking somewhat difficult. Few bushes grew on this inclined plane, but the wood was dense at each side.

It was to this particular place that Poodah now directed his attention, and about half-way up it. He had provided himself with a long stout rope. This was attached to a tree at one side, about a foot from the ground, then the other end of the rope was stretched right across the

broad pathway, and given into the willing hands of little Josh, who was carefully instructed to lie perdu, and only to pull the rope tight when he should see the attacking party returning from the cave. Until then the rope was to be allowed to lie slack on the ground, and Poodah himself walked across and covered every portion of it up with shingle, so that it could neither be seen in the moonlight nor touched by the feet of any one passing up the hill. Having done this, Poodah went farther up the hill and hid himself among the bushes.

A whole hour passed by. In the cave all by themselves, Dem and Willie were beginning to feel the time very irksome. The moon was now shining bright and clearly over the sea, making everything about them nearly as light as day; but saving the occasional cry of a night-bird, no sound broke the dreary stillness.

So quiet was it that they could hear the slightest stir or movement among the heather or gorse, and more than once they imagined the sound of footsteps creeping stealthily towards the cave, which made them grasp their cudgels and prepare to resist attack with might and main.

But the attack was never made!

Suddenly, however, from the dark wood below there arose a yell so unearthly, so blood-curdling, as surely was never before heard in these peaceful wilds. It was almost immediately succeeded by a confused chorus of frightened screams, and for a moment it seemed as if pandemonium had been let loose in the wood. Once or

twice the first fearful yell was repeated, then by-and-by the sounds died away, and all was once more silent.

What had happened was as follows: Poodah, having given little Josh his orders, and having hidden himself in the bush, by means of a little phosphorus had succeeded in imparting to his face and hands an appearance that was truly demoniacal. When, some time after, armed with cudgels and stones, Granite and his party stole silently up the hill past the bush where Josh lay, and approached the spot where Poodah was, the Indian had simply popped out from behind a tree, and with hands aloft and glaring eyes gave voice to the yell which so startled every one who heard it.

“The spirit! the spirit!” screamed the boys. Cudgels and stones were instantly thrown away. Nothing was thought about except safety in flight. The bigger boys knocked the smaller down. Ah! but the bigger boys themselves came to tumbling grief when little Josh tightened the rope.”

Poodah had speedily crossed to the other side, and after giving vent to another wild yell, pulled the rope clear and permitted the lads to go once more madly plunging down the hill.

The discomfiture of Granite's party was perfect, their demoralisation complete. They never forgot that terrible adventure, and were most careful ever after to give the wood a wide berth, even during the day.

The hill and wood had never borne a good name; it had a worse now that these naughty boys went and told

their story, with a good many embellishments of their own, all over the country. So that in future the cave had as little chance of being molested as if it had been situated in the wilds of central Africa.

It was a lovely warm summer's afternoon; the boys, Dem and Willie, had been away at a distant burn fishing. They had had extra good fortune, and sent little Josh—their body-servant, as they called him—back to the cave with a portion of their capture, so that Poodah might cook them for dinner. When therefore they themselves arrived at last, there was a most fragrant and delicious repast awaiting them, to which they did ample justice, praising Poodah sky-high for his skill in the art of cookery.

Not far from the mouth of the cave there was a broad grassy bank, on which the fragrant wild thyme of Scottish mountains bloomed, and many another sweet floweret and heath.

Here, on this particular afternoon, Poodah and his two pupils were seated, little Josh having gone on an errand to Gowan Lodge.

Far down below them, stretching away to the limitless horizon, was the sea, as blue as the sky above it, save where the green shadow of some white and fleece-like cloudlet fell. It was dotted with many a sail, while in the more immediate foreground gulls floated on its bosom or circled in the air above. Yonder, too, poised on high, was the great solan goose watching his chance to speed downwards, swift as a thunderbolt, disappear

for a few seconds beneath the water, and reappear with a fish in his bill.

It was a quiet and dreamy kind of afternoon, and all were silent.

Suddenly they were startled by a joyful shout, and there was little Josh, the waif of the wilds, dashing towards them waving aloft something white. Letters from India!

The two boys were lively enough now, and so was Poodah also.

CHAPTER VII.

A CRISIS IN HIS LIFE HAD COME.

“How still the morning of this hallowed day!
Mute is the voice of rural labour, hushed
The ploughboy’s whistle and the milkmaid’s song.”



THE good ship *Queen of the Waves* would soon be homeward bound! That was the news which so stirred the hearts of our young heroes; for not only was Captain Grant, as in duty bound, bringing the fine old East Indiaman home, but Dem’s father was coming with him.

What castles in the air those two boys now built, of the happy time to come; for if all went well their fathers would be home by Christmas! A voyage that would be done now-a-days in a month, took three to four in those times.

What would they do? and what would they be?

These were the questions that now chiefly exercised their minds.

They were never tired discussing the subject by day in their cave, nor at night till late in their bedroom.

“I’ll be so sorry to part with you, Dem,” said Willie more than once; “but I’m going to be a sailor, and nothing else. Father has promised to take me to sea.”

“And I dare say,” Dem would reply, “I shall have to be a soldier, though I should like far better to be a sailor, like you.”

“Yes, we could, perhaps, be often together then.”

“But anyhow, we will manage to see each other sometimes, won’t we?”

“I hope so.”

“Do you know,” said Dem after a pause, “I’m sure I shall cry my eyes out when we have to part.”

“Well,” Willie said, “I suppose I shall feel like crying too, but I won’t. It isn’t like a Scotch boy to cry, and it isn’t manly; but I’ll be so sorry, and I won’t love you any the less.”

“No, I’m sure you won’t.”

“Haven’t we been happy?”

“Oh, so jolly and happy!”

“And there are months and months before us yet.”

“Yes, that is a consolation. What a pity it is that people ever get old!”

“Yes, indeed. Though I think I want to be a man all the same.”

“Well, and so do I.”

Ah! dear young readers, there is many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip; and whatever castles we may choose to build in the air, the very wisest amongst us have but

little if any notion of what may be in store for us in the future.

Summer wore away at last. The golden harvest was gathered in from the glens, and the thatchers began to be busy in the corn-yards. Then Willie and Dem went back to school, and recommenced their studies, so the time flew faster than before.

They still made their pretty mountain cave the place of re-union, however, where, in company with little Josh, they would listen entranced for hours to the stories that Poodah had to tell.

Sometimes they would all meet to hear the strange Indian's tales in Miss McBride's parlour, and old Tibbie would also be invited to enter. She was still a little afraid of the heathen, as she called Poodah, but his stories she confessed quite bewitched her.

Often and often in after life, while embarked on his stormy career, did Willie Grant look back with joy to those happy little fireside meetings in Gowan Lodge, and in memory see once more Tibbie's half-scared face, Dem all eyes and ears seated on a low chair, pleasant Miss McBride with her knitting in a corner, the cosy cats on the rug beside the blazing fire of peats and wood, and the big ha' Bible, with the old lady's spectacles on it, ready to read as soon as the ancient groaning clock on the stairs rattled out the hour of ten.

The snow began to fall early in November, and in the woods and forests wild storms went tearing and roaring through the bare and leafless boughs.

November wore away. December came on, with hard frosts and bright clear skies and sunshine; and so came Christmas itself at last, and then Auld Yule, which in this country was held as the festival of the year.

But, woe is me! the *Queen of the Waves* has not yet made her number.

Where could she be? Both boys grew sadly uneasy as the days went on and on, and January itself became a month of the past.

There still was hope. The good ship might have broken down, or been delayed in many ways.

Then, towards the end of February, when grief had quite got hold of both poor lads, a letter came to Miss McBride.

The boys went to her room and found her in tears.

"Oh! how shall I tell you!" she cried, wringing her hands.

Willie was very pale.

Dem was crying.

"Give me the letter," said the former.

Miss McBride did so.

"No longer," said the official document, "could the slightest hope be entertained of the safety of either the *Queen of the Waves* or her crew, portions of her boats and bulwarks, her figure-head, and stern post name-board having floated on shore near Symon's Bay, Cape of Good Hope."

Could sadder news be given to any boys? The ship a wreck, both their fathers gone!

The letter dropped on the carpet. Willie Grant stood for fully a minute with his eyes turned upwards, his head erect, and his lower lip firmly pressed between his teeth, to stifle his sobs, to restrain his tears. But the convulsive heaving of his chest told how deeply he was affected.

Dem had thrown himself on a couch, and burying his face in a pillow, given way to his grief.

Miss McBride waited till both were somewhat calmer; then she arose and went and knelt beside the couch, and Willie knelt near her.

“Let us pray, boys,” she said.

What else could she do?

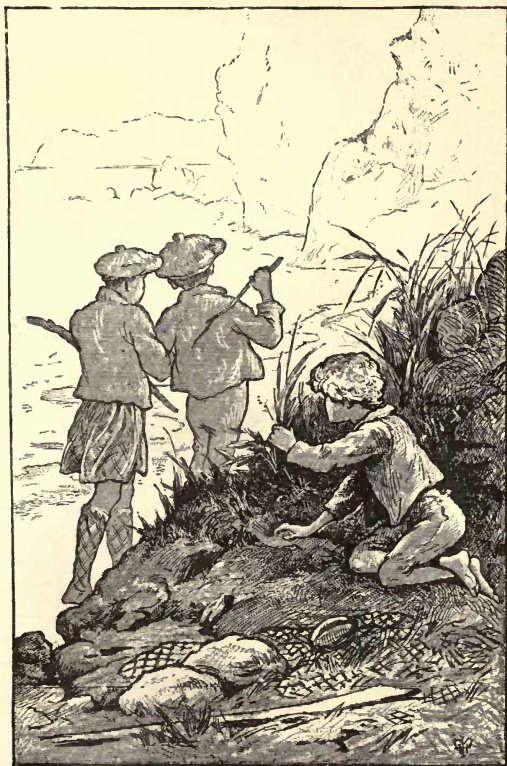
What better could she do?

Well, reader, there is one abiding blessing in this dark world of ours. How dark soe'er it be, how deep soever be our grief, there is always consolation at His footstool for all who seek it there.

* * * * *

Willie Grant had not made much of a show of his grief at first, but it was none the less deep and lasting. He could hardly appreciate the extent of his loss when the blow first fell, and it was only after some weeks that he felt the leaden bullet of sorrow weighing so heavily at his heart.

Dem used to be lively and even cheerful at one time, but down to zero the next; throwing himself suddenly on the couch or on the grass, and sobbing till his heart was like to break.



“I expect somebody's going to catch it. . . . I'll creep a little nearer and hear what they say.”

Miss McBride and old Tibbie did all they could to cheer the lads in a quiet and almost motherly way, but for a long time without much success. At last, however, and as the spring wore away and summer returned with sunshine, birds, and flowers, both boys grew calmer, happier; a chastened kind of happiness though.

“Willie,” said Dem one day, when both were lying on the gowany lawn in front of the cottage, “Willie, of course both your father and mine are in the good place?”

“Of course they are, Dem.”

“Well, do you know I have constantly the idea that they can see us, and that they will guard us through life.”

“So have I,” replied Willie, “precisely the same feeling.”

The ice was broken now, and instead of remaining silent, these two poor lads used to delight to be always talking about their fathers, and soon they came to look upon them as not really dead, but rather ever present though invisible.

Thus matters stood till midsummer came; they had gone no more back to school, and they had not visited their cave lately, although Poodah was very often there alone.

One day, somewhat to their surprise, two boys visited the cottage and inquired for them.

They were Granite and Fomart.

Willie and Dem went to the door to see them.

"Ahem!" begun Granite, "I—I—that is—Foumart and me—— Come and sit on the grass; I hate being indoors, and so does Foumart."

They all went and sat on the grass.

"I say," continued Granite, "you'll think it funny of Foumart and me coming to see you. It was Foumart's fault."

"No, Granite, you proposed it."

"No, you, Foumart, you."

"Never mind," said Willie, "we're glad to see you."

"We haven't come to ask you to fight," said Granite, "or anything of that kind, though many a fine 'stashie' we've had, haven't we?"

Granite's eyes dilated with joy when he thought of it.

"But," he added, "that's all past, and we want to be friends, Foumart and me. 'Cause we've heard you've lost your fathers. Not that Foumart and me would think that much. My father is a miller, and mother would never let him take me on his knee 'cause of his spoiling my clothes, and Foumart never had a father. Come, I say, Willie Grant, here's my Jock-the-leg knife, I want you to keep it."

"And here," said Foumart to Dem, "is a New Testament. Keep it. It isn't a morsel of use to me."

So those queer boys made friends, in their own queer

fashion, with Willie and Dem, and there was an end to all former feuds between them.

By-and-by Miss McBride came out and asked them all in, but Granite and Fomart refused to budge. So Tibbie brought out tea and cake and gooseberry jam to the lawn, and Miss McBride presided on the grass. Then Josh the waif dropped round, so it was quite a social party.

* * * * *

“You must go and see my cousin, boys,” said Miss McBride one day to Willie, “and thank him for giving you the cave rent-free.”

“Indeed, yes,” Willie said, “we ought to have gone long ago; but——”

“Ah! I know,—well, go to day, boys.”

So that very day off they set to see the old invalid, who with all his wealth never had a single day’s happiness.

He was kindly and good to all around him, however, and bore his great affliction with true Christian boldness and courage.

He was delighted to see the boys. He talked first about their fathers, then gradually he brightened up, and brightened the boys up as well.

He told them stories of his sporting days and his fishing exploits, and described them in such a telling, natural

way, that the boys were both delighted, and the time flew swiftly by.

He made them promise to come again soon. They did promise, and did come too, and by-and-by it became a regular thing for them to be at Harthill every second evening.

"You really make me feel young again, lads." Old Mr. McBride said this to them over and over again.

But it was in Willie that he took special interest.

Now, however pleasant such a life might be, it could not last for ever. Willie felt this, and he felt something else: he felt that he was poor and friendless. Dem had an uncle in England, who by-and-by might come and fetch him, but Willie had not a relation in the world.

He determined to leave Gowan Lodge, and go away to sea as a boy before the mast.

In his bedroom one night he told Dem of his intentions, and Dem quite approved of them.

But when he told Miss McBride next day of his determination, the poor old lady was inconsolable.

No, no, he must not go. She would keep him and school him, and send him to college, and make a parson of him. No, no, no, he must not go!

But Willie was proud and independent in spirit.

"I'll be nothing but a sailor," he said, almost doggedly, "though I'll never, never forget your kindness, and I'll always make this my home when I come back from a voyage."

Miss McBride did not very often leave her cottage. She paid periodical visits to Harthill; visits of ceremony they were, for there was not a great deal of affection or even of friendship between the cousins. But a few days after the above conversation with Willie, Squire McBride was surprised to see the old lady walk into his drawing-room,—a fine room, with an outlook over the Atlantic.

“What, you here, Mary!” he said. “Well, I’m glad to see you, though it isn’t your time. James, tea at once. You look cold, Mary. Nothing wrong, I hope?”

“No, Cousin Robert, nothing wrong; all will be right if I can manage you.”

The old man laughed.

“Manage *me*, Mary! Why, you always managed me. You’d have managed me still better if you had only married me, Mary!”

“You know, Robert, I don’t believe in cousinly marriages, so there!”

“Well, Mary?”

“Yes, Robert.”

“What did you come about, a sitting of eggs?”

“No, you silly old boy, not a sitting of eggs this time. I want a sitting of another sort. My poor boy, Willie Grant——”

“Yes; he is a charming chap. I like him.”

“Well, he is determined, like his father, poor dear dead

man, to go before the mast. I want you to get him into the Royal Navy as a midshipman. That's the sitting of eggs I want."

"Oh! that's the sitting of eggs, is it? Come away, James. Hand Miss McBride a cup, and me another. Thanks. So, Mary, that's your sitting of eggs. Well, I'll do my best."

"Oh! thank you, Robert, thank you! You always were a dear, good, kind soul."

After this the old good-hearted couple had a long and earnest conversation, and it was agreed that Willie Grant should know nothing about it till his appointment came; that is if it could be got.

And it *was* got. They were stirring times these; the French were trying hard to sweep the English from the seas, and the English were not only trying to blow the French out of the water, but actually doing it.

Squire McBride set about keeping his promise to his cousin without delay; and with so much success, that after the expenditure of much paper and ink and postage money, Willie's appointment arrived at Gowan Lodge one snowy January morning. On a Sunday too! He was to be midshipman on the frigate *Castile*, then fitting out at Spithead for foreign service.

Willie's feelings on this occasion were so conflicting, so commingled with sorrow and excitement and joy, that if he had been asked, he really could not have said whether he was happy or the reverse.

He thanked Miss McBride with tears in his eyes, and then he went straight away—all alone—over to the Squire's hall, to thank him. And having done so, he took his way back again over the moorland and through the forest.

Nor had he forgotten to thank Him, also, in whose hands our lives and fates all are, nor to pray for His guidance, to make things work together for his good, and to help him to do his duty.

Willie never forgot that Sabbath morning. There was something impressive in its wintry stillness. Every sound seemed muffled, deadened, deafened. It was as if all nature held her breath. Even the sea-mews went circling round in the leaden sky, without uttering a sound except the fanlike rush of their wings when they wheeled and tacked. The sky was grey and like the ocean, which far away in the west met and blended, without a line to mark a horizon.

Only a lisping kind of whisper along the beach, where the lazy wavelets curled and fell.

And in the woods the silence was even more marked. The trees stood waiting as it were; never a twiglet moved; there was not a leaf to fall nor a fern found to rustle, for the ferns had been beaten to the earth with the last snow, and now lay flat and frozen to the ground. All creeping things were dead, or deep buried below and fast asleep. Only, every now and then, there was the peevish twittering of a flock of starlings, circling round

in the still air, or the quick "Bee't! bee't! bee't!" of a startled blackbird, and anon a little half hysterical lilt of a song from a robin, as if the wee bird thought that by singing he could conjure away the winter's frost, and that spring would return, with leaf and bud for the trees, and flowers—the anemone, the fragile wood-sorrel and scented primrose—for the grassy banks.

Willie Grant went slowly homewards, thinking, thinking.

A crisis in his life had come!

END OF BOOK FIRST.



Book II.

Under The

Pennant.

CHAPTER I.

JOINING THE SERVICE.

'ROCKED in the cradle of the deep,
I lay me down in peace to sleep;
Secure I rest upon the wave,
For Thou, O Lord! hast power to save.
I know Thou wilt not slight my call,
For Thou dost mark the sparrow's fall;
Then, calm and peaceful shall I sleep,
Rocked in the cradle of the deep.'



EARLY in the spring of 1807, a small coast-
ing vessel had been seen by those on shore
struggling all the afternoon against a
strong breeze, in a seemingly vain attempt
to round the stormy Mull o' Cantyre. You may call her
what you please, smack or yawl. She had one tall mast
which would have accommodated a good spread of canvas,
had the weather permitted any such display, and a tiny
morsel of a standing stick right aft for a sail not much
bigger than a meal sack. Her size—perhaps twenty
tons. She carried plenty of bowsprit and jibboom, which
proved her to be saucy enough, and willing to sail into
the wind's teeth if there was the ghost of a chance. To-

day her big mainsail was closed reefed, and she carried a hurricane jib.

Two Highlanders had been standing on a rock for ever so long looking at her, while they smoked their black clays and took an occasional pinch of snuff from a ram's horn that one of them owned.

"They'll no pe doing it, Tonal, man," said one.

"It's myself," replied Donald, "that thinks with you, Archie; and look see, the sun'll pe setting pefore long, and the wind gettin' higher. So sure enough, if they get round, it's on the rocks they'll pe afore mornin', as sure as your name is Archie Campbell."

"Och! yes, it's right you are, Tonal, to pe surely, and it's deep in the water she is too; and if the folks on board—poor dears—are all trowndëd, then the bits o' barrelies o' herrings and potatoes will pe yours and mines, Tonal."

"Yes, to pe surely."

Hope, however, told those two honest countrymen of mine a too flattering tale. Let us take a peep on board.

The crew are all on deck, for she is not an open boat, and there is a cabin, too, and skylight, and a chimney fore and aft.

The crew all told consists of the captain, a man, and a boy. There is besides a passenger, and he is not above taking a pull at a sheet, or even helping to take in a reef when need is.

The name of the little vessel is the *Flora McDonald*; her master is Saunders, the fisherman recluse; and the passenger our hero, Willie Grant.

Saunders had returned to the glen, and Squire McBride had chartered the *Flora*, and put him in charge to take Willie round from the Highlands of Scotland to join his ship at Spithead. She was deep in the water. Her ballast itself was stones and water, and in the latter floated or sulked a splendid assortment of live lobsters. Her other cargo consisted of barrelled herrings, potatoes, and Willie's sea-chest.

A strange way of going to join the service, it must be admitted. But there were no trains in those days, and far away in the Highland wilds no coaches either.

The boy was little Josh McGregor, who had evinced an inclination, and a very determined one it was, to be a sailor and follow, if possible, Willie's fortunes. In fact, the lad loved Willie Grant, even as a collie dog loves his master; I can compare his affection for him to nothing else.

Both Willie and Josh were excellent sailors, so sea-sickness was out of the question entirely.

"Do you think," said Willie, "we can do it?"

"Indeed, I feel sure we can't; and so, with your permission, we'll put about and run round the north coast of Ireland. We will have sea-room there, anyhow."

"All right," said Willie. "We have been three days at sea already; perhaps we may yet get a fair wind, by-and-by."

Round she came in lovely form; and on shore, Donald and Archie went away disappointed as the vessel began to show her heels.

“There’ll pe no barrelies o’ herrings then, Tonal,” said Archie.

“Och, no !” replied Tonal ; “but we’ll just pe putting our trust in providence for another time. Take a snuff, Archie.”

The *Flora* flew now. There is no other verb to describe the fleetness of her motion as she cut through the water before the wind. Compared with the height of the vessel and her size, the waves were really mountains. She sunk in the troughs so far that the wind was almost taken out of her sails, and when she mounted a billow she appeared to cleave the top of it in two ; the white foaming water went rolling aft half-leg deep, but she shook herself clean and clear the very moment after.

There was a gorgeous sunset to night. The sun sunk over the Irish hills amid a blaze of golden glory. By-and-by the wind went down so far that reefs were shaken out, and a “fore-soldier” set.

Willie and Saunders went below and squeezed themselves into seats, for the cabin was wondrous small. Josh came staggering aft, and handed down a great dish of Irish stew. Then Saunders dived his arm into a locker and produced a further contribution, and the two made an excellent supper, and sat talking for hours.

Only once that evening Willie mentioned the disappearance of the diamond star of Carrickareen.

“It isn’t always visible,” was all the fisherman remarked, and this subject dropped.

By-and-by Willie began to wink, then Saunders took

out the Book, and after our good old Highland custom read a chapter and said a prayer, and then——

“I’ll turn in,” said Willie; “and won’t I sleep, just!”

He had not far to go to bed, and in half an hour both he and Saunders were in that deep, delightful slumber which only sailors know, and that only when the wind blows and the vessel rocks.

For nearly two weeks longer the little *Flora* struggled against heavy seas and high winds, and then at length she bore away up Channel, and in good time passed the Needles, and arrived at Spithead, and so into Portsmouth harbour.

Saunders knew the frigate which Willie was going to join. As they neared her, Willie came on deck rigged out in his new uniform, tailcoat and all complete.

Tom Thumwood was signalman of the *Castile*. He was called Tom Thumb for short, and perhaps he was the original Tom Thumb. But Tom was not short, by any means, but quite the reverse, and a deal of chaffing he had to endure from his messmates owing to his extreme length.

Tom was so long, indeed, that you had, when talking to him, to stand off a yard or two in order to get your proper bearings, else you might have hurt your neck looking up to his face. He had been on board a brig before he came to the *Castile*, but was mercifully permitted to leave, being nearly always off duty with a broken head, owing to the swinging round of the trysail boom; and as for caps, why Tom had to get a new one

about once a week, for the wind blew them off—his head being so far aloft—and every stay and sheet in the ship had a shy at Tom's cap. But Tom was useful in other ways as well as in signalling duties, at which latter, by the way, he couldn't be beaten, for when the young officers went off on a boat excursion, they always took Tom if they could get him, and made him stand up for a mast, holding aloft a reefing jacket or a Highland plaid.

Tom liked his "tot o' rum," as he called it—most sailors did in those days, before the blessings of temperance came to be appreciated—but he very seldom exceeded.

Once upon a time, though, Tom did get over the bounds of prudence. He had been seeing some soldiers off from Portsmouth; three friends of his own they were. He conveyed them as far as the fifth milestone; they then drank their rum and broke the bottle on the stone. But Tom felt rather overcome going back, and lay down to sleep. In the starlight a good Samaritan came along; he did not know Tom, but he helped him up to his *feet*, as he thought, but Tom was really on his knees, though quite as tall even thus as the good Samaritan.

"Now," said the latter, "take my arm; can you walk?"

"Walk?" said Tom. "Yes, my friend, but I'm not all up yet, *there's another fold of me!*"

But Tom was very good-natured and a general favourite, especially with the boys.

When they wanted to ask a question of him, they would shout, "Are you up there, Tom—ahoy!"

“Ay, ay, lad,” Tom would reply, then bend himself down to almost a sitting position, with his hands on his knees, so that his face would be on a level with the boy’s. “What is it, lad?”

And often the only question the cheeky boy would have to ask would be,—

“What sort o’ weather is it up with you, Tom?”

“I’ll show you,” Tom would reply, and hoist the lad right on top of his shoulders—cockerty-coosie fashion—and trot off with him round the deck.

It was a treat to see Tom coming down the companion ladder, if you happened to be below. There seemed no end to him, but when Tom’s face did appear at last, a right jolly-looking and pleasant face it was, only slightly disfigured as to one cheek by the quid of tobacco, which he was never without except at mealtimes. Roddy Flint, a carpenter’s mate and a character, declared that if Tom were dressed up in pig-skins, with a horse’s mane along his neck, and pitched overboard, he would pass for “the great sea-sarpint, and froighten the shark himself.”

Yes, Tom was something like a signalman. It was he who in duty bound noticed the *Flora* first.

It was just after the sunset gun had been fired, and Tom was abaft the binacle, having a quiz round through the medium of a battered old telescope, which Tom was proud to call his own.

“Smash my buttons, Jack,” he said to a bos’n’s mate, “if there isn’t a rotten old smack going to run right into us.”

“Never mind, Tom, we won’t hurt. May I be skivered, though, if she ain’t coming alongside. Down goes the mainsail. That youngster in uniform handles the tiller well too.”

The smack was laid alongside “lovely,” as a girl would say, and next minute Willie Grant was on deck.

He lifted his hat to the king’s ship, then stood for a moment uncertain what to do next.

The bos’n’s mate gave his trousers a hitch and swung easily up to Willie.

“Can I do anything for you, sir?”

“Well,” said Willie boldly, for the boy had expected to see some officers on deck, “well, I’ve come to join the ship.”

“Yes, I heard say a youngster from the north was expected. But there ain’t an officer on board, bar a master’s mate, and he’s below in the gunroom. Got your chest, sir?”

“Yes, it’s in the smack alongside.”

“All right; I’ll have it aboard afore you can say ‘sword,’ sir. You’d better go below and see Mr. Smart, and just tell him you’ve come to join. Stay, though, I forgot, you’d hardly find your way. I’ll go with you. Come along. Mind your feet. All is confusion, and will be for weeks. Nobody hardly joined yet.”

It was confusion indeed. Lumber of all sorts lay on the fighting deck, mixed with blocks of wood, chips, sawdust, buckets, ropes, stoves—everything; and the guns were anyhow.

“Ah! Mr. Smart’s in the wardroom. He wouldn’t be there if any superior was aboard. Go in, sir.”

Willie walked in.

In an easy chair, with his legs on the table—his feet in stockings only,—sat Mr. Smart, with a wet towel round his brow and a book in his hands.

A tall, long-faced, pale young man, with thoroughly Saxon hair and eyes.

Smart took no notice.

“If you please, sir, I’ve come to join.”

“Go to the mischief.”

“Thank you!”

“Get out of this. Can’t you see I’m studying my wretched logarithms? Get out, I tell you.”

Smart leant down, and next moment a boot went whizzing past Willie’s nose, and struck the bulkhead behind him.

The second boot followed the first. This Willie dodged. Then he stood erect, and as he did so he kicked off his shoes; the lad’s Highland blood was up, though he was cool enough.

He looked at Smart for a moment, then said slowly,—

“I ne’er delayed,
When foeman bade me draw my blade.”

Whizz through the air went a brogan.* The book was knocked from Smart’s fingers.

* *Brogan* = a Highland shoe.

Whizz went the other, and ricocheted from the enemy's shoulder.

"Great stars!" shouted Smart, kicking away his chair and tearing the towel from his brow. "Great stars! You have struck your superior officer. That is death, by the king's instructions."

"I'm midshipman William Grant, and I've come to join the *Castile*," said Willie calmly.

"Great stars! for two pins I'd pound you into a mummy. You're a Scotchman, ain't you?"

"Yes," said Willie; "and you're an Englishman. That's your misfortune, not your fault; and I promise you I sha'n't boast of my birth if you say you are not ashamed of yours."

Smart looked at him for a minute, then laughed aloud, as he pitched away his book.

"Come on, Scottie," he cried, "and sit down. I'm precious pleased you've arrived. Bother the logarithms! Let us be friends."

And if any one had looked into the wardroom ten minutes after this, he would have thought that Willie Grant and Edgar Smart had known each other since childhood.

The *Castile* was a thirty-six gun frigate, and was now fitting out with all the despatch possible for immediate service;—but where, no one beyond the sacred precincts of the Admiralty offices knew as yet. Both the first and second lieutenants came off next day, Edgar and Willie having bunked all night on the wardroom floor.

The first lieutenant was a burly, fair-haired officer of some five-and-thirty years of age, and would have looked very nice and pleasant if he had not unfortunately possessed a squint. However, he always put two fingers on the squinting eye when talking to you. This did not look odd when you knew the reason connected with it.

He welcomed Willie, and promised at once to be his friend, and thanked him for bringing Josh, who was at once installed as a sort of second-class boy.

“Let me see what I’ll rate you as,” said the commander, looking down at the queer little waif of the wilds. “You want to be rated, don’t you, lad?”

“I don’t mind very much,” said Josh, “I’m used to it; but I’d rather they did it with the cane than the tawse.”

The first lieutenant laughed.

“We’ll call you lee-scupper boy, and your duty for a time will be to assist the cook’s make and look after the live stock.”

There was a muster-by-open-list about a fortnight after this, when every man-Jack in the ship has to answer to his name, and as he passes before the captain declare his rating. When little Josh was called he appeared, and, touching his cap, created no little amusement by shouting out,—

“Joshua McGregor, sir, captain of the lee scuppers.”

The first lieutenant laughed behind his hand, and the captain, an innocent-looking but brave little man, said:

“Bless my heart and soul! What an extraordinary rating! Well, well, well!”

While the ship was still completing her refit, the gun-room officers were "located," as the Yankees say, on board an old line-of-battle ship hulk, and a right merry mess they made of it.

In number they were nine all told; namely, two surgeon's mates,—one being a supernumerary,—one mate, one master's assistant, three midshipmen, including Willie Grant, and two clerks.

They had four marines and a cook to wait on them, and the former also did sentry go.

The hulk was a great old high-sterned line-of-battle ship, taken from the French during the seven years' war, but made of timber that would apparently never wear out.

One of the midshipmen was a man in reality. A rough old tar of nearly thirty or over, who had at first been taken from before the mast to fill a temporary vacancy, and had his acting-rating subsequently confirmed, and tails added to his jacket. This was by no means an uncommon occurrence in the dashing days of old.

He was naturally somewhat unpolished, and sometimes a little uncouth in language; but a brave fellow, a good sailor, and a great favourite in the mess.

Jack Williams was this hirsute mid's name, but as he talked and told so many stories about Admiral Benbow, he soon got the *sobriquet* of "Old Benbow" himself, and by that tally he must be known in our tale.

Yes, it was a merry mess in the hulk, and like the McDonalds before the Flood, they had a boat of their own.

Even after the *Castile* was ready for sea, this hulk-mess was kept up. There were no watches in particular to keep, and the captain said: "Let the boys remain in the hulk; we'll be rid of their noise for as long as we can."

If one of the three mid's was a man, another was a mite.

A smarter, brighter, cheekier boy never trod on a quarter-deck or shivered for delinquencies at a mast-head. He was about fifteen years of age, but very small, and as active altogether as a ferret. He was the son of a lord, and called the Honourable Henry de Grey.

That is, he was called Mr. de Grey on the quarter-deck, but down below, alas! his high-sounding cognomen was degenerated into Dick-Rae, and often shortened into Dick.

Dick did not mind a bit what he was called, he said, so long as the master-at-arms did not call him too soon in the morning.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE IN THE OLD HULK.

“AND now, having nobly defended the cause
Of the nation, of freedom, religion, and laws ;
Her timbers all crazy, all open her seams,
Torn and wounded her planks, and rotten her beams ;
To the last humbly fated her country to aid,
Near the very same slip where her keel was first laid ;
No trace of her rating, save her ports and her bulk,
The pride of the ocean's cut down—a sheer hulk !”

—*Dibdin.*



HEY talk and tell us about David Rizzio's blood-stain outside Queen Mary's boudoir door in Holyrood Palace, and I daresay the ugly dark spot at the top of the stair was caused by the blood of the murdered man. But had you seen the marks on the deck of that great hulk, you would have thought no more of Holyrood. Of course the decks were scrubbed, and then the stains were visible: here and there all along, but more especially near the ports where the guns had been, and on the poop—deep, dark and terrible. They were plentiful, too, alongside the fore and main hatches, where Frenchmen

had fallen in dozens when the British, cutlass in hand, had boarded and chased the enemy below.

We do not have such deep stains on our old ships, because no sooner is a fight over than all trace of it is eliminated, and buckets of water and holystone quickly banish the ugly tell-tale stains ; but the French never were so particular.

There was said to be a ghost on that old hulk too—perhaps there were scores—the ghost of a master-at-arms, who had met his death in a queer way, and used to haunt the orlop deck of the hulk, carrying his head in his hand by the hair, and swinging it about as if it had been a lantern. Those who swore they had seen him, averred that if he wanted to talk to you, he held his head aloft, or swung it near your face. Old Benbow would not have gone below to that orlop deck after nightfall for five hundred-weight of Spanish doubloons, so he said ; only I do not myself believe there was anything more disagreeable in the cockpit than cockroaches or an occasional rat. There were plenty of the former, and, strange to say, some of the latter, though what they got to eat is more than I can say. Perhaps the rats swam ashore to feed, and came off at night to sleep.

Summer soon gave evidence of its near approach. Away out in the country the woods were all green, and alive with the voices of thousands of singing birds ; and in the beautiful evenings it was the custom of lovers, as it is in our day, to walk a long way to hear the nightingale sing.

One day at dinner-time the young Hon. midshipmite burst into the mess-room of the hulk, which, by the way, had been the admiral's own quarters in the days of auld lang syne. De Grey, or Dick, let us call him, was shouting and singing, and waving aloft a letter.

"Mr. President," he said, bowing to one of the surgeon's mates who sat at the head of the table; "Mr. President, and gentleman all: here is a letter I've just brought from the *Castile*, and what do you think it contains? Why, an invitation to a hop at Mrs. Flounce's."

"The beef contractor's wife?" said the President.

"The beef contractor's *lady*, sir. Dr. Hunt, I'm astonished at you. Is her husband not rich? He made his money by beef, 'tis true, but can we live without beef?"

"Was it beef?" said Mr. Dance, the mate.

"I am fully aware of what you allude to, Mr. Dance," replied the Hon., helping himself to about half a pound of rump steak. "You allude to the fact—the trifling fact, sir—that on one or two occasions horses shoes have been found in the beef casks of Mr. Flounce, and once a pair of stirrups and a portion of a military bridle had got mixed up with some sirloins. That is nothing,—a mere matter of business, let us say. But these substantial facts remain, namely, that the Flounces are wealthy and well to do, and——"

"Mrs. Flounce used to keep a tripe shop."

"Mr. President, I call upon you to maintain order, sir, till I have finished speaking."

“Silence!” roared Hunt, knocking on the table with the handle of the carving knife.

“I was going to add,” continued Dick-Rae, “when that purser’s clerk interrupted me so unfeelingly, “that the Flounces have a fine house, beautiful lawns and gardens, asparagus beds, and last, but not least, three of the most charming girls for daughters in all the town.”

“Hear! hear!”

“Well, gentlemen, in this world riches rule the roost, cash is cock of the walk; and we are invited to a ball, and I will now read the invitation. Ahem! It is brief and to the point, and written, I’ll go bail, by the white and slender hand of Julia herself, and not by the fair but somewhat fat fingers of the Mrs. Flounce: ‘Mrs. and the Miss Flounces request the honour of the Hon. Henry de Grey, and the other gunroom officers of H.M.S. *Castile*, to a ball at Flounce Hall, on the evening of the first of June.’ Sweet and simple,” added Dick Rae; “and you will observe that they mention me particularly, which proves that, wealthy though they be, they do not despise rank. Steward, bring that pig’s cheek round here. Thanks.”

“Why,” said old Benbow, “that’s the day of our boat races at Spithead.”

“True, my Benbow, true; and all the better. What a time we’ll have of it! The Glorious First of June! a boat-race and a ball! Now, who’s going? Benbow, you’ll go for one; Smart, Dr. Hunt, and you, Grant, and I myself must go.”

“Will the Hon. Henry de Grey,” said Smart, “really degrade himself by going to a beef curer’s hop?”

“Oh, you vile master’s mate!” cried Dick-Rae, putting his fingers in his ears; “what a shocking pun! Mr. President, do something, for heaven’s sake.”

“But you mentioned me,” said old Benbow. “My dear lad, balls and hops are for my betters. *Me* among ladies with low-bodied dresses and bracelets! *Me* among grand people dancing Sir Roger! No, no, lad; a bull would be better mannered than old Benbow. Besides, I ain’t got proper dress.”

“I tell you, Benbow, I insist upon your going.”

“Well, well; but I’ll be as shy, bless your heart, as a maid on her marriage morning. Besides, I can’t dance any more than a turtle.”

“We’ll arrange all that,” said the middy; “but anyhow you’re going.”

It wanted a whole fortnight to the first of June, and almost every evening these young officers had the ship’s fiddler on board the hulk, and practised their steps incessantly—quadrilles, contra dances, cotillons, and Sir Roger de Coverley itself.

Young Dick-Rae bent all his energies to making old Benbow proficient. His pupil proved an apt one; he put his whole heart and soul in the business, and after ten days of constant dancing drill, the middy pronounced him perfect. He was a little clumsy, it is true, and sometimes gave a lurch to leeward, as if down-hauling a jib-sheet; but that did not matter much.

The boat race day came round at last, a day never to be forgotten at Spithead, for all the Portsmouth world was there, all the Portsmouth world's wives and daughters all so gay. The races were limited to the cutters of the fleet, so soon to sail for foreign service, and twenty were entered in all; and there were all sorts of prizes for all sorts of races, and much fun and laughing and talking, and general jollity. The shores were lined with sight-seers, the water was crowded with boats and skiffs of every imaginable kind, and with yachts as well; and the beauty of the whole business—so thought the junior officers—was that nearly all those boats and yachts were crowded with pretty parasols, from under which there peeped youthful faces as pretty and enchanting as angels in a dream.

There was plenty of fun, both on shore and afloat; and it is needless to say that the gunroom officers, the younger ones at all events, were in the middle of it.

So the day wore away, and the sea was deserted except by an occasional boat on business, and the reflection of the stars that shone in its bosom.

Now, although there were fewer madder middies in the service than Dick-Rae, and fewer more fond of pranks, he really was a little gentleman at heart. He belonged to one of the oldest families in England, and was honourable in nature as well as in name. But he did not like the style of invitation sent to his mess. Why should Mrs. Flounce specially mention *his* name, he asked him-

self, unless she was a veritable old "tuft-hunter"? It was not good form, and he determined if possible to serve her out—to "sell her a pup," as they phrased it in the service in those days. Benbow was to be the pup. Benbow was willing to enter into the joke, just for the fun of the thing.

And the joke was this. Dick-Rae himself was to go to the ball as simple Mr. Williams, midshipman, and old Benbow was to go as the *Hon.* Henry de Grey, for neither were personally known to either the Mrs. Flounce or the Misses Flounce.

The other officers of the ship were told about it, and saw no objection, but rather the reverse.

The *Castile's* fellows were somewhat late in getting to the ball, but they were made heartily welcome nevertheless by the charming but very fat hostess, by her stately and beautiful daughters, and by old Flounce himself.

Not a bad fellow was old Flounce, and very sensible indeed, only a trifle henpecked; and he had to carry out his wife's instructions about being excessively polite to the *Hon.* de Grey.

"Because, you know," his better and bigger half had told him, "the haristocracy is the haristocracy, and there's no saying what might come of it."

So Flounce cornered poor Benbow whenever he got the chance, and called him "your lo'dship" in every sentence, and talked to him of the House of Lords and the king, and affairs of State, till Benbow would have

given his watch to get out into the open air with a pipe in his mouth.

The wicked midshipmite who was accountable for poor Benbow's misery was enjoying himself as well as ever a middy did before or since, dancing with all the prettiest and tallest girls he could find, talking enough for two, boasting enough for a dozen, and even "saucing" soldier officers who were big enough to put him in a coat pocket. He devoted not a little time to flirting with the junior Flounces. The elder Miss Flounce had, by her mother's express private orders, cocked her ribbons at the Hon. de Grey—Benbow to wit. Benbow was terribly shy for a time, and what made him doubly so was this: he felt that he was dressed somewhat like a guy, for his waistcoat was far too small for him, and his coat was a jacket to which tails had been added of cloth a shade darker. Moreover, he felt ill at ease about the neck, and when he danced and went whirling round, his coat tails stuck out considerably, so that he gave rise to no end of merriment and half-disguised talk and tittering. More than once Miss Flounce was put to the blush. But then, was her partner not an "honourable," and was her mother's eye not on her?

More than once the naughty middy brushed past the pair of them, and never forgot to sing out loud enough for all near at hand to hear,—

"How are you getting on, my lord?"

And Benbow would give his trousers a hitch and reply,—

“I’m heaving round with a will, my lad.”

The supper was a genuine business affair that nearly all hands sat down to, not like the standing scramble we are used to now-a-days. Benbow was seated near Mrs. Flounce at the head of the table, and as the wine mounted to his head, he made remarks so odd and droll that all within hail laughed till the tears filled their eyes. Mrs. Flounce several times bent over to some of her guests, and remarked in a stage whisper,—

“*Isn’t* the Hon. de Grey original? *Isn’t* he delightful? Quite the genius.”

It was not long before this thirty-year-old midshipman opened out in earnest, and thrilled his audience with terrible anecdotes of his favourite hero, the redoubtable Admiral Benbow; and on this subject he really did speak well and to the point. He was a handsome fellow, too, though rough-and-right, very honest and straightforward, and Miss Flounce really began to be proud of her partner rather than otherwise.

Certainly Benbow danced more with Miss Flounce than was proper etiquette, but of course he knew no better. Once Mrs. Flounce took her daughter aside.

“*Aren’t* you proud?” she asked. “*Aren’t* you happy?”

“Perhaps,” said the poor girl, whose fair face was flushed, “I ought to be; but he is really so eccentric.”

“But, my dear child, think; one of Hengland’s noblest haristocrats. And I assure you, dear, he is taken with



“If you please, sir, I’ve come to join.”

you—smitten with you ; and I shouldn't wonder if he proposed this very night."

Well, after supper there was no mistake about it, Old Benbow had lost all his shyness ; and as to his dress, late of an evening at balls in those good old times people took little notice of such trifles. But to have seen Old Benbow in Roger de Coverley was something to be remembered for years after. What a night it was altogether ! There was no mistake about it that, beef or not beef, Mrs. Flounce's ball was a success.

“As bees flee hame wi' loads o' treasure,
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure.
But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed ;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white, then melts for ever ;
Or like th' aurora borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place ;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.”


The grey dawn of the summer morning crept through the sky at last ; then good-byes were said and farewells whispered, and soon thereafter our fellows of the *Castile* were speeding in their boat back to the ship.

CHAPTER III.

“PLAIN JACK WILLIAMS.”

“A SAILOR and an honest heart,
Like ship and helm, are ne'er apart ;
For how could one stem wind and tide
If t'other should refuse to guide ?
With that she freely cuts the wave.
So the tar,
When dashing waves around him jar,
Consults his heart, and danger braves
Where duty calls.”

—*Dibdin.*

“OYS will be boys,” said Captain Oldrey of the *Castile* next day, when Dr. Curver laughingly told him of Dick-Rae's little practical joke.

They were walking arm-in-arm on the quarter-deck just after breakfast.

Now it may not look like strict service for the captain of a frigate to walk arm-in-arm with even his head surgeon ; but these two officers knew each other well, and were great friends.

“Yes,” said the doctor, “of course boys will be boys, and I don't care a bit for a boy that isn't a boy.”

“Nonsense, Curver; you like all boys, you’re the boy’s friend *par excellence*. Didn’t you often enough prevent me from flogging even second-class lads in the old *Rodney*, or order them to be cut down before the bo’s’n’s mate had got well under weigh with the cat?”

“Hang the cat!” said Curver.

“Yes, hang the cat, in the gunners’ cabin for instance. Ah! Curver, you’ve a great big thumping kind heart of your own, but duty’s duty, and service is service.”

“But,” continued the captain, “I knew your little game, even in the *Rodney*, though you didn’t think so, *mon ami*. I’ll describe it to you in three scenes:—

“*Scene I.* The doctor and Tommie Trot in the sick-bay.

Doctor (*loquitur*)—(Tommie in tears). ‘No, Tommie, there is no physical bar to your being flogged.’

Tommie. ‘Oh, I wish there was a bar, sir. I wish I had heart disease or something.’

Doctor. ‘Twaddle, Tommie, twaddle. Go and take your punishment like a man, and don’t go and empty an ink-bottle again over the schoolmaster’s only linen shirt.’

Tommie. ‘Hoo—hoo—hoo—oo! Oh! sir.’

Doctor. ‘Off out of here! And mind you don’t faint during the flogging, else I’d have to cut you down.’

Scene II. Tommie lashed to the grating.

Commander (*loquitur*). ‘Commence the punishment.’

Bo's'n's Mate (beginning). 'One!'

Tommie. 'Oh! Jee—roos—alum!!!!!!'

Bo's'n's Mate. 'Two!!'

Tommie. 'Oh! Kriekie—Doodle! ain't it hot!!!!'

Bo's'n's Mate. 'Three!!!'

Tommie. 'Murder in Irish. Oo—oo—oo!!!!'

Tommie faints.

Bo's'n's Mate. 'Four!!!!'

Tommie makes no sign.

Dr. Curver, holding up his hand and feeling Tommie's pulse, then saluting the commander: 'Syncope, sir, that may prove fatal if the punishment be continued.'

Commander. 'All right. Take him down and carry him forward.'

Tommie is taken to the sick-bay, smiling slyly.

Tommie (*loquitur*). 'Doctor, you're a brick!'

Scene III. The sick-bay. Cold cream for Tommie's back, commiseration for his mind, and a drop of cordial as a reviver."

Dr. Curver laughed, but admitted there was some little foundation of fact in these scenes. "But," he said, "even though I cut the boys down, you could have lashed them up again and given them fum-fum a week afterwards."

"Did ever you know me do that?"

"No, Captain Oldrey, no."

There was a minute's pause in the conversation; then,

“Curver,” said the captain, “I’ll bet you my old dress-sword-belt against your best new one that young De Grey goes to the Flounces and apologises.”

“I won’t have your bet, Captain, for I know that De Grey is a little gentleman. There isn’t much of him, but it’s good what there is.”

“Yes. And what about the new mid, Mr. Grant?”

“From what little I have seen of him, he has a high sense of honour, and a determination to do his duty. His fault may be that he is, like all Scotchmen, a trifle hot-headed.”

“And Smart? How is he?”

“A good lad, and willing, but somewhat lazy.”

“Ha! look, yonder goes the dingey from the hulk. And sure enough, Williams, or Old Benbow as they call him, is in it, and De Grey as well. Now, where would your new sword-belt have been?”

“I wouldn’t have risked it,” said the doctor.

Dick-Rae and Old Benbow went straight to the Flounces, and were most graciously received.

Julia—that is Miss Flounce—came into the drawing-room arrayed in a summer morning robe of some kind, that became her, so thought Benbow, better than even her ball-dress.

She extended her white hand somewhat languidly to her partner of the night before, and he seized it and gave it a genuine sailor’s squeeze. There was no humbug about this man, at all events.

“I hope, Mr. de Grey,” said Mrs. Flounce, addressing

him, "you have quite recovered the fatigue of the ball-room?"

"Fatigue!" said Old Benbow, "I never heard it called that before. Now, two hours aloft reefing frozen top-sails in half a gale of wind is a little fatiguing, I confess; but a ball—and in such company! But," he added, "myself and my young friend, the Hon. Henry de Grey here, that we call Dick-Rae for fondness" (both ladies started), "came to apologise. We changed names last night. *He is De Grey; I'm plain Jack Williams!*"

"It was all my fault, I assure you," began Dick.

"Don't believe him, ladies."

"But, Benbow——"

"I won't let you speak."

"I will speak."

"Hold your tongue, I tell you."

Julia looked from the one to the other, then burst into a merry peel of laughing, in which after a moment or two even her mother joined, and so the matter ended.

No, not quite though; and as this is not a love tale in the strict sense of the term, I may just as well tell my readers at once how the matter did end.

Well, then, after leaving the Flounces, Dick-Rae and Old Benbow repaired to an old-fashioned inn called the Fountain.

"How shall we spend the time?" said Dick.

"Game at draughts," said Benbow.

"Well," cried the former, "bring the board, waiter;

and look here, my friend: I'll play you for a new suit of clothes. We both want one.”

“Right!”

Now Dick-Rae was a very good player; but he lost this time. Sly Dick! I fear he did so on purpose. *N'importe*. Off the two went now to Dick-Rae's own outfitter, and next Sunday Old Benbow appeared on the quarter-deck of the *Castile* so nattily rigged out that second Lieutenant Buchanan—a brown-whiskered son of Caledonia—hardly knew him.

On the Monday evening Dick-Rae and he were again at the Flounces', and Benbow wore his new “togs.”

“Mr. Williams and I have come to take the girls for a drive,” said Dick-Rae.

“Dear me!” said Mrs. Flounce. “Well, Julia and Ada can go.”

It was a dog-cart they had. The honourable drove, and by his side was the charming, chatty little Ada. Dick and she were well matched.

Behind were Julia and Benbow. The latter felt in fine form, with which perhaps the fine clothes had something to do; for really, after all, being pleasantly dressed does put one on fairly good terms with himself.

Being in fine form, Benbow launched out wonderfully, and held Julia spell-bound, entranced, and all the rest of it, with the stories of his wonderful adventures by sea and land. There was no bombast about Benbow, no boasting. He spoke in plain English, conversationally, but every word told, every sentence was graphic. No

wonder that Julia gazed on his face and his bright, earnest eyes, and—thought him a hero !

They listened for the nightingale that night, but he was almost silent. They did not care. They drove back home, and all confessed the time had *flown*, there was no other name for it.

Every second night for weeks these two officers, the midshipman and the midshipmite, went and took the girls out.

Said the midshipman to the midshipmite one day, “ Dick-Rae, I wish we were at sea.”

“ Why, my worthy Old Benbow.”

“ Because I love Julia.”

“ Go and tell her then.”

“ What, straight out ? ”

“ Yes ; that’s sailor fashion, I believe.”

“ I will then, but——”

“ Bother the ‘ but.’ Come on shore with me to-night.”

They went.

They drove.

Benbow conquered ! Plain Jack Williams was victorious ! Oh ! what would Julia’s match-making mamma not have done if she had known in time how matters were to end.

But she did not, for Julia had taken the tiller in her own hand, and when it was all settled that in some future day Benbow should lead her to the altar, then she asked her mother’s consent.

Her mother mourned.

“But,” she said to herself, “they’ve got to wait a few years till the *Castile* returns from her commission; anything might happen in a few years to sailors on the sea.

* * * * *

Poor Dem Rutherford had been left behind in Glengair, and sadly he missed his friend and companion. Poodah did all he could to comfort him, and so did Miss McBride and even old Tibbie; while Granite and Fomart, in their own rough, wild way, tried hard to make him forget.

But all in vain!

Willie Grant wrote to him long delightful letters. These, however, had an effect quite the reverse of comforting; they excited the boy. He, too, he argued with himself, must have adventures; he must see the world or die.

He was a strange boy, this Anglo-Indian; he was quite as fond of adventure, in his own way, as Willie was; only he lacked the steadiness and the patriotism of his friend. He—Dem—did not care particularly about England or Scotland either, he had been reared in India, among tinsel, glitter, and show. He hardly remembered his mother, and had known far too little of his father; so that had he consulted his own wishes, he would as soon now draw a sword for France as for Britannia. He would fain—so he thought—be a free lance.

But there was no one now to get him an appointment as a midshipman in any service.

“Well,” he said to himself one autumn day, some time after the fleet to which Willie Grant was attached had sailed, “I’ll do what Willie meant doing at first; I’ll go and be a sailor in the merchant service, if I can’t enter the Royal Navy like a gentleman.”

He went and told Poodah of his determination.

Poodah was inconsolable.

Poodah preached and prayed.

But all in vain!

“Wait here in this place, Poodah, I command you,” he said. “My uncle will come here, and I will not be long away. Wait.”

One morning Miss McBride missed the boy.

He was gone!

* * * * *

The fleet to which the *Castile* was attached sailed away in July for northern seas.

Now, my bold boy-readers, some politicians since then have been bold enough to say that the expedition I shall now briefly notice was not justifiable. I maintain it was, and that the whole affair was one of the smartest I have ever read of in ancient or modern warfare. It quite cut the ground from under the feet of Napoleon Bonaparte, and prevented him from carrying destruction to our fatherland.

Here is how we stood before this: France had made an alliance with Russia; old sores were forgotten, and the two nations became friends, in a business way, and not for

love. The business part of this soldered friendship lay in sweeping the British fleet off the seas and landing an immense army about Edinburgh perhaps. They would have laid that city in ashes,—if possible,—then swept onwards with fire and sword, bringing sack and sorrow to every city in our noble empire, till London was reached and razed to the earth. To do this they needed the mighty Danish fleet that then lay off Copenhagen. Had they obtained it, the invasion would have been a certainty.

The Danish fleet was the bone that lay in front of the British Lion.

The French Eagle and the Russian Bear, said,—

“Let us seize the bone and therewith batter the silly old Lion’s brains out. He is sound asleep.”

But was the Lion asleep? If so he speedily awoke, and forty of our navy ships, including gunboats, frigates and line-of-battle vessels, under bold Admiral Gambier, with twenty-seven thousand troops, were despatched with all speed to Copenhagen, and at once Lord Cathcart and his merry men landed and invested the Danish capital.

I do not wonder at the Danes being astonished at this sharp practice.

Only, before a shot was fired, Admiral Gambier commenced negotiations with the Danish Government; but these fell through. Perhaps the Danes did not think the British were in earnest, because the two nations were not at war. Not openly so, but Denmark meant to play us

what Paddy Flint of the *Castile* called "a nasty dhurty thrick, sure!" and we were perfectly justified in "trumping that trick."

We will see in the next chapter how that was done.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTAINING A LITTLE FUN AND A LITTLE FIGHTING.

“AGAIN! again! again!
And the havoc did not slack,
Till a feeble cheer the Dane,
To our cheering sent us back;—
Their shots along the deep slowly boom;—
Then ceased—and all is wail,
As they strike the shattered sail,
Or, in conflagration pale,
Light the gloom.”

—*Campbell.*



THE *Castile* frigate joined the other ships of the fleet in Yarmouth Roads, and in company therewith sailed away to the north, preceded by some and followed by others.

The whole fleet had been got ready with the utmost expedition. Indeed, there was no time to lose, for the season was already far advanced, and there was everything ahead of them to contend against in these treacherous seas. Fogs, for instance, are common in the German Ocean in August, so are calms; gales of wind may be

expected in August, and early in the year ice appears at the gates of the Baltic.

But when did ever British sailors fear a foe, whether that foe was the elements or the combined fleets of half a dozen nations? If we but fight as bravely in the next naval war as our fellows fought in these stirring times, and if we have the wherewithal to fight with, ships and guns, there is little doubt about our retaining our old supremacy on the ocean, and of England still continuing to rule the waves.

Willie Grant was attached to Old Benbow's watch just for a time, to bring him into the ways of the service. And little Josh, much to his delight, became Willie's servant, one of the marines, who "looked after and did for" Mr. Smart, kindly showing the boy how to perform his duties, and even lashing up his master's hammock for him.

Josh thought himself of no small importance; and no wonder, for his duties were multifarious. Here they are in detail:—

1. To assist the cook's mate, and empty the ashes.

(N.B.—He was told to throw them to windward the first day; they came all back in his face. He had the decks to sweep, and got blown-up and laughed at so he never went to windward with them again.)

3. To feed the fowls and pigeons. He did so most carefully, and the pet of the ship, an old game cock who had been round the world, took quite a

fatherly interest in Josh, and never attempted to spur him.

3. To feed and keep clean the big Newfoundland dog, and the long-haired Skye terrier, and to keep the latter from fighting with Nelson the cock.
4. To assist the loblolly boy in making plasters and poultices.
5. To help to serve the grog out, and make himself generally useful.

That was all. But having so many masters, of course Josh had his difficulties ; but he acted with such tact and determination, that he surmounted them one by one ; and before the *Castile* was a month out, the boy was not only friendly with all hands, but a favourite with the officers and the pet of the middies' mess.

The old cock and the terrier *would* fight. In fact, Nelson used to consider himself king of the fo'c's'le, whenever he clapped his wings and crew. He never got the crow quite out of his throat, though, before Jack—the Skye—was at him. Jack always tried to seize Nelson by the leg or wing, but was never successful, for the cock would leap nimbly from the deck and hit hard and straight, upon which Jack would wheel just as nimbly, and receive the blow on his rump instead of on his head. Jack's long-haired rump was his shield and buckler.

Orion, the great jet-black, straight-coated Newfoundland, used to lie and look on at these strange battles.

Now, Orion was Jack's friend, and used to permit him to sleep at night between his paws ; but one day the

terrier, by what he doubtless deemed a lucky chance, got Nelson by the neck. The cock roared out. I dare say Orion thought this unfair, or that if Nelson was slain the fun would be all over. Anyhow, he sprang to the rescue, seized Jack by the back, jumped up on the bulwark, and dropped him overboard. He seemed to repent of what he had done immediately, and went yelping and jumping aft, like a mad thing, and finally sprang overboard from the stern post. The ship was hove to, and a boat lowered and both dogs picked up. After this Josh never allowed Jack and the cock to get "in tow."

Josh McGregor, "Captain Josh," as he was called—for was he not captain of the lee-scuppers?—had a difference of opinion with the loblolly boy. Well, they did as boys did do in those days, and I dare say would do now, they threw off their jackets and had it out in the sick-bay. Each got a black eye, but they respected each other and were friends ever afterwards.

But Josh's greatest difficulty was with the cook's mate. He was harsh and quick-tempered, and indulged in grog whenever he had a chance. One day he knocked poor little Josh down with an iron ladle. Josh determined to retaliate. He quietly put the poker—a fine-pointed one—in the fire, and it soon got red. The sentry saw the manœuvre, but said nothing; for he knew the cook's mate's character, and knew Josh too. Presently the man was bending down over a small tub, putting potatoes in a net, with his back to the fire.

"A glorious chance!" thought Josh. Out came the

flaming poker. "One—two—three," cried Josh! and stabbed the matie in the rear, burning through his trousers and the skin and flesh within them.

The slogan of the Highlander rushing into battle is something to hear and remember, so is the yell of the Somali savage or the whoop of the Apache Indian, but the shriek the cook's mate gave when little Josh so unceremoniously branded him, was a compound of all three, it was slogan—whoop—and yell. He dropped the potato net and went shrieking off to the sick-bay, while dogs barked and the cock crew, the whole hullabaloo being so great that the first lieutenant sent forward to ask if the ship was on fire.

When Dr. Curver investigated the story, he cautioned Josh not again to take the law into his own hands; but while relating the incident to his messmates aft, amidst a good deal of laughing, he said,—

"After all, you know, it was justice not revenge."

Josh had to dress that wound every day, and probably it was the tenderness with which he did so that "saved his bacon," as the cook's-mate phrased it, for he had meant to half-kill Josh, but forgave him instead.

* * * * *

The affair of Copenhagen and the Danish fleet, from first to last represented on a small scale a whole campaign, including fighting both by sea and land, and any amount of adventures.

At the entrance to Gottenburg, four 74's and a fleet

of frigates and brigs were despatched to the Great Belt, to prevent Danish troops being sent from Holstein, where the main body of their army lay, to Zealand. The admiral with the rest of the fleet went on to Elsinore, and anchored. This was on the 3rd of August. Here, by degrees, other ships joined, and transports bearing troops, till by the 12th we had the respectable number of five-and-twenty sail of the line, with forty and two frigates and other vessels; so that we numbered in all nearly seventy ships of war, and well-nigh four hundred transports.

The Danes were not idle, and though the king—deeming, I dare say, Copenhagen somewhat hot for comfort—left for Jutland, the defence of the city was placed in good hands, and preparations to fight commenced at once.

There was an army of 12,000 in Copenhagen, but the greatest pity must be extended to the inhabitants; it was no fault of the British, but why were they not sent away ere the terrible bombardment commenced?

The harbour runs up through the town, but was splendidly defended. About a mile to the nor'-nor'-east of the mouth was the great pile-battery of Frakonnán, with sixty-eight big guns and monster mortars; another pile-battery in front of the citadel, half as big; the citadel itself very strongly fortified and gunned. In front of the harbour, and near the first battery, the ship *Mars*, of sixty-four guns, four prames or flat-bottomed boats of twenty guns each, and about thirty gunboats well armed.

There were in the harbour sixteen sail of the line and

twenty frigates. So that on the whole the Danes were capable of an excellent defence, and, to give them their due, they made the best of it.

Who fired the first shot? The answer is: the Danes did actually fire the first shot aimed to kill. And here is how it happened. One of their frigates, the *Frederickscoarn*, that lay at Elsinore when we arrived there, tried to slip away on the night of the 12th, and started for Norway, where, by the way, two of the Danish sail of the line were lying. But next day Admiral Gambier sent two ships in pursuit, the *Defence* and the *Comus*, to capture the frigate in a friendly way, as it were.

Well, the *Comus* was the best sailer, and overhauling the Dane on the 14th, about midnight, her captain, whose name was Heywood, politely requested the captain of the Dane to hand over his ship.

Now, the *Frederickscoarn* was far larger than the *Comus*, so the reply of her captain—and I do not blame the man—was that he would see Heywood and all his crew at Hong-Kong first. Then Heywood fired a musket across the Dane's hawse; and that began the fun, for the Dane retaliated, firing point-blank from her stern-guns at the plucky *Comus*.

For three-quarters of an hour both ships now went at it pell-mell and *minus* mercy; then an event happened which, though unlooked-for, quite suited the *Comus*. The Dane was disabled as to her rigging, and missing stays during one of her evolutions, came rasping alongside the Britisher.

“Hurrah!” shouted Lieutenants Watts and Knight, both in one breath. “Follow your leader, lads!”

Next minute, followed by a portion of the crew, they had boarded the big *Frederickscoarn*, and most gallantly, sword in hand, took her by storm.

About half-way betwixt Elsinore and Copenhagen lies in a bay the village of Wedbeck, and here a portion of the troops were landed, and the fleet went on to Copenhagen itself, where the admiral made known his intentions.

To show their independence, the Danes seized and burned an English merchant ship, and fired on our pickets with round shot and grape from their gunboats. These were forced to retreat however.

Fighting now became general until the 23rd, the enemy doing all in their power to prevent us from constructing mortar batteries on shore.

The fight on the 23rd, between the Danish flotilla and ours, was almost a drawn battle, both sides having suffered rather severely.

Skirmishing went on almost every day, up to the 1st of Setember. Zealand was surrounded entirely by a portion of our fleet, and it becoming known that the French, who occupied Stralsund, would attempt to relieve it, that port was also blockaded by Commodore Keats.

On the whole the British had all their work cut out, and were very busy indeed.

Willie Grant received his baptism of fire, for several men were wounded and one killed almost close to where

he stood. Josh was as cool as a frosted cucumber, and seemed to think no more of the battle and continued fighting than if it had been a snowball engagement in Glengair. The game cock crew defiance at every shot; the Skye terrier went wandering and wondering about, but the great Newfoundland went down below and hid in a locker.

The Danish major-general, whose name was Peiman, was now called upon to surrender, in much the same high-handed, haughty way that castles were summoned in the days of chivalry, and returned much the same answer that knights of old used to give.

So on the 2nd of September, the batteries being all completed, the dreadful bombardment commenced, and by night and by day continued almost unremittingly till the evening of the 5th. Probably it was on the 4th that the firing was at its fiercest and the mischief done the most. Then the steeple of the great church fell and spread the flames in every direction, the Danish firemen were slain and their engines destroyed, and the timber yard was set in a blaze by red-hot shot. Fancy, if you can, reader, what horror and misery all this entailed on the unfortunate inhabitants, through no fault of theirs! The whole city in a blaze, the smoke and flames rolling far to leeward, the constant roar of guns, the shrieks and cries of the wounded and groans of the dying! No wonder that the Danish Government begged at last for an armistice, and that though it was not granted, yet in very mercy Gambier stopped the firing.

War is glorious! Yes, but war is very terrible! It goes against my grain to describe such scenes as occurred at the bombardment and burning of the Danish capital. Let me cease to write of it then, merely adding that this bold undertaking and siege was perfectly successful, and that the great fleet of Denmark, that was intended to aid in landing a foreign foe on our eastern shores, was partly destroyed and partly requisitioned, and that nearly one hundred transports were required to bear the "loot," in the shape of naval stores, to the shores of "merrie" England.

We cannot help sighing when we think that about two thousand innocent men, women, and children fell victims to the bombardment; but even this sacrifice is but a flea-bite compared to the terrible slaughter, the sacking and rapine that would have taken place in our peaceful towns and villages, had the craft of the French succeeded in letting loose among us all the savagery of a foreign foe.

May the day be far distant that witnesses so awful a calamity to the happy homes of England!

CHAPTER V.

“ I WILL GIVE MY SWORD TO FRANCE ! ”

“ I SIMPLY wait for your command.

Is it peace or is it war ?

Shall we quarrel, or shake hands, sir ?

Which, good Signor, are you for ? ”

—*Dibdin.*



ONE bright, beautiful day, some weeks before the fall of Copenhagen, several languid-looking young gentlemen stood by the window of an admiralty office that looked over the Thames. The river was just a trifle less dark and muddy than it is now, and a trifle less crowded. But it flowed along quite as quietly and quite as sullenly, and probably held concealed beneath its murky bosom almost as many dreadful secrets as it does to-day and will a hundred years hence.

But the sun was shining gaily, there were white and fleecy clouds in the blue sky, and even the twittering sparrows looked more happy in consequence.

The young gentlemen were clerks. I dare say they had something to do at their desks, but I am perfectly

sure they were not doing it. One was chewing the feather end of his quill, another was picking his teeth with the point of his pen, and a third paring his nails.

“What a marvellous fine day!” said one; “Fred, wouldn’t I like to be in the country?”

“Yes, out shooting, eh?”

“Or sailing in a boat off Margate.”

“Or bathing on the sandy beach.”

“Or walking with a lovely girl, and whispering soft nothings in her indulgent ear.”

They did not hear the knock at the door, and turned round just in time to see one of the porters advancing towards them accompanied by a bright-looking boy, with dark eyes, and fairly well dressed.

“I beg your pardon,” said the porter, touching his hair, “but this young gent says as how he wants to see one of the lords-commissioners.

The man smiled.

The clerks burst out laughing.

“Well, little boy,” exclaimed one, “you’ve got a cheek. Do you come from Wolffe the tailor?”

Dem, for it was he, got red with anger. He felt shy when he first came in; all diffidence fled at once on being so rudely addressed.

“Sir,” he replied, “I suppose you are clerks, but you are not gentlemen. My father, the general, had a hundred such as you in his office in India, and I’ve seen them flogged round the yard with a bamboo cane.”

“Ha! ha! he!” and “Ho! ho! ho!” roared the

clerks, who were determined not to be cowed; but one asked at length,—

"Who is your father?"

"General Rutherford."

A list was produced and speedily referred to; then the boy got a little more civility, and as one of the lords really was in, his request to see him was grumblingly taken, and in a few minutes Dem was ushered through double and baize-covered doors into a large, silent room, where at a broad table sat writing a pleasant-faced, white-haired old man.

He received Dem kindly enough, and listened to his story; he even said that he had heard of his father, but laughed outright when Dem told him boldly that he had come to place his sword and his services at the disposal of the Lords-Commissioners of the Admiralty.

"My dear boy," he said at last, "you have no one to nominate you; so take my advice, go home and go to school."

Dem started up.

"I have no home!" he cried, with tears in his eyes, "no home but the wide world. You refuse my offer. You laugh at me, and your low clerks insult me. I had thought I would serve you as a gentleman, or go before the mast. Now, I'll do neither. I hate you all. I'll go to France."

The old man smiled, for the life of him he could not help it.

Dem turned, stamped on the floor, and, "I will give

my sword to France!" he said majestically, then strode out and away along the corridors and down the broad staircase. The porter who had shown him up touched his hat to the general's son. He pressed a rupee into the man's non-reluctant hand, and walked on,—on across the big yard and out at the gates. Then he was swallowed up in the crowd, lost from our gaze in the great world of London.

* * * * *

The *Castile*, as I call her, had been in the thick of the fight from the very first hour action had commenced. The Danes, it must be admitted, fought well and nobly, and only succumbed at last to strength and superior tact. The mortars used by the enemy were of the largest sort, and many of the guns were arms of great precision and force, while the gunners themselves succeeded in making good practice.

To say that the *Castile* was riddled would be somewhat wide of the truth, but she received many shot holes, and some in the water line, and she had several men wounded; so that on the voyage home, not only had the doctors plenty to do, but the men as well. There was more pumping to be done in every watch than had ever been performed in a floating frigate before to my knowledge. The simple plugging of a shot hole does not always serve to keep the water out. This would do if a cannon ball passed clean and sweet through the timber as a rifle bullet would through a bar of soap; but it does

not, but shivers the wood-work and timbers around it as often as not.

However, the frigate arrived safe and sound at the Downs, and was sent from there round to Portsmouth to be seen to.

A gale of wind was encountered off Dungeness which almost put an end to the *Castile* altogether. It was not a lee shore, however; so after scudding for four-and-twenty hours under all but bare poles, they woreed ship, and in due time got into harbour, sadly battered as to bulwarks and wholly boatless, with ragged sails and rigging, and one splintered stick standing up where a foremast should have been.

The inhabitants of Portsmouth received the heroes with open arms. They were madly merry in their welcome. Ah! England dearly loves her sailor lads, Britannia doats upon Jack.

First came Saturday night. It was not what you might call Saturday night at sea, but it was kept very like it, for the *Castile* having come in on Friday night, and as no leave was to be given for some days, Jack's shore friends had been allowed to come off next forenoon, so Jack was happy. Next came a quiet and blessed Sunday, and soon after pay-day.

How in all the world did those bumboat people and Jews and slop-merchants find out that Wednesday was pay-day, I wonder? Well, news leaks out of a ship just as water leaks in. So there they were, in hundreds, surrounding the poor *Castile*, every one wanting to sell

Jack or the junior officers something. Of course some good ladies had come for the gentlemen's washing, and to supply them with fresh provisions and vegetables, fruit, and what not.

Now towards afternoon, on this particular day, the *Castile* being then in charge of Mr. Buchanan, the second lieutenant, the only officer above the gunroom on board, and he being in his cabin discussing a bottle of champagne with a shore friend, the decks and the down-below of this fine frigate presented a very motley appearance indeed.

To repel boarders, the gunroom fellows had spent no end of money in stale eggs, they had also rigged the fire hose; but they got tired of this, for the shore people clambered in through the ports and over the bows as well.

Things were getting tiresome. It was very jolly for Jack, for Jack was merry and singing, dancing and shouting and spending his money, or giving it away as cheerfully as if he had not risked his brave life to win it.

"I say," said the Hon. de Grey, addressing Willie, for the two boys had become very friendly. "I say, Grant, I've got an idea."

"You never want one," said Willie, smiling.

"Now, I'm going to clear this ship in ten minutes of that rubbishy crew of shore folks."

"Bravo!"

Off went Dick-Rae to see Mr. Buchanan. He said something to him in a low voice, at which this officer

laughed and stammered, for he had a sad defect in his speech.

"Did-did-do as you la-la-like then, but be ca-ca-canny."

I may add that Buchanan was a Scot.

"I'll be canny," said this mischievous midddy, and away he went.

He called the bo's'n on the quarter-deck, the master-at-arms, long Tom Thumb, the other officers of the gunroom, and a few more petty and warrant officers.

It was a kind of a council of war, though from the laughing and joking that resounded therefrom a bystander would hardly have thought so. In a few minutes after the bo's'n's pipe re-echoed fore and aft.

Eee-pee-peepee-peepee-peepec-pee-ee! went the pipe.

"Hands to the pumps!"

"Marines on deck!"

The pumps were speedily started and the water went washing through the spouts, falling unceremoniously into the boats beneath. The marines had their orders given them in a whisper, and were stationed round bulwarks and bows and at the companions, with fixed bayonets.

For so small an officer, young Dick-Rae's voice was a marvel. It sounded like thunder, and sent a thrill of fear through every heart on the lower deck, when he stood on the last steps of the ladder and shouted,—

"Now then, listen; all the women folks are to get into the boats at once and without confusion, then the shore men. The marines have strict orders to shoot or bayonet

any *man* who attempts to leave the ship till the women are safe. And—*she is sinking!*”

A live hissing shell alighting in the midst of a crowd during a bombardment, or the cry of “Fire!” in a crowded church never created greater confusion than did the words of this midshipmite. First there was a sound, half a shriek, and half a mournful, whining moan, and next a rush for the ladders.

High over the din once more rose Dick-Rae’s voice.

“Now, the women first, and no crowding!”

Among the crew it was pretty well known that there was no danger as far as sinking went. The only danger rose from the over-crowding to the gangways. This the young officers and the men did their best to prevent, but the shoremen, especially the Jewish class, would press forward among the women folks.

And they caught it in consequence, for Jack had many an old score to pay off, and many a grudge against some of those rascals who used to rob the sailor lad of his hardy earned wages. So now they were pulled back most unceremoniously, and if they dared to advance again, then down they went, some with loosened teeth and some with crimsoned noses.

Lieutenant Buchanan and his friend stood by the binacle and enjoyed the fun to the utmost.

But it must be recorded that the whole affair was conducted in a most careful way, as far as the junior officers were concerned. The women were passed down the broad starboard ladder two and two, and there were

sailors waiting at the foot to receive them. As soon as one boat was filled, off it was shoved and another took its place ; and so on until every woman was afloat. Then the men were allowed to go down, many carried their baskets and bundles and boxes, and everything left below was brought up and most unceremoniously handed over the side or thrown into any boat.

When the last man had got in and off, and the last bundle was thrown over, the scene in those boats which, though at some distance, hovered around the *Castile* was one that never could be forgotten.

There is a story told of a party that once took place in an out-lying county of the States, to which not only did mothers come from a long distance, but brought their babies. The story describes how, when these blessed little infants were all placed in beds or on the floor in one room, and just as the dancing and fun had waxed fast and furious, some “wanton wags,” as Burns would call them, went and changed the children’s dresses, one with the other. In the grey light of early dawn, each lady took the baby that was like hers, going more by dress than by physiognomy ; the discovery, when it did come—after their mammas had got home—must have been appalling. I can fancy I hear the wail of the poor mothers just then.

“Where is my Jeannie, this is a boy?” or, “Where is my Johnnie, this is a thing of a girl?” “My daughter! O my daughter!”

But the principal shout that arose from those strangely

mixed crews and shore boats was, not "My daughter! O my daughter!" but "My basket! O my basket!" or "My bundle! O my bundle!"

Not a soul was in his own or her own boat apparently. The women were crying about their eggs and sugar and cabbages, the Jews were wringing their hands and shrieking,—

"I vas ruined! I vas ruined!"

"Vat ish life to me now? I ish ruined for evermore! I ish ruined! I ish ruined!"

But the means at my disposal in the shape of pens, ink, paper, and descriptive power are quite inadequate to do justice to the scene of excitement and confusion, so I shall take the playwright's plan of treatment under similar difficulties, and drop the curtain.

Pumping was now suspended for a time on board the *Castile*. Indeed, no one could do anything for laughing, either officers or men.

Lieutenant Buchanan, who was brighter in the eye after the champagne, and redder in the face, than becomes an officer on duty,—shook little Dick-Rae by the hand, and stammered:

"Mr. de Grey, you're a r-r-real bri-bri-brick of a chap. So you are, and I hope you'll la-la-live to be an admiral."

Long Tom was now observed to be very busy, and presently he advanced to the fore part of the quarter, touched his hat to Mr. Buchanan, and said, "They want to know at the port admiral's office what is amiss?"

“Tell them,” was the reply, “we’ve been cak-cak-clearing the ship of the bub-bub-bumboat crew.”

Long Tom Thumb looked puzzled.

“I hardly know,” he said, scratching a thoughtful poll, “how to make that precisely.”

“Well,” said the lieutenant, “just d-d-d-do as you please.”

So away aft went Tom, and the signal he made read as follows :

“Boarded by the enemy in force from the shore. All hands cleared ship. All’s well.”

CHAPTER VI.

“A MAN’S A MAN FOR A’ THAT.”

“DEAR land of my birth, of my friends, of my love,
Shall I never again climb thy mountains,
Nor wander at eve through the lone leafy grove
To list to the dash of thy fountains ?”

—*Fraser.*

“BEHOLD the dinner in array,
A column it appears ;
While pyramids of whips display
A corps of grenadiers ?”

—*Dibdin.*



WERE it not my humble endeavour to describe—as near to the truth as possible—life in navy ships in the old days, the very word “grog” would never appear on my pages. Things have changed very much for the better in the service since then, and an officer now who over-indulged in wine, were he the highest in the land or on the sea, would soon find himself placed on permanent half-play, if indeed his name were permitted to remain on the list at all.

Touching bold Lieutenant Buchanan then, being a countryman of my own, I must not be too hard on him; but in justice to my narrative, I am compelled to state that while his motto was not “*Bibo, semper bibo,*” he seemed at times really to have the *cacoethes bibendi*.

But—I am glad to add—only when off duty, and never in a sly or sottish manner. He was a worthy fellow nevertheless, though, belonging as he did to a nation from which feudalism had not yet quite departed, he was apt to flatter and be fond of people high in rank—lords and such. Scotland is different now.

Buchanan had a history. He had left home, after thrashing his schoolmaster, with a liberal education, especially in the matter of Latin and Greek, and five bawbees * in his trouser pocket, entered the service before the mast, and fought his way on to the quarter-deck.

He had a bold, bright face, a brawny arm, and a leg that measured sixteen inches round the calf. He had been in many a battle, and could show cutlass scars and bullet marks enough to prove him a hero. Besides, he had once led a forlorn hope, and was just about being buried with the dead next day. Two of his brother officers stood by his side, looking down on him for a time in mournful silence.

“As brave a fellow as ever swung a sword,” said one at length.

* Five bawbees = twopence-halfpenny.

“‘*Sic transit gloria mundi,*’” said the other. “Men, proceed with the work and bury this poor officer.”

“So,” he continued, “Buchanan led a sailor’s life, but you see he must fill a soldier’s grave. Heigho!”

The men began to move the body, when brave Buchanan opened his eyes and his lips were seen to move.

“A soldier’s ga-ga-grave be shot!” he stammered; “you might let a fellow be dead first.”

Both the officers had turned their backs and gone sadly away before Buchanan spoke. But Paddy Flint, who was in command of the funeral party, and who had staggered back as if stunned when the supposed-to-be-dead officer spoke, ran after them,—

“I beg your pardon, gentlemen,” he said, “but shure, I don’t think the lieutenant is dead at all.”

“What! What makes you think so, Flint?”

“Becos sorr he asked for a dhrop o’ the crature. Now, sir, if he’d been dead entirely, d’ye think——”

Both officers listened no more to Paddy’s logic, but hurried off back to their messmate. He was tenderly carried on board, and in six weeks time was doing his duty.

* * * * *

As the *Castile* had now to undergo a good deal of repair about her hull, she was listed considerably to port, which made it somewhat uncomfortable for those living on board. The junior officers, therefore, were greatly

pleased to be allowed to once more take up their quarters in the hulk.

Buchanan and Dr. Curver were invited to dinner there one evening. Both men were very great favourites. As we have already seen, Curver was exceedingly fond of boys, whether officers or not, which only proves he was a boy himself at heart.

“Now,” said young Dick-Rae at breakfast one morning a week before the party, “I move that we do this dinner in proper style. What do *you* say, Hunt, or you, Dance?”

“Most certainly,” said both.

“Decidedly, I should say,” from Smart.

“You’re only a youngster!”

“And what are you Dick-Rae, pray?”

“A man!”

“Ha! ha! ha!”

“Shut up, Smart,” said Hunt, “or I’ll box your ears. Now, I think you’d better be master of the ceremonies yourself, Mr. De Grey.”

“Right! I will; and my friend, Willie Grant, shall be my coadjutor. We will want a fund though, a list will be put on the table to-day, and every one can give according to his means. Is that fair?”

“Yes, very fair.”

“Is that motion seconded?”

“I second it,” cried Willie.

“Any one got anything to say against it. One—two—three—speak now, or for ever after hold thy

peace. Not a dissentient voice. Bravo! Carried unanimously."

After breakfast, Willie and Dick-Rae went ashore, having no watch to keep till evening.

"I think," said the latter, "I managed that nicely. You see, there isn't a fellow in our mess has such an allowance of pocket-money as I have, but I wouldn't hurt their feelings by putting down more than they; only I'm not limited, you know, so my name shall be last on the list. Don't you tell, *mon ami* Grant; I'm going to put 10*s.* in the shillings column, and I can afterwards put what I like in the pounds column. D'ye see, little boy?"

Willie Grant laughed, and then lapsed into thoughtfulness. He was thinking what a fine thing it is to have money. He gave a bit of a sigh.

"I know what you're musing about, Will, my lad."

"Well?"

"You're thinking it is nice to be rich. Now, I'm only a little chap, but I know a good deal; and I tell you, Willie Grant, that nice and all as it is to have money given you, it is ten times nicer to make it with your own brains and hands. That's my opinion, Willie Grant."

"You ought to have been a parson, Dick-Rae."

"A parson? No, I'm not good enough, and far too fond of fun."

"There isn't much harm with your fun though."

"Oh, isn't there! You haven't seen the half of it yet."

The gunroom dinner-party came round, and the

“spread,” as Smart called it, was “elegant.” Dick-Rae had the whole interior of the mess berth lined with the flags of all nations; and very pretty it looked. Here and there all round were bunches of glittering bayonets, with candles, nicely arranged. The table-cloth and all thereon was perfection. The dinner was good, made on shore, and served by shore waiters.

There was no band on the *Castile*, or they would have borrowed it; but during and after dinner there was sweet, soft music discoursed by stringed instruments hired on shore, with one or two clarionets and a flute.

So the whole affair passed off most delightfully. Buchanan was in the third heaven, and Dr. Curver kept every one laughing with his quiet, humorous remarks and his quaint and funny anecdotes. The doctor possessed that rarest of gifts in a good conversationalist, the power to draw out others, and without their knowing it positively suggest witticisms; so that even Smart, who, albeit his name, was admitted by all the mess to be the dullest in it, found himself for once a wit.

Plain Jack Williams, *alias* Old Benbow, was in fine form that night. Fact is he had seen Julia in the forenoon; so he not only told droll yarns, but even volunteered a song.

After dinner came a dance. Then away went the guests, and by-and-by all who had no watches to keep were snugly asleep in their hammocks.

About a week after this, Buchanan communicated to Dick-Rae and Willie the fact that he had been invited to the house of a countryman to spend the evening, and wanted to take them. He would drive them over with his own trap.

Yes; Buchanan kept a horse when in harbour, or as he called it, "a cow."

His "cow's" name was Jean, and when this Scotch lieutenant was at sea, Jean lived at his friend's farm.

Willie and Dick-Rae were delighted; so when the night came round, Jean was put into the dog-cart, and off they rattled. It was a lonesome sort of a drive, for the country round Portsmouth was not then peopled as it is now.

However, they got to the farm safe and sound at last, and received a true Highland welcome. There were other Scotchmen there—strange how they always do meet, and how they ferret each other out, even in foreign lands!—so that what with music, songs, supper and dancing, it turned out to be what might be called, "A nicht wi' Burns."

And long though the nights were now—it was the dreary month of November,—these hardy northerners kept up the fun till far into the morning. Then a second supper, or rather breakfast, appeared on the table, at which both Dick-Rae and Willie rejoiced, their eyes having nearly given up duty. But the tea revived them, and they felt like giants refreshed.

Well, our midshipmen had not indulged in the wine of Caledonia, but Buchanau had.

“ Shall we go and get the horse in now ? ” said Dick-Rae to him at last.

“ No,” was the reply ; “ nobody puts a hand on my Jean’s harness but her master.”

It may be observed that the worthy lieutenant got clear of this sentence without stammering. This was a strange thing, but true, namely, that after a few glasses of wine the nervous affection of speech quite left him.

“ My Jean, my Jean, my bonnie Jean ! ” he began to sing.

“ Well,” said Dick-Rae boldly, “ it’s time to be off.”

“ Right you are, my boys. Let us say farewell.”

Farewells—as far as the middies were concerned—were soon concluded. But Buchanan took longer time to them ; parting seemed such sweet sorrow.

Dick-Ray pinched Willie’s arm, and they both slipped away out.

“ That tea has made me as lively as a cricket-bat, Willie Grant. Let’s have some fun.”

“ What will we do ? ”

“ Let me think. Oh ! yes, I have it. Follow me.”

Now Buchanan had carefully stabled his steed—bonnie Jean—in an out-house all by herself, and bedded her well. Near this place was the byre, or cow-house, and into this the lads now went, and led forth a hummel-cooie,* exactly Jean’s size and colour, and this animal

* Hummel-cooie = hornless cow.

was duly installed in the mare's place, while she was tied up in the byre.

It was barely daylight when Buchanan marched into the stable and proceeded to business, while the artful middies stood in the doorway, and behind them Buchanan's friends, who had now been let into the secret.

"Wae, my lassie! Wae, my bonnie Jean!" said Buchanan.

Thinking perhaps he had something to give her, the cow licked his hand.

This display of what the lieutenant took for his pony's love for him, so affected Buchanan that he must needs come to the door, and with tears in his eyes tell his friends about it.

Then he got the bridle and put it over the cow's head, and tried to force the bit into her slobbery mouth. This the cow resented of course.

"I never saw you behave like this before, Jeanie," said Buchanan. "Well, my lass," he added, "I'll try you with the saddle."

On went the saddle.

That was easy work, but when he passed his hand along the tail, with a view to put it through the crupper, and felt her lack of long hair,—

"Oh! the ill-gettit * monkeys!" he muttered. Then, losing all control of himself and his English also, he rushed towards the door, shouting,—

* Ill-gettit = mischievous.

“My conscience! Wha shaved ma pony’s tail?”

Flesh and blood could not stand it longer, Willie and Dick-Rae and Buchanan’s Scotch friends laughed till the very rafters rang.

The lieutenant’s face at this moment was a study for a psychologist; but when Jean herself was led from one door, and the hummel-cooie, with bridle and saddle on, was led from the other, then Buchanan himself saw through the trick the boys had played him, and right merrily joined in the laugh at his own expense.

But this joke was never forgotten in the old *Castile*, and all that was required at table at any time when Buchanan was argumentative, was to quietly ask the question,—

“Who saddled the dun cow?”

“Never mind the cow,” Buchanan would often reply.

“‘A man’s a man for a’ that.’”

* * * * *

“Hurrah!” said Captain Buckram of the marines, coming into the wardroom one day, “Hurrah! Dr. Curver, have you heard the news?”

“No!”

“Well, I’ve just seen the purser, and we’re off south in a day or two.”

“Glad I am,” said Curver, “peeping through his microscope at an insect’s wing he had just mounted.

“Anything, Buckram, for a change.”

“Just what I say. Anything for a change. A little fighting will do us all good.”

This was in the end of this same year 1807.

By-and-by the purser himself came fussing in full of importance. A little funny, fat man he was, with a high notion of his own dignity and intrinsic worth, but on the whole rather a favourite in the mess.

“Curver,” he said, “have you all your medical stores on board?”

“Oh, yes,” replied the worthy doctor, quietly adjusting his focus.

“All right!” said Purser Perkins. “Steward, is it seven bells?”

“Gone seven bells some time, sir.”

“Well, you may fetch me a glass of beer.”

“Steward,” cried the doctor, “bring my cold tea.”

“How you can drink cold tea,” said Buckram, “and beer like this on the table is a puzzle to me.”

“Don’t, Buckram, don’t,” replied Curver with mock solemnity, “don’t attempt to puzzle your brains.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed Purser Perkins, “he needn’t trouble, he hasn’t got any to puzzle.”

“I owe you one for that, my worthy Perkins.”

“Don’t bother about paying then, Buckram, my boy; I know you have the will—the ability is quite another pair of shoes. And now I must hurry away to the dock-yard. I shall be frightfully busy for a day or two.”

“Oh, bother your busy-ness!” cried Dr. Curver, looking up. “Listening to you twaddling, I’ve spoiled my wing. A beautiful specimen, too, as ever was seen.”

“I’ll go,” said Perkins.

“Time, too,” said Buckram, laughing.

Next afternoon Dick-Rae and his friend went on shore together.

They were going to bid their friends the Flounces farewell.

Friends?—ah! we must not forget, Old Benbow was more than a friend to one, though Dick-Rae did not seem to have a heart at all, so thought the gentle Ada, or rather the gentle Ada’s mother. To be sure the Hon. de Grey, she thought, was but a boy, Nevertheless, boys will be men, and if she could only have seen her way even to the remotest probability of an alliance between his noble family and the family of the Flounces, she felt as if she could die happy.

As to Benbow and Julia, well, I suppose they bade each other good-bye in the usual affectionate style of British sailors and their betrothed; but I was not there to see, and if I had been I would have considered the interview sacred.

But I happen to know that there were a few foolish tears shed, and a broken ring, and also a broken six-penny piece, so I suppose it was all *en règle*.

And now the scenes of our story change to warmer climes, and adventures far more exciting than any amount of love-making.

The French had occupied Portugal,—they kept our fleet very busy in those dashing days; they had occupied Portugal, but they certainly would not have Madeira. Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood would see to

that, with his squadron of four ships of the line and as many frigates, the *Castile* being one.

So away they went, and for a time we bid adieu to the chalky cliffs of old England.

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH ENDS WITH QUITE A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE.

“THE white sail’s set, the gallant frigate tight,
Masts, spires, and strand retiring to the right,
The glorious main expanding o’er the bow,
The blue waves curl before the dashing prow.”

—Byron.



THE wind going down Channel was bitterly cold but favourable; so good way was made, and ere long the *Castile*, which by some accident or other had at night lost sight of the rest of the squadron, was ploughing her lonely way through the dark waters of Biscay’s stormy bay.

Not always stormy, however, is this much maligned bit of sea. Out of some eight or ten times that I myself have crossed it, I have been but in two gales; but one was a hurricane, a night I shall never forget should I live to be ninety.

The *Castile* on the present occasion had what sailors call rough-and-tumble weather; the wind, however, was pretty favourable, being abaft the beam a point or two,

and blowing at times hard enough—so some of the men expressed it—to tear the buttons off their jackets while reefing topsails.

But once clear of the bay, with the good ship dancing and curtseying to every wave, things got more pleasant and the weather grew sensibly warmer.

By this time it had leaked out aft where the *Castile* was bound for, though the men had not received the news. Things of this sort, however, soon get wind at sea.

“Heard we were going to the West Indies,” said the carpenter one evening in his mess.

“Hurrah! for prize-money then,” cried a messmate.

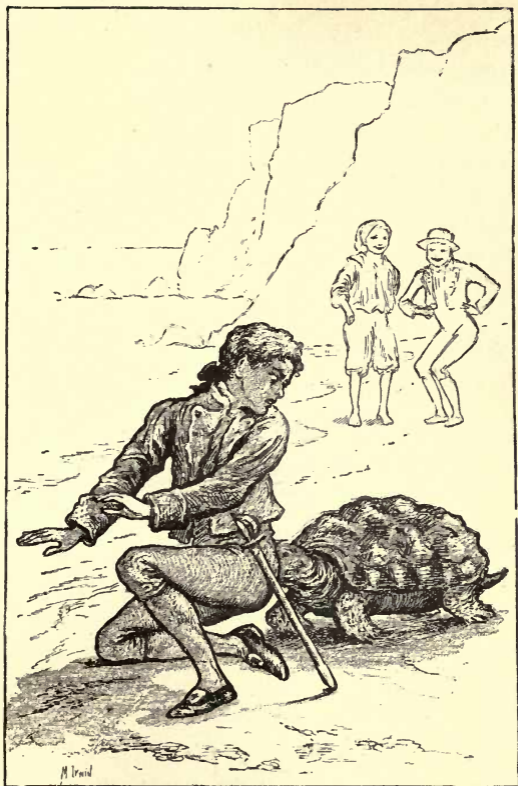
“But come, I say,” said another sailor, “this isn’t the way to the Ingies. Why, here is long Tom Thumb. Look out to grab him as he goes by.”

Long Tom was coming from forward; but long as he was, as slippery as an eel was Tom.

But the carpenter hitched his leg between Tom’s, and Tom fell forward and was caught in the arms of the A.B. who had last spoken.

“Beautifully landed! Sit you down, Tom, old man. Bring yourself to an anchor. You don’t get out o’ here till you’ve jolly well had a glass and drunk our healths, and given us a toast.”

“Well, matie,” replied Tom, “as to bringing myself to an anchor, why I haven’t a say in the matter, seeing as how you’ve pulled me right down. Well, if I’m obliged to—your wery good healths, lads, all round.”



“You’ve got the great snapping turtle of the far west on to you now and there’s no getting quit of him.”

“But the toast?”

“Oh! didn’t I give you a toast?”

“No; fill up his glass again, Fred. Now, Tom, now.”

“Well,” said Tom, looking smiling round the table,
“here’s to—

‘The wind that’s abaft, and the glasses unquaffed,
And the enemy down on our lee;
To the old folks at home, to the young ones that roam,
And the girl that’s a-thinking on me.’”

“Bravo! you’re a brick, Tom.”

“Now, Tom, tell us, lad, where we are off to? Eh? You pick up all the news aft.”

“Well,” replied Tom, “atween you and me and the binacle, boys, it’s bearing up for Madeira we are, to fight the Portugees.”

“Ah! you means fight for ’em, don’t ye, Tom?”

“Bothered if I know, mates; it’s either for or agin ’em.”

“Well, anyhow there’ll be some fun.”

“Ay, that there will.”

“And a bit o’ prize money too.”

Farther and farther south went the good frigate. Strange birds came floating and tacking around the vessel, strange fish leapt up out of the sea, and strange stars were raised from the southern horizon.

And the sea got bluer and bluer, and the sky brighter, and the sun was hot and scorching by day, so much so that even the nights were close and sultry. Active

enough our fellows had been in the cold north, but now all hands were quiet and listless, even the great Newfoundland went slouching round the decks as if there was but little life left in him, the Skye terrier forbore to bark at the game-cock's cage, and that bold bird almost forgot to crow.

Smart kept his watch, when it happened to be the middle one, in a way peculiarly his own. For the first hour, from twelve till one, his messmates could hear him rattling up and down the companion ladder, about twice in every ten minutes. He was paying visits, *sans ceremonie*, to the pantry, for the purpose of eating and drinking. Between one and two, the bells were struck; but after this, if there were any such sound to break the stillness of the night, it was more by chance than good management: and had you been on deck and anywhere near the skylight, you might have descried the figure of a young officer lying prone thereon, and heard sounds emanating from 'neath the cap that covered his face, which very much resembled the planing of wood or croaking of ditch frogs,—only it was neither. The figure was that of Smart; he was keeping his watch, and that was how he did it.

Ah! but there were more sleepers than Smart on that drowsy deck; for the men on the outlook had curled up, and there were hands lying here and there in dark corners, while even the man at the wheel bent and nodded over the binacle as he held the spokes.

It was a drowsy time.

It was a drowsy ship.

I might quote the poet Thomson's lines, with one word changed, and say,—

“ A pleasing *ship* of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,
And of gay castles in the clouds, that pass
For ever flashing round a summer sky.”

This is the poetical way of putting it, and it really does seem a pity to descend from Parnassus to the extreme practical, and to say that the drowsiness experienced by nearly all hands was easily accounted for on physiological principles, and depended more on the sudden change from the snow-cold of England's winter to the almost eternal summer that ever smiles over the blue waves that lave the shores of Madeira.

For near Madeira they soon came, and all at once, as it were, the island burst upon their view. This is true, at all events, as far as Willie Grant and Dick-Rae are concerned; for it happened to have been all-night-in with these young gentlemen just before Funchal was sighted, and on going for a turn on deck before breakfast, lo! the glorious mountains towering over them, wooded to the very top, the white town nestling beneath, the rugged rocks and forts near by, and high up in mid distance, in a kind of forest land, the mansions of the wealthier Portuguese.

But what astonished them most was the fact that there, quietly at anchor, lay the British squadron; flags flying

and sails all clewed ; the sweet, soft music of the flag-ship's band stealing o'er the rippling water, and many a native boat flitting hither and thither on the water, looking like butterflies afloat in a summer's sky.

The fun was all over, and of fighting there had been none.

The splendid audacity of the British sailor had won another bloodless victory.

The Portuguese showed a deal of wisdom in permitting us to quietly take possession of the island ; they always did show wisdom whenever number one was at stake. But in this case, why should they have shown fight ? If they had done so, spread out as it is on a kind of amphitheatre, the town would have been in flames from end to end in a few hours, and the not over-strong forts piles of smouldering ruins.

Madeira is a glorious island ! From my inmost heart I pity the English tourist who has never spent a month there, and the toiling, moiling ones who from June till May are kept at work amid the grime and din of cities, for ever trying to push their wheel of Fortune hard up hill. To these Madeira might say,—

“ Come, and without fee,
I in oblivion will your sorrows steep,
Your cares, your toils ; will steep you in a sea
Of full delight ! Oh, come, ye weary wights, to me ! ”

I have the sweetest, the dearest recollections of this lovely isle of the sea, with its grandest of scenery, its

wild mountains, its rocky ravines, its cliffs and cañons, its roaring streams, its smoking cataracts, its hills and dales and forests and flowers, and its ever-changing, encircling sea.

All in this last sentence gives food for the mind. Come with me into the hotels, with their cool halls and tree-shaded verandahs, and you will have food for the body also; the fish and curries placed before you, and the fruit, are things never to be forgotten!

And the turtle? Oh! yes, the turtle. Sometimes, when passing along by a great English hotel, I notice lying at the door an unfortunate animal of this kind, bearing on his horny shield the words—in chalk, “For dinner.” I pass by with a shudder, and my mind reverts to Madeira. That unhappy hotel turtle has been fasting for weeks; he is poor, almost diseased. Pah! You get turtles at Madeira, fat and fresh from the beautiful sea.

“You’ve been here before, Dick-Rae?” said Willie Grant, as the boat which had brought them on shore was sped up over the round, hurtling stones and made safe on the beech.

“That I have, and I’ll be your guide. There’s no end of fun to be got away aloft yonder. But let us go and get that lordly turtle that Hunt told me to buy. Ever turn a turtle?”

“No, man; there are no turtles in Scotch waters, only jelly-fish and herrings. I’ve turned a herring or two in my time.”

The two friends got a shore boat, a kind of semi-gondola, and had a long cruise round. They landed on a bit of nice beach with rocks rising up round it. Here they found a Portuguese fisherman in possession of an exceptionally large and splendid turtle. Dick-Rae bought it, and made the fellow haul it right away up as far as the rocks.

“Now,” cried the midshipmite, “stand by there, Grant. I’m going to turn this animile, this insect, on to his breast. He will scuttle away, and your duty is to intercept him, seize him by a flipper and the shell, and spin him over on his back again. He’s only a kind of a beetle, you know. Are you ready!”

“All ready.”

“Hurrah! then. There goes the beetle!”

The creature headed away for the ocean. Willie Grant went for Dick-Rae’s beetle pluckily enough, and after a terrible struggle succeeded in turning it; but in doing so he missed his footing and fell.

Then that “beetle” did what he was quite justified in doing under the circumstances; he made a grand snap, and fixed Willie by the seat of the trousers.

Fixed him, did I say? Yes, and it was a fix; and that beetle kept the hold too, and meant it. Willie struggled in vain. Dick-Rae rolled in the sand and screamed with laughing, and the Portugee joined him.

“Can’t you call your beetle off?” cried Willie.

When Dick-Rae and the fisherman had laughed till they ached all over, they went to Willie’s assistance. The

Portugee was going to speak, but the middy gave him a sly pinch on the arm.

"That beetle," said Dick-Rae looking awfully serious, "that beetle means business."

"So it seems," said Willie.

"Yes; and he'll never let go. No, never! You've got the great snapping turtle of the far west on to you now, Willie; and there's no getting quit of him."

"What's to be done?" cried Willie.

"If he does let go for half a second," continued Dick-Rae, "it will only be to snap farther in, and to get more trouser, and likewise skin."

"I tell you, Dick-Rae, I'm coming all over in a cold sweat. Pull him off, I tell you."

"My dear boy, keep cool,—it is always the best plan, in love or war. Now, as to pulling him off, I might as well attempt to whistle him off."

"What's to be done then?"

"One of three things. First, we might bundle you, beetle and all, into the boat, and take you on board; then probably in a week or so this snapping turtle might consent to let go, and you could go and keep your watch again as if nothing had happened."

"Oh, do be quick!" cried poor Willie.

"Secondly," Dick-Rae went on, with most provoking *sang froid*, "we could cut off the turtle's head; but that would not cause him to quit. You would either have to go on board breechless, *sans culotte*, or report yourself to the commander with the beetle's head hanging to you.

Thirdly, we can cut out the seat of your unmentionables, permitting the turtle—evidently a strong-minded beetle—to retain that portion of your lower garment which he now holds so pertinaciously in his bony jaws.”

“Any mortal thing!” roared Willie, “but get the brute away.”

“Right!” said Dick-Rae, and out came his knife, and he proceeded to work with a will.

In less than half a minute Willie was released. He sprang to his feet and dealt the turtle a kick, which did not at all disturb the equanimity of the beetle, but punished his own toes considerably.

“My conscience! Dick-Rae,” Willie exclaimed, “you needn’t have cut so much cloth away. How in the name of goodness can I ever get on board?”

“I must admit,” said Dick, “it will be awkward; it would be still more awkward if any ladies came round the corner.”

Willie made a rush for the boat.

“Don’t you bring your beetle, I won’t be shipmates with the brute.”

His friend stopped for a minute to speak to the Portugee, then joined him, and by-and-by they found themselves alongside the *Castile*.

“By all that’s unlucky,” said Willie, “there are ladies on the quarter-deck.”

“Yes,” said the imperturbable Dick-Rae, “so there are; you’ll have to make a run forward and a bolt for the fore hatch,”

“No, no; that would be worse and worse. Under the circumstances I dare not turn my back to the foe.”

“Well, I’ll run aft and engage the enemy near the binacle, and you walk aft, then back astern down the companion ladder.”

And that is exactly what Willie did do. He heard the man tittering and laughing behind him. Willie did not mind that. His eyes were aft, and he kept them so till, without further adventure, he slid below.

If Willie Grant thought he had seen and heard the last of that snapping turtle, he was far mistaken.

The adventure was etched in the wardroom, and caused no end of merriment. Nay, more than that, when dining one day on board the flag-ship, the president said to Willie, somewhat pointedly,—

“Are you fond of turtle, Mr. Grant?”

Willie had a sly glance round the table, and felt sure that several of the officers were biting their lips and that suppressed merriment was twinkling in their eyes.

“That all depends,” he replied thoughtfully.

The officers were dying to laugh, only too polite to do so; but the president, being a man of tact, immediately made some humorous remark on quite another subject. The table exploded then, so to speak, and the laugh went rippling round the table; but no one knew better than Willie Grant that it was the story of Dick-Rae’s beetle, and not that joke of the president’s, which caused the ebullition.

About a week after this, on taking a message to Dr.

Curver's cabin, what should he see hanging among the pictures but a nicely mounted turtle's head on a gilded slab of ebony, with a piece of white canvas in its jaws, and underneath the inscription in gold letters :

“DICK-RAE, HIS BEETLE.”

CHAPTER VIII.

FURTHER FUN AND STRANGER ADVENTURES.

“AWAY now with care and with sorrow,
And with all which may burden the mind,
He who mirth can put off till the morrow,
Loses that which he wishes to find.
The present for mirth is the hour,
The present is the time to be gay,
With haste let us take, then, the flower
Can only be gathered to-day.”

—*Dibdin.*



WHAT with boat-cruising, picnics among the mountains, and balls and parties, not only on shore but on the ships of the fleet, time passed right merrily away at Madeira, and Willie Grant thought he would like to live here for at least a year.

I do not think, however, that the military portion of the inhabitants cared very much about our possession of the island, nor any one in authority, for the matter of that; even boatmen were insolent to our officers, and civility could only be had from them by paying for it.

The policemen made themselves particularly objectionable to the men, and often made them prisoners without much cause; that is, when they could overpower them by force of numbers.

But Jack soon found a way out of the difficulty by always marching in convoys, armed with sturdy bits of oak, that more than once had been found useful in beating down the policemen's swords, and laying their owners prone in the dust.

Those bold policemen, however, never failed to take their revenge on Jack when they found him straggling.

Willie Grant, Dick-Rae, and Old Benbow were dining together one evening at the house of a wealthy merchant. After dinner, what with music, talking, and dancing, the time passed very quickly by indeed, till

“ Between the late and early,”

when, bidding their guests good-bye, they started off for the shore.

It was a bright moonlight night, and having about three-quarters of a mile to walk, what more natural than that they should enliven the journey with a song, or that the song should be,—

“ Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!
Britons never—never—NEVER
Shall be slaves!”

They were passing through a kind of square when they were most unceremoniously attacked by four policemen with drawn cutlasses.

They had hardly time to throw themselves into a state of defence before those cowardly fellows were on them.

The attack, however, was beautifully met, though each officer fought in his own way, all being armed with heavy sticks only. Willie Grant was a powerfully built young Highlander, and a capital swordsman for his years. Anyhow, he floored his linen-draped opponent in a minute, or less.

Old Benbow knocked one down—English fashion—with a blow from his fist, and then fenced with the other till a well-aimed blow from his cudgel put the foe *hors de combat*.

Dick-Rae's defence was like everything he did—funny. He ran himself right between his enemy's legs and pitched him over his back; the policeman, falling on his head, was speedily relieved of his sword.

"Run now!" cried Benbow.

Run they did, but right into the arms of a fresh posse of policemen who, scenting the battle from afar, had come rushing to the assistance of their cloth. There were five of them. Our officers got into a corner and prepared for a sturdy defence.

How the affair might have ended it is impossible to say, had not—at the very moment those bold white-jackets, reinforced by the defeated four—nine in all, and armed—were about to rush in—a door opened right behind, and very speedily closed again, but not before our heroes were safe in the hall.

This was a strange turn of the tide. An old white-haired Portuguese gentleman received them most hospitably, and treated them so well that it was three o'clock before they thought of moving. Good-nights were said and promises made for interchange of visits, and a servant of this kindly old man was sent to conduct them by a private road in safety to the beach.

By good luck they found a boat and boatman. For the modest sum of ten shillings, English money, this fellow agreed to take them off; so they embarked, and were rowed away just as a party of disappointed policemen made a rush for the beach.

But the adventures of this night were not yet over, for after rowing about fifty yards, the fellow hauled in his oars and demanded ten shillings each, threatening to row at once on shore among the policemen if they did not at once comply.

Old Benbow started to his feet, almost upsetting the frail boat.

"Desperate diseases," he shouted, "need desperate cures." Next moment that scoundrel boatman was five yards off struggling in the sea, and Benbow had the oars.

The fellow could swim, so there was no fear for his life.

The policemen made a rush and began to launch a boat in pursuit.

They were too late! Old Benbow made the boat dance over the moonlit waters.

Dick-Rae started a song, in which all joined, and they were soon hailed by the sentry of the *Castile*.

“Boat ahoy!”

“No, no.”

They went, therefore, to the port side, and clambered up the rope ladder, Benbow first bestowing a farewell kick to the shore-boat, which sent it spinning away astern.

So ended one night on shore.

I have said that for purposes of defence our blue-jackets used to go in squads.

Well, once a boat's crew came off so much the worse of liquor that the doctor declared—Dr. Hunt I mean—that he would not have their leave stopped this time, but if the like occurred again he would punish them in a way they little dreamed of.

Now there dwelt away up high on a hill a horrid man, who sold our fellows a vile and fiery spirit called *aqua ardenta*. The men translated these words into “fixed bayonets.”

On a Saturday Dick-Rae came into the gun-room. It was after sunset.

“We have five men in the cells, doctor,” he said; “they have been on shore and come off wild, if not mad. The fire-hose has been manned, and is playing on them.”

Hunt started up, red with anger. He called the sentry.

“Sentry, pass the word for the barber.”

"I want you to bring your tools below to the orlop deck," he told the barber when he came.

He found the delinquents quiet and shivering, most of them in a state of almost coma.

The doctor felt their pulses, then ordered the barber to cut off their hair and shave their heads. Dick-Rae stood by and laughed, and the master-at-arms laughed too as he held the lantern.

But the business was got through nevertheless.

When next morning, in the sick-bay, little Josh rang the bell to see if there were any more patients, behold those five bald-heads put in an appearance.

"You're all right!" said Dr. Hunt, "go to duty."

"Go to duty!" exclaimed the five in a breath, five pairs of hands raised at once to rub five hairless heads.

"To duty, sir, like this?"

Dr. Hunt quietly rose.

"Quartermaster!" he cried.

"Yes, sir."

"Send those men to duty, and see that they stand together in a row when the captain inspects the ship!"

Now Captain Oldrey was a good officer, and a man of even temper but of strict service, and he would not have laughed on duty for a ship's ransom.

When however he approached the bald-headed crew, and the order was given "caps off," and they stood in all their nakedness, their faces as long as fiddles, and their grotesque-looking skulls as guiltless of hair as the lid of a copper kettle, the captain was staggered.

“In the name of everything comical, what is the meaning of—ha! ha! ha!” he finished the sentence with a hearty laugh, the officers took up the chorus, and a titter went all round the ship’s company.

When Dr. Hunt explained, the ship’s corporal was called, and bare-headed and in single-file, the men were marched off to the cells. But it was a sight not easily to be forgotten.

In those dashing days of old, the very uncertainty of what would occur or turn up, or the kind of adventures that would accrue to them, must have possessed a certain amount of charm for naval officers.

The changes, too, of fortune were so sudden, no wonder that our great Nelson himself once remarked that nothing was improbable at sea. A ship might, in the morning, fight, beat, and capture a Frenchman, but be herself beaten and captured by some other Frenchman the same evening; and no one would have been surprised had the fortune of war found both French ships prizes next day, and the English ship once more free.

When the *Castile* left England, she certainly did not expect to sail for the Cape of Good Hope. But a vessel ran into the roadstead off Madeira one evening with the news that ten merchantmen from India were lying helpless at Symon’s Town, with French privateers hovering like hawks over larks outside, the man-o’-war that had conveyed them having been taken aback in a white squall, and sunk like a stone in ten minutes’ time.

So off went the *Castile* to the rescue, with all possible despatch.

This would be quite a long cruise, so our fellows on board the frigate quietly settled down to a sea life.

Service was now stricter than ever. Even Smart, the master's mate, dared not now have forty winks on the skylight while keeping the middle watch. Both sailors and marines were kept busy all day, what with gun-drill, small-arm drill, scrubbing or holy-stoning decks, cleaning guns and brass work, setting or shortening sail, and keeping the frigate as tidy and bright, from bowsprit to binacle, as a crown-piece newly from the mint.

The best of look-outs had to be kept, and though there was no such thing as tyranny on board her, still every man and officer had to be most strict in the performance of his duty,—any dereliction was severely punished, any attempt at insubordination met with dire reward.

Twice during this voyage to the Cape the cat was used, and so well-deserved did the punishment seem that even Dr. Curver did not attempt to interfere, as, in mercy, he might have done.

But he asked to be excused from attending the "flaying match," as it was called. He remained in his cabin, and Dr. Hunt took his place.

Dr. Curver was as great a favourite with the officers of the gunroom mess as Willie Grant and Dick-Rae were with the men forward. In fact these two young gentlemen might often be found near the galley fire of an evening, not only listening to the sailors' yarns, but

themselves telling stories. They were on this account universally respected and looked up to, and positively loved.

Little Josh was the ship's pet all round, and occupied much the same position that monkeys do on board, when there happen to be any such.

It was nothing uncommon to see Dr. Curver seated or standing by the bows, surrounded by half a dozen ship's boys, including Josh—who hung on every word the good doctor uttered—and close under his lee Willie and Dick.

Curver was a naturalist; at least, he was a lover of nature, and it is very much the same thing. And these little parties at the bows had really assembled to hear him discourse on living things, on the creatures they saw in the water and in the sky.

One of his most attentive listeners was a dark-skinned native lad from Sierra Leone, whom the doctor had picked up at Madeira and installed as body-servant. And very pointed and pertinent, though never impertinent, were many of the questions the lad was wont to ask.

He even sometimes volunteered a little history of his own, and at times his anecdotes of life in the far interior of Africa were well worth listening to. But strange was his English, or way of talking, and terrible his tales at times. His grandfather, it seems, was caught and carried into the bush by a lion.

“He plenty ole man, though,” Cuckoo remarked, “he

plenty ole, so no muchee good. De lion he catchee he quick. I follow he to de jungle. Dat lion makee de bones scrunch. He! he!"

"Didn't you make any attempt to save your grandfather, Cuckoo?" asked Willie.

Cuckoo looked at Willie pityingly.

"What for I try savee he? He ole man. Ole man no good. Dat is nuff."

This last expression was a favourite one with Cuckoo. Cuckoo, it must be admitted, was a strange name for a nigger boy, but the men had at first named him Cucumber. Cucumber he was named by Paddy Flint, who was always up to some lark, "bekase he looks so cool, it's quite refreshin' to clap yer eyes upon him."

"Dey kill my fader in de war," he said one day. "Fader fight with spear. But they knockee he down, den hold back he head, and cut one big cut in de neck. Massa Curver, how de blood fly! Dat is nuffin."

It ought to be noted that I, the author of this tale, am not accountable for Cuckoo's morality, or rather his lack of it. He seemed most unfeelingly unfilial, so far as the male portion of his predecessors were concerned. But it should be mentioned to his credit that he loved the female branch.

"Seems to me now," he said one day, "I nebber had no mudder. He takee she away."

"Who did, Cuckoo?" asked Dick-Rae.

"Why de Great Spirit. One day she come to me, and say, 'I'se berry poorly, boy.' Den she go and lie

down in de shade of de lookta tree. She breathee quick. She pantee too. Den de eyes roll up and roll, and by'me-by I see nuffin but de white. We digee one big hole and lay poor mudder down to sleep. Next day we go look. No mudder dere now. De ground all scrapee scrapee, where de lions had been.

“No one to make de curry now. Sister not big, but we lib in de great forest. We eat de nut, de cassava root, and de big splash apple, and we sleep togedder in de jungle bush. By'me-by though de yellow man come, plenty sword, plenty spear. De bush now all fire. De wild beasts run, de snakes go past, makee much hiss. Plenty bobbery in de forest now. I run. Sister run; but de yellow man catchee she, and I nebber, nebber see her more. But dat is nuffin.”

It was evidently a good deal nevertheless, for the tears were running down poor Cuckoo's cheeks fast and thick.

The *Castile* was becalmed on the line, as most ships were in those old days. Not a nice position to be in either, with the great sun flaming overhead, the blue sea beneath reflecting his rays from every great smooth, heaving wave, the pitch boiling in the seams under feet, stifling heat everywhere, and the ship tumbling about with uneasy motion, as a dead log of wood might have. Far from pleasant.

There was the usual old-fashioned fun in crossing the line. Neptune came duly for his boys, and brought his stiff-bearded wife, and the lads who had never been on the equator before were duly interrogated, duly shaved,

and duly plunged head over heels into a tub of water. Willie Grant was among the number, and though Dick-Rae was his best friend on board, that did not hinder him from enjoying sport at Willie's expense. Oh, dear no! for the truth is Dick-Rae was Willie's chief tormentor.

Now Willie, having been duly warned, had taken the precaution to put on his oldest clothes. He was a canny young Scot, you see. But he did something else that was cannier still: when his eyes were being bound, Willie whispered hurriedly to the man to manage it so that he could just see a little with one eye. Having hopes of a reward, the man did so.

And it came to pass that just at that moment that Willie was being toppled over into the great tub, he made a spring and a grab at Dick-Rae—who had his best jacket on,—and the dark dirty water closed over the heads of both at one and the same time.

Cheers and laughter rent the air! It was beautifully done, and Dick was under. Willie had paid his friend out for the snapping turtle trick.

The breeze sprang up at last. Oh, what joy to see the white sails once more bellying out before the wind!

By-and-by they got into the trades again, and then indeed the ship flew merrily on.

One afternoon,—

“ A sail in sight appears,
They hail her with three cheers ”

CHAPTER IX.

A DASHING ENGAGEMENT.

“ If to engage they give the word,
To quarters all repair ;
While splintered masts go by the board,
And shots sing through the air.”

—*Dibdin.*



HERE were all sorts of queer craft about in these war times, and the sail now showing her top-gallant-masts over the water might be either friend or foe ; and she might either fight or run away.

“ Aloft, Mr. Grant,” said Captain Oldrey, “ and see what you can make of her ; you have younger eyes than I. Take your time.”

Up went Willie, with his telescope—a beautiful gift from Squire McBride—slung over his shoulder ; up into the main-topmast cross-trees.

“ I’m going higher,” said Willie.

“ But you can’t, sir.”

“ I can ‘speel,’ ” * Willie replied quietly, focusing his glass.

* Speel = climb a bare pole.

"I'm bothered!" exclaimed Buchanan on the quarter-deck, "if that young monkey isn't going to s-s-speel up to the m-m-m-maintruck."

So Willie did, at the risk of his life, for with each swing of the vessel the main-topmast described a frightfully giddy arc in the air. With great difficulty he got the glass to bear on the strange sail, and having done so he immediately came below.

He was pale and sick, but he staggered aft.

"You foolish boy!" said Curver, who was with the captain.

"Let him alone, doctor," the captain said. "It was done for the good of the service. Well, Mr. Grant?"

"She is a three-master, sir, probably a frigate like ourselves, but looks bigger, and carries the French flag at her mizen."

The sail was well down to leeward of the *Castile*, and going in the same direction.

Everything was got ready to go to quarters at a minute's notice, and the ship was kept away, with an extra bit of canvas to help her on.

The frigate seemed to feel what was wanted of her, as a good hunter knows the slightest touch of his master's heel. She swept through the water now, proudly, defiantly, dipping her bows till the water curled in over, then raising her head and tossing the spray aside.

Two things very soon became evident: first, that the strange sail had seen the *Castile*; and secondly, that she preferred running to fighting.

Discretion is the better part of valour, especially in a Frenchman's idea.

Every one who could form any excuse for coming on deck now came. The officers, senior and junior, walked rapidly up and down the quarter-deck or waist, the men moved about forward or leant about the bows and winch, discussing the probabilities of a bit of fun, and telling yarns of fights they had been in in days gone by.

But hours went by, and the chase was apparently but little nearer.

The *Castile* might carry stu'nsails. They were tried, and the speed increased. This was good. No matter if they did carry away, there were spare spars on board.

They were gaining on her now! What brooked it? The sun would soon be setting. Indeed, in half an hour his lower limb began to flirt with the rising waves; soon the sun would be buried entirely by a sea, appearing again red and angry, only to sink again, and finally go down for good.

Then the gauzy veil of gloaming was drawn over sky and ocean, the stars blinked out, and by-and-by it was night.

Every light was hidden on the *Castile*, and none appeared on the Frenchman.

"In stu'nsails now," said Captain Oldrey, "and shorten sail."

"Are we wise in doing so?" asked Lieutenant Hayes.

"I think so, Mr. Hayes. This is my idea: you see that craft was on the same lines as ourselves when we

sighted her. She is going south, and it will be to her advantage to let us on ahead, if she can. She will think we will crack on, and she—well, I'm much mistaken if we don't find her far down to leeward and astern of us to-morrow morning, if we just hang around or go ahead easy."

"Very well, sir, we'll see."

"The captain's orders were carried out therefore, and the *Castile* went but slowly through the water."

She was waiting.

The evening wore on somewhat anxiously for all on board. The lookouts were stationed aloft in the bows, waist and stern.

But never a light was seen.

"I say," said Dick-Rae to Willie Grant. The two young men were leaning over the bows. "I think I can smell powder."

"Do you?"

"Yes, my boy, I think we'll have a fight to-morrow, hand-to-hand, boarding, and all that sort of thing. Won't it be a lark?"

"I don't know about the lark. Up in the Baltic, of course I was under fire, but you said that was nothing. I thought it pretty hot; so according to your idea this will very likely be my first real fight. Heigho!"

"What are you heigho-ing about? Eh?"

"Not much; only, if there be boarding, I hope I won't be in a funk. But," he added after a pause, "I only hope and pray I may be able to see my duty, and that

God will give me the strength to go straight for it. Mind you, Dick-Rae, if I *can* see it, I'll have a good shy at it, even if it means being cleft to the teeth by a Frenchee's cutlass. I'm a dreadful, worrying, nervous kind of a fellow."

"Ay, lad, and that very nervousness will carry you on and through with flying colours. As to being cleft to the teeth, frogs don't give power to do it."

"Frogs?"

"Yes, those Frenchees eat frogs and all kinds of soft slobbery-bobbery food. It doesn't feed the muscles nor steel the heart; it takes beef to do that."

"You've been in lots of fights, Dick-Rae. How does it feel?"

"Well, I can hardly tell you. My first fight I remember most about. I was very excited, quite a lot of our fellows were put *hors de combat*. It was a brush with two piratical dhows we were having in the Persian Gulf, all guns, no hand to hand work or boarding. The decks were all over blood and sawdust, and so full of smoke you could hardly see the men at the gun nearest to you. Then I kept sweating; so I tore off my clothes, garment after garment, till I was naked to the waist. I kept sweating and coughing so that I could hardly speak. But I was glad, oh, so glad, when the battle was over!"

"Why, because danger was past?"

"No; somehow I *forgot to think about the danger*. I was glad because I was so fearfully hungry; and I can

tell you, that as soon as I had the chance, I found my way to the steward's pantry."

Willie Grant laughed heartily at this description of his friend's first fight, and the conversation took another turn.

There was hardly a sound all through the live-long night to break the stillness. The men even trod the decks softly, and talked, if they talked at all, in whispers. There was the occasional flap of a sail, the rattling of the rudder chains, the creak of the turning wheel, or the rush of the water around the bows, and its speaking ripple along the sides; but saving these no other sounds.

The day broke at last, and gradually as it got lighter, Mr. Hayes scanned the horizon with his glass from the main-top.

Hayes was not an excitable officer, but when a little round picture appeared at the end of his telescope, partly grey sea, partly grey sky, and in the centre the top-masts of a ship in full sail, he gave vent to just one little sharp "Hurrah!" though it wasn't meant for any one's ears save his own.

Then down he swung and entered the captain's cabin and made his report.

Captain Oldrey was on deck in less than five minutes; sail was clapped on her now, and the *Castile* tore away through the water in chase once more.

The captain was in high glee.

"Let the men have a good breakfast, Mr. Hayes. There is a round of beef, and a lordly one too, in my

steward's pantry. Let them have it all, and the mutton also, if there be any."

Captain Oldrey was physiologist enough to know that men fight but poorly on an empty stomach.

Dick-Rae went down below to breakfast, the other fellows being already seated discussing that meal. Dick was rubbing his hands and laughing. Rubbing his hands as if they had been cold. But cold they could not have been on so gladsome a morning, for surely a brighter sun never smiled over a blue and sparkling ocean. The wind raised but little sea, and the wavelets danced on its surface, reflecting the light from their sides as diamonds do. There were gulls about in dozens, the wide-winged albatross wheeled round too, and the birds screamed as if in delight; while ever and anon from the water flying-fish leapt up and went skimming along over the surface, as if they were trying to make believe they were birds, and hoped to be so in reality some day.

No, Dick-Rae's hands were not cold, but he rubbed them again, and laughed, as he said,—

"Benbow, old man, now for a row, now to punish the Froggies. Benbow, honour and glory await thee!"

"Bother honour and glory!" replied the midshipman. "I want to get the prize-money, and perhaps promotion. Don't forget, Dick-Rae, that I've got to get spliced when the cruise is over. Sit down and eat.

"I say, men," cried Willie Grant, coming into the gun-room after a while. "What do you think? We are coming up hand-over-hand with the French frigate.

She is bigger than us. She is sending down her top-gallant masts."

"Ha! then she means having it out with us," said Old Benbow. The captain of that ship has long guns on board and a long head on his shoulders. He would have got away if he could, but as he can't, he means making the best of it and fighting. Bravo! Frenchee. Pass the pork."

As speedily as possible now, the *Castile* was put into the best fighting trim, and an hour afterwards the drum began to beat to quarters. Before it had well ceased, every man was at his post, fore and aft.

Then came a brief spell of solemn stillness, during which many a prayer went up before the throne of Him who holds the sea and all it contains in the hollow of His hand, and Who alone is the giver of victory.

Captain Buckram's marines were a pretty show, and the gallant soldier was justly proud of them.

The French frigate was still ahead, the *Castile* working gradually up to her.

About four bells in the forenoon watch, the action was commenced by a shot from the bows of the Britisher, to which the enemy right saucily replied from her stern chasers. She was then seen to take in more sail, and when the *Castile* was well up to her, she luffed, bringing her broadside guns to bear upon and rake our frigate from bows to stern. This was a pretty movement, but checked; for the *Castile* went round nicely, and received the chaste salute in a less vulnerable position.

“Hard a-port!” roared the captain. “Stand by the guns, gentlemen, to let her have it.”

Round swung the *Castile* again, and next minute had walked to windward of the enemy, right alongside and close aboard.

“Give it to them now!”

The *Castile's* broadside made the Frenchman reel, but she was heavily gunned, and heavily manned, and fought like a floating fury. Off and on, for half an hour and more, the two ships battered each other, and the damage done to both was considerable.

Once more the Frenchman nearly got in a position to rake the *Castile*. Once more her kind intentions were frustrated, the two vessels colliding for some minutes, then separating.

But the raking came from the other side at last, and the Frenchman's decks were swept, her mizen went a few feet from the board, and her very scuppers ran blood.

Soon after this the two ships closed, both being eager to board.

With guns mouth to mouth now, the battle raged. Then smoke began to curl up the fore hatch of the enemy. She was on fire!

No time was to be lost.

“Away, boarders!” shouted the captain.

“Now, my lads!” cried Buckram to his gallant marines.

Next moment the war was carried to the battle deck

of the Frenchman, and brave indeed was the defence they made.

But what could stand the gallant onset of our blue jackets and marines? Stripped to the waist, just as they had fought at their guns, the former had rushed to the attack, and closed with the foe with a determination that would not be denied. The din was terrible for a time; it was as if—

“ Men fought upon the sea,
And fiends in upper air ! ”

Not only our marines, but even our sailors were composed of different nationalities; so amid the shouting and shrieking, and the ringing of pistol and musket shots, could be heard the hearty “ hurrah ! ” of the English, the shriller war-cry of the Irish, and high over all the wild slogan of the Highlanders, with their “ Scotland yet, and Scotland for ever ! ”

Up in the tops of both vessels marines were still exchanging salutes. But soon the battle was over, and the French colours hauled down. None too soon, for the fire was rapidly gaining the mastery, and flames began to creep up the masts before the wounded and prisoners could be got on board.

Some stores were also saved, and the British sailors managed to do a little looting on their own account—*sub rosâ*, of course.

Then the *Castile* cast loose, hauled off and left the great French frigate to her fate. She blazed for an hour, then blew up with terrific force, sending burning spars,



“ ‘Conduct me to the commandant,’ says he boldly, in French.”

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masts, half-charred boats, and flaming yards high into the blue sky.

A minute afterwards she went down head first, and the *Castile* proceeded on her voyage, making the best of her way to St. Helena, there to land her prisoners and undergo repairs.

CHAPTER X.

JOLLITY IN CABIN AND ROUND THE GALLEY FIRE.

“WHILE whim and glee and jest and song
Display their charming treasure,
Mingling in gay laughter’s throng,
Come to the camp of pleasure.
Youth’s joy’s season, so is age ;
Each temper, sex, complexion,
In mirth may harmlessly engage,
As well’s in sage reflection.”

—*Dibdin.*



HE captain of the French frigate and his first lieutenant had both fallen mortally wounded at the time the vessel was raked by the *Castile*.

In all the enemy had lost nearly one hundred in killed and wounded, so fierce had been the engagement, so determined the resistance. Of our own fellows many had fallen never to rise again, but no officers were killed. Willie Grant, however, was wounded, and Mr. Hayes was shot through the left hand.

About a week after the fight, without further adven-

ture, the *Castile* landed the Frenchmen safely at St. Helena: there to languish in prison, or to be put on parole, until a chance turned up of sending them to Porchester Castle, England.

As all our wounded were now doing well, Captain Oldrey thought himself justified in giving a dinner party in his own quarters.

How elastic youth is! Although for the first night Dick-Rae sat by Willie, looking more serious probably than any one had ever seen him before, his friend was now so far recovered as to permit of his being carried into the captain's cabin, and, propped up on a sofa, thus see the other fellows dining, though he could not join them.

There were gunroom officers around Captain Oldrey's mahogany that night, as well as wardroom officers, and every one who sat down was in the highest of spirits and best of form.

The fight with the Frenchman naturally formed the subject of discourse for some time at the table.

"And so, Dr. Hunt," said the captain, "your patients are all doing well?"

"Very well indeed, sir, including our friend on the sofa."

The captain looked round to where Willie lay listening.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "Have some wine, Mr. Grant? May he, doctor?"

"If he cares to."

"No, thank you, sir," was Willie's reply. "I'm so jolly and comfortable as I am. I'll have some fruit, but

wine would flush my face, and make me feel hot and uncomfortable."

"Hayes," said Dr. Curver, "looks quite the hero with his hand carried in a sling, and his somewhat pale face. Wouldn't he interest ladies now?"

"I don't care what he looks like, doctor," cried Captain Oldrey enthusiastically; "he fought splendidly. Mr. Salmon there witnessed the boarding and carrying of the Frenchman from the quarter-deck."

Now Salmon was the purser's assistant or head clerk, a bit of a "masher" in his way, though there was no such slang term in those days. It had been his duty to stand near the captain during the action and take notes. If the truth must be known, he had been in a mortal fright from first to last.

He now gave himself airs, however, and to hear him talk amused Dick-Rae immensely.

"Yes, sir," said Salmon, "I had the honour of being by your side, sir, during the whole engagement, and here are my notes."

"You weren't afraid, were you?" said Dick-Rae.

"Afraid! Deah me! How can you ask so stoopid a question?"

"Well," replied Dick, "I was."

"Doctor Curver," said Salmon haughtily, "I don't mean to insinuate that I am a hero; but, sir, the Salmons came over with the Conqueror, and I wish you to take that notebook in your hand, and tell us, and especially this young gentleman, the Hon. de Grey, if you

observe any indication of nervous tremor in the handwriting?"

"Not the slightest," replied Curver after a moment's scrutiny.

Now Dick-Rae knew well enough that the clerk had written a second copy of the scrawly notes he had pencilled down on deck, but he was not the one to tell tales out of school.

He took the notebook from Dr. Curver's hands and looked at it; then,—

"I really beg your pardon, Mr. Salmon; the writing is almost as devoid of any indication of nervous tremor as if—ahem! I'd written it myself."

Everybody laughed, and the clerk turned red.

"I think," he said, soon regaining his self-possession, "I have named nearly all the officers who distinguished themselves. Mr. Hayes specially, and Mr. Buchanan, who fought like a Scottish lion. And Captain Buckram, sir, I was pleased to note how gallantly you maintained a hand-to-hand fight against three of the enemy. You stood on the skylight, sir, and I saw the fellows fall one by one. It was beautiful, sir, beautiful. Young Grant," continued the clerk, "fought like a positive pole-cat."

"H'm," said Dick-Rae, "Willie was at the positive end of the pole, and I suppose I was at the negative."

"You are mentioned farther on, in a general way, you know——"

"One to you, Dick-Rae!" cried Old Benbow.

"Oh, Mr. Jack Williams!" the clerk went on, "I

was very pleased indeed to have such evidence of your courage all through the engagement."

Old Benbow bowed.

"Well," said the captain, "I must say I was pleased with every one of my officers, and I have no doubt our gallant surgeons down amidst the heat and smoke of the cockpit did their duty like heroes. Gentlemen, I thank you all."

There are people in this world ill-natured enough to say that this little party of Captain Oldrey's was a kind of mutual admiration meeting; but I do not think it could be fairly and honestly called so, albeit the conversation for the most part hinged upon the recent fight with the Frenchmen.

And I do not marvel at it. It was a tough fight to begin with, and no one except those who have actually undergone it, could believe the amount of nervous excitement such an action produces on the system. It is not felt at the time, but afterwards, and talking is the only cure for it.

Forward it was just the same, only as soon as the main brace was spliced, the honest tars set themselves down to tell stories, or spin yarns as they called it, and every now and then a song with a rattling chorus came in. The yarns generally commenced with words like the following,—

"When I was in the old *Goliath*, Bill," or,

"I was captain o' the main-top in the *Centaur*," or,

"I say, Jack, and that reminds me."

Around the galley fire the men criticise the actions of their officers pretty freely, and very much to the point indeed ; and it would not do these gentlemen much good at times to be listening. To-night they had nearly every one on the boards. The captain was a brick, and as cool as steel. Mr. Hayes, the first luff, was "a gentleman, every inch, and I dares any on ye to say he ain't."

Lieutenant Buchanan: "My eye! Bill, isn't he a fellow to fight. See the way the Scotties all got round him when he got under. Yes, old Buck may like a glass, like the rest on us; but he's a buffer to fight, I says, says I."

Young Grant: "Ain't he a sturdy chap; another Scot, too. I saw him sheath that dirk of his into a Froggee that could 'ave eaten him up—swallowed him, in fact, and looked none bigger for it. I could 'ave cried when I saw him fall. It was a back shot, and Fred Bligh there cut the Frenchee's head clean off."

Captain Buckram: "A pretty soldier; fought well, but not so easy like as we Jacks like. If he'd taken off his stock, now, and his coat—ah! then he'd 'ave looked double the indiividual."

Midshipman Jack Williams: "Well, you know, messmates, he is one of ourselves, and if he couldn't fight, who could? Been afore the mast has Old Benbow, as the boys call 'im. The king can make an officer, maties, but it takes Some One more than man—with reverence be it spoken—to make a sailor."

"Now, messmates," said Paddy Flint, "there is one

officer that sure none av yez has said a word about at all, and that is Mr. Salmon, the purser's clerk, as nate and as purty a boy as you'd meet in a dhrive twixt Cork and Bally Poreen.

"Ha! ha! ha!" There was a chorus of laughing.

"Why, I'd put the young lubber in a band-box and pack him home to his mother."

"Keel haul him."

"He wouldn't stand it; he'd melt. Dress him in petticoats and send him to a girls' boarding school."

"Hear! hear!"

"And what think ye, men, of our little honourable?"

"Yes, last and least."

"Well, now, for a gent as is a real gent, and a nob into the bargain, I say he's a little hero. My stars! he was in the thick of it in that boarding brush."

"Wonder he wasn't killed."

"He's too small to see, that's how."

"It's his cheek that carries him through," said an old sailor. "Now I was in a queer scrape two years ago with this young honourable, and, mind ye, he was smaller then than now. It was like this, maties. We were in the old *Ruby*, just cruisin' around the French coast like, picking up whatever we could see, and now and then havin' a bit of a brush with a fort and a skirmish on shore to give us an appetite for breakfast. Well, there was a newly erected fort on a point o' land, and it was saucy enough to fire at us. 'Bother it,' says our skipper, 'we can't stand this nohow. We'll land and take it.'

“The point o’ land was separated from the mainland by a kind of bushy marsh, and near here about one in the morning—and a fine summer’s night it was—we landed, intending to march upon the fort from the rear, blow in the gates and shiver the garrison.

“But la! bless you, maties, we reckoned athout our host for on in a way; for, if there wasn’t half a company o’ soldiers encamped in the bush. They attacked us with such a suddenness that our fellows were driven back to the boats and re-embarked, all but poor me and the young honourable. We had been well ahead, and the Frenchees hadn’t seen us.

“‘Never mind,’ says he; ‘come on to the fort, Jack.’

“‘You’re never going there,’ I says.

“‘But we are,’ he says, says he, ‘D’ye think,’ he says, ‘we’re goin’ to be taken prisoners like a couple o’ sheep. Come on, Jack,’ says he, ‘courage and cheek will carry us through anythink.’

“‘Lead on,’ says I, and away we went. And the young honourable pulls a white ‘ankerchief out o’ his breast, and draws his dirk and makes a flag o’ truce. Then he goes boldly up to the gate.

“‘Conduct me to the commandant,’ says he boldly, in French. I knows a little o’ this lingo myself, though I can’t get my tongue round it like.

“The officer o’ the guard was called.

“‘The commandant’s asleep,’ says he. ‘Is it very pressing?’

“ ‘It’s so pressing,’ says the honourable, says he, ‘that if you don’t send a message to the commandant telling him that an officer of the *Ruby* has arrived with a flag o’ truce, I wouldn’t be in your boots for all that’s on earth, Mister Moosoo.’

“ Away goes Mister Moosoo.

“ ‘Let us follow him, quiet like,’ says the honourable. ‘Do as I do, and never fear.’

“ So after Mr. Moosoo we goes, dawdling like, and the honourable was a whistling. But no sooner was Mister Moosoo round one tent, than the honourable and I whips round another.

“ ‘Come on, Jack,’ he says; ‘let us make our feet our friends for our precious lives.’

“ But a sergeant spied us and gave the alarm. It were sharp work then, messmates, I can tell you. But round the tents we dodges, and, as good luck would have it, comes to the wall. The fort was partly stone and partly turf.

“ Over we tottles, and down the sides, and plump into the ditch over head and ears.

“ Musket shots rang above us; bullets pattered on the water, but over we swam like a couple o’ water rats, clambered up and made tracks for the beach.

“ Ping—ping—ping went the bullets; but neither the little honourable’s body nor mine had billets for ’em.

“ ‘Fortune favours the brave, Jack!’ cries my mite of an officer.

“ And so it did; for there was a boat, oars and all

complete. And in half an hour we were round the point and safe on board.

“Next morning our marines and blue jackets landed in force. We thrashed the sodgers and took the fort in first-rate style, lads. It were as fine and fair a little fight as ever I seed in my born days, maties. And the first prisoner we took was Mr. Moosoo himself; and it was to the honourable he gave up his sword too. And the honourable takes off his hat and says, says he,—

“‘Thank you, Mister Moosoo,’ he says; ‘may I ax if the commandant is awake yet?’”

So ended Jack’s yarn.

“Bravo, Jack!” said the cook; “you can spin a good yarn.”

“Yes,” said Jack; “and what I’ve just told ye is as true as that there’s a quid in your mouth, matie.”

* * * * *

There is no more beautiful scenery, I do believe, in all the wide world than that which surmounts that broad sheet of water called Symon’s Bay. The mountains are rugged and wild, some of them green-fringed with trees and shrubs at the foot, and higher up crimson with heaths and geraniums. The rocks that for miles stand on guard twixt land and sea are wild and fantastic. In the sea itself floats many a strange living thing, for all of which even naturalists have not yet found names. The sunrises and sunsets are often gorgeous, and the cloudscapes indescribably beautiful.

The *Castile* arrived, after an extra long voyage, at the sweetest, loveliest time of the year—the springtime, which commences here in September.

She arrived at night off the bay, and a clear, bright moonlight night it was. The captain was not surprised to find no less than five privateers dodging about or lying to, awaiting their chance when it should please the merchant ships at anchor in the bay to set sail.

Would they fight? The men prayed they might. But their game was up, and they knew it. Their motto now was flight, not fight; and no flock of pigeons ever scattered more speedily at sight of a hawk, than did these French privateering scoundrels at the sudden appearance of the *Castile*.

The frigate fired a few guns, but forbore to chase them, having encountered heavy weather and being once more sadly in need of repair.

About three weeks after leaving St. Helena, a sad occurrence had taken place.

It was in the first dog watch, and about the middle of it, just as the steward in the wardroom was laying the cloth for dinner, that the startling shout of—

“Man overboard!” resounded through the ship.

In an instant all was stir and bustle and anxiety. The helm was instantly put hard down, and a boat was speedily cleared and lowered.

But meanwhile, divesting himself of his coat, Willie Grant had dived from the head rail into the sea, and despite the wind and waves was making his way to

where every now and then, as he rose on a billow, he could see the poor fellow floating.

Willie was a powerful swimmer for one so young, but still somewhat weak from the wound he had received. Many a Highland lake a full mile wide had he swam across; but Highland lakes present no such sea as he had now to contend against.

He had never yet attempted to save life, however, and knew actually nothing of how to proceed, and could not help wondering as he swam on and on, buffeting the billows and swallowing a deal of salt water, if he would have much of a struggle.

Alas! when he reached the spot, he had little to contend against. Poor Mr. Dance, the mate, was sinking for the last time.

Willie threw himself on his back as he clutched the head—hair was worn long in those days; he got the head on to his breast, and there rested, floating as well as he could.

What a long, long weary time it seemed! Would the boat never come. Several times he thought he heard the sound of oars—it was but the rushing wings of gulls that floated and tacked in the air around him.

On board all was silence and deep anxiety. Poor little Josh was silently weeping and—Scotch-boy fashion—praying to God to restore him his friend; Dick-Rae walked the deck most restlessly, and every one observed how pale he was.

After what appeared an interminable time the boat

was seen returning ; it had been miles astern, as the ship had not been put about with judgment.

As soon as she was within hail, the captain shouted, "Is the officer saved?"

"Mr. Grant is saved."

"Mr. Dance is dead."

These were the replies.

So it ever is on board ship in times of war. Change, change, change ; and the sun that rises joyfully in the morning may set in gloom at night.

CHAPTER XI.

MIDSHIPMAN'S PRANKS.

“THOSE joys that are harmless, what mortal can blame ?

’Tis my maxim that youth should be free ;

And to prove that my words and my deeds are the same,

Believe me, thou’lt presently see.”

—*Dibdin.*



EITHER incidents nor accidents are long remembered on board a ship of war ; at all events they are never allowed to cast a gloom over the ship.

The sad, solemn service was conducted over poor Dance and his body committed to the deep, and by the time the vessel had been a week at Symon's town, his messmates had ceased to speak of him, though his memory would remain green in their minds for many a day.

One afternoon the gunroom officers were sitting quietly talking in their mess place, Smart alone studying his everlasting logarithms, when Lieutenant Buchanan entered his own cabin, took out his fiddle and began to play.

“ Bother that old Scotch lieutenant ! ” cried Smart at

last, pitchin gaway his book. "There is no sense in the rotten old Scotch things he plays; the fiddle seems to me to say 'dram-dram, diddley-dram, dram diddley-dee.' I'll let any of you fellows have my rum for a week who will butter Buchanan's bow."

"I don't want your rum," replied Dick, "but I will butter the bow."

As good as his word, no sooner had the Scotch lieutenant gone on deck, than over went Dick-Rae to his cabin, and greased both bow and fiddle strings most liberally.

Buchanan would be down again presently and recommence to play.

Dick-Rae waited for him, and just as he appeared at the foot of the ladder,—

"Oh! sir," said this cheeky midshipmite, "Willie Grant and I want to go shooting. Would you kindly lend us your fowling-piece. I think Smart is looking for you to ask it, as I saw him come out of your cabin; but you'll give it to me, won't you?"

"That I will, my boy, and welcome."

Back went Dick-Rae to his mess place. He knew what was coming. Smart had recommenced his logarithms. Presently in dashed Buchanan, red with wrath, and fiddle-bow in hand.

"Which of you did-did-did-dared to bub-bub-butter my bow?" he stammered.

"It was you, Smart!" he continued, "it was you, you r-r-r-rascal."

Poor Smart got no time to reply. Down came the bow across his cheek, again and again and again. Buchanan dealt his blows like wintry rain, till the bow was broken in splinters.

"Well," cried Smart, "I call that jolly hard."

"I'll have you kie-kie-keel-hauled if you say a word. Come on, De Grey, you're worth ten of a chap like that."

So the fiddling was stopped. Dick-Rae the delinquent got the gun, and poor Smart had a hiding.

"I say, boys," said the midshipmite, coming in five minutes after, and triumphantly exhibiting the fowling-piece. "I say, boys, mark my words, there is nothing in this world succeeds as well as cheek. Hurrah! Now for a shot! Now for sport in the jungle!"

Dick-Rae, Willie Grant, and Old Benbow, accordingly, asked leave next morning, and having dressed in plain clothes started off in pursuit of adventures.

"Bring game of some sort," said Dr. Hunt, "for we are pretty short in the mess, I can tell you."

"Never fear!" was the reply, "we'll bring bags well filled."

With the party went Jock the Skye terrier, and all had guns, while provisions had not been forgotten, and little Josh accompanied them to carry the bags, which they were confident they would fill to repletion.

The town ran along the shore for some distance, then immediately deserted them; or in other words, they left the town and began to ascend the hill-side through scrubby bush and along a rough red road that led to

the right. Once well up among the mountains and valleys, they left the road altogether, and struck straight away through the heath and half-burned grass. They soon found that the hills were inhabited by many curious kinds of snakes, that went rustling here and gliding there, even leaping at times; so that they had to be careful. Yonder, basking in the sunlight, is a great black snake; he seems asleep, but springs up at their approach. Dick-Rae bowls him over, and coolly bags him. "Dr. Curver," he said, "told me to bring him all the specimens I could get."

That long thong-looking thing is the deadly whip-snake, that, they say, springs on you backwards forming a hoop and striking as it falls; and that short, light thing, the terrible sand-snake. There are many others, and Dick-Rae had good sport, succeeding finally in shooting a splendid specimen of the much-dreaded cobra.

About noon they came to rocks and boulders on a mountain side, and for hours had excellent sport among the rock rabbits. They required to stalk them, however, and this took time.

At three o'clock in the afternoon they found themselves near a cool streamlet where trees grew, from which depended many a queer-shaped nest, not unlike the straw-covered flasks of Florence oil we see in shops.

The grass beneath the trees was very green; so here they laid themselves down, and being as hungry as the proverbial hunter, did excellent execution among the good things their steward had provided for them,

They quenched their thirst in the stream. Old Benbow had a smoke, little Josh counted the contents of the bag, which, independent of the snakes or rock-rabbits, contained quite a number of bright-winged beautiful birds.

Having dined and rested, they went on again. By-and-by, in the bush Dick spied some large and strange-looking birds. He knocked one down, and Old Benbow knocked down another; when they picked them up, they found they were ordinary barn-door fowls.

"Never mind," said Dick-Rae, "the mess larder is not over-well provided, and they seem wild."

Willie had his doubts, but said nothing. Soon a Dutchman's house appeared in view, and up they marched in a body, to ask for water; the afternoon was hot, and they were thirsty.

The Dutchman was a boer of the most boerish class. He refused them water even, but a very pretty young girl made up for it by bringing out a large dish of whey.

She was the Dutchman's youngest sister. Dick-Rae slipped a sovereign into her hand.

"It's conscience money," he said, "and I won't take it back." Dick was thinking about those two fowls.

Her brother howled at her to come in.

She smiled so sweetly, said "ta-ta" so prettily, and tripped away so lightly, that Dick-Rae fell in love on the spot, and as they went away he cast many a

"Longing, lingering look behind."

Time flies quickly by when one is on the hill with gun in hand ; and now the sun went down, leaving behind it a sky of dazzling beauty and crimson glory. Very soon, however, twilight deepened into night ; as there could be no possibility of returning till next day, they lit a fire in the lee of a rock, and sat down to supper.

They yarned and talked for hours, then the fire was replenished and down they lay,—

“To sleep, perchance to dream !”

covered by a great Scotch plaid of Willie’s that Josh had carried, and which did excellently well to defend them against the dew.

Whether Dick-Rae dreamt or not, I cannot say ; but sure enough he awoke Willie about midnight. There was a great round moon in the sky, and bats innumerable whirling and wheeling about.

“Come and have a walk, Willie Grant,” he said ; “it is a shame to sleep on so glorious a night.”

“All right !” said Willie, rubbing his eyes.

And off they went, leaving Old Benbow and little Josh to snore together.

Now I do not know how it happened, but happen it did, that before many minutes they found themselves close once more to the Dutchman’s house.

“Let us serenade that lovely girl,” said Dick-Rae.

“All right ! What shall it be ?”

“‘Auld Lang Syne,’ it is simple and effective. You take the air, I’ll give you a bass.”

Close by the garden gate they commenced,—

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind.”

Suddenly a casement window was thrown open, a white-dressed figure in a red night-cap appeared before them, bang! bang! went two barrels of a gun, and down went Dick.

That was an end to the serenade. Willie got his friend away.

“Are you much hurt?”

“No, not at all,” said Dick. “It was only a few scattered shot, and old Hunt will have to pick them out. But that was the brother. Did ever you hear of such an ungrateful and unfeeling brute?”

“Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast,
A hungry middie or a butcher's dog;”

but that fellow hasn't got a soul—only a gizzard. Bah!”

What with rock-rabbits and birds, the bags were quite filled next forenoon, and they went on board singing.

Dick-Rae told his adventures, and set Dr. Hunt to work to pick out the shot. And they had a splendid supper that night in the gunroom, consisting not only of the standing ship's delicacies in the shape of salt-junk and pork, but of fish, fowl, and curried rock-rabbit. No wonder they slept soundly after it!

* * * * *

There is no one in a middie's mess more detested than

a sneak; and a day or two after this Mr. Salmon, the Beau Brummel of the ship, was caught telling Mr. Hayes the story of the Dutchman's fowls. It was mean, for he had partaken of them himself, both for dinner and breakfast. So a court-martial, *sub rosâ*, was forthwith assembled at the fo'c'sle, and without a dissentient voice the clerk was condemned to be "cobbed."

Accordingly, next morning, between five and six bells, while the junior officers were busy dressing in the cockpit, Mr. Salmon, purser's assistant, was suddenly extinguished; for a flour sack clapped over his head and shoulders shut him for a time completely out of the world.

No one spoke a word; but the young man, struggling and shrieking in a half-smothered voice, was placed face downwards over his own sea-chest, and the cobbing or flogging commenced. Midshipmen's dirk scabbards and flat rulers were the instruments of punishment; and every member of the mess, time about, gave him one, the dose being administered in three rounds.

Then they left him, and when he succeeded at last in tearing off the sack, he found each of his messmates standing by his chest quietly and coolly dressing.

Salmon was wild. They should dearly rue it. It was a case for a court-martial, and every mother's son of them would be turned with ignominy out of the service.

Salmon walked up to the sentry: the sentry had seen nothing. He accosted the ship's corporal: he had seen nothing *unusual*. He spoke to little Josh: little Josh

had been too busy with his master's things to know what was going on.

But Salmon "planked" all his messmates before the first lieutenant.

"Cobbed you, did they? I'm truly sorry. You have your witnesses, of course? No! Then I fear I can do nothing in the matter."

"If you hand him over to me," said Dr. Hunt, with something very like a smile curvetting around his lips and dancing in his eyes, "I'll be able to put Mr. Salmon all to rights, sir. We have a good supply of cold cream in the dispensary."

And so the matter dropped.

* * * * *

When Dick-Rae went on shore next day, he made a bargain with a Caffre, and that same evening he brought off two monkeys, a big baboon-looking thing and a very innocent and pretty little one, and forthwith installed them as ship's pets.

Having done so, he went and asked Lieutenant Hayes for leave to keep them. It will be observed that Dick did not ask before but after buying his pets.

"Two monkeys!" said Mr. Hayes. "Well, well, I suppose I must; but *one* was enough, Mr. de Grey, and now we'll *have three of you!*"

Dick-Rae pocketed the insult and rushed off to order a suit of sailor's clothes to be made forthwith for the smallest monkey.

In a day or two after this the *Wasp*, homeward bound, came into Symon's Bay, and the admiral of the station gave orders for her to convoy the merchant ships; and as for the *Castile*, instead of going back to England, she got orders to complete her repairs forthwith and make all sail for India, around the coast of which the Malay pirates were committing cruel and murderous ravages.

The officers were not sorry for this turn in events, and Dick-Rae and Willie were delighted. It gave them an opportunity to get further adventures and fun inland.

Accompanied by their friend Old Benbow, they hired horses and a guide one morning and set off for Cape Town. The ride was a most charming one. Along the shore they went nearly half way, galloping over the hard sand, and splashing and shouting through the shallow water of the little bays that barred their progress. They dined at Rathfeldas, sung songs, danced hornpipes on the grass, to the great delight of a bevy of Dutch children, mounted their horses, gave three cheers, and galloped on again as merry as May bees.

It was nearly dark when they got into Cape Town. But they put up their horses at the best hotel, ordered their beds, and dined a second time. Then they went to such places of amusement as were possible at Cape Town in those days. On their return they had supper, a song, and a yarn or two; then went to bed and slept the sleep of the just, or of sailor-lads—it is much the same.

Dick-Rae had the happy knack of enjoying himself

wherever he went, and neither Willie Grant nor Old Benbow were far behind him, though not quite so fast.

They had leave for four days, and enjoyed it thoroughly. They did everything on earth that midshipmen could do, and a deal that no midshipman ever did before.

As they started for home at last, Dick-Rae sighed and said,—

“I'd dearly like to go and see that Dutch boer girl again. But no, I will not; I'd fight with her brute of a brother. Heigho! but while life does last she will live in my mind like the memory of some beautiful dream!”

It was not often that Dick-Rae waxed sentimental, but he was a strange youngster altogether.

CHAPTER XII.

AN IDYLLIC VOYAGE.

“A WET sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast.”

—*Allan Cunningham.*

“A LITTLE maiden frank and fair,
With rosy lips apart,
And sunbeams glinting in her hair,
And sunshine in her heart.”



ON the morning on which the *Castile* was appointed to sail it was blowing big guns.

The captain came off from shore about nine o'clock.

“Think you’ll try it, sir?” said Mr. Hayes.

“Well,” replied the captain, “between you and me and the binacle there, I think it is folly to do so; but what d’ye think the admiral said?”

“I couldn’t guess.”

“If you’re afraid to go out to-day you know, Captain

Oldrey, I advise you to stay ; and indeed, Oldrey, I think it best.' ”

“ Afraid, indeed ! ”

“ That's what I said. So up sail and anchor. Is our passenger on board ? ”

“ Yes, sir, General Fraser and his little girl came off early, and the doctor has given up his large cabin to them. A cot is swung for the child, and they will be happy and comfortable enough, I've no doubt.”

“ All right, Mr. Hayes.”

“ Hands—up—anchor ! ”

The wind was off the land, but the sea was terrific. In the afternoon, during a squall and fearful thunderstorm that made the day as dark as night, the ship was struck by a mountain billow that washed right aft, carrying everything before it, and alas ! one poor fellow was dashed into the lee scuppers and killed.

Next day the wind had moderated, but it still blew high and the seas were glorious to behold. The sun sunk lurid and angry, and the storm came on again ; and thus it was for nearly a week, during which no officer or man lay down at night in dry clothes.

But sea and wind went down at last, and the weather became warm and balmy.

General Fraser and his daughter, who were on their way to Bombay, now came on deck for the first time, both having been ill.

Willie Grant was leaning over the bulwarks watching the busy sea-birds—Cape pigeons—that went circling

and screaming round the ship, alighting every now and again on the water to pick up some morsel that had been dropped overboard, when he felt a little soft hand in his. He looked wonderingly round, and there by his side stood what he might have well mistaken for a fairy at first sight. A beautiful blue-eyed girl of some eleven or twelve years, with a red silken fez on her head, from under which light, soft tresses fell and floated over her shoulders.

“The captain says you are to amuse me.”

“Does he?” said Willie. “And who are you?”

“I’m Etheldine, but pa calls me Eth; and you can call me Eth. Amuse me, please.”

“But how, Eth?”

“Oh, I know! catch a pretty bird for me.”

Willie felt shy at first, but the sport broke the ice: a piece of wood was floated overboard, with a long string attached, and before long a bird was entangled and pulled on board.

One wing was clipped, and the beautiful creature at once installed as Eth’s pet, and strange as it may appear, this bird became in a very short time resigned to its fate, and fed from Eth’s hand.

Although the precaution of shortening the flight feathers of one wing was in this case adopted, still it is almost unnecessary, because for some reason best known to themselves, these Cape pigeons, when once caught, go toddling around the deck without evincing any inclination to fly away.

The voyage to India was a very long one, and altogether quite idyllic in a manner of speaking.

Long, long years afterwards, Willie used to look back to the two months spent on the *Castile* at this time with fond and sweet regret, as to the happiest days of his eventful and chequered life.

What though at times the waves were high and the wind was stormy! What though they were becalmed for weeks in the tropics! The time did not seem long, yet each day appeared a little lifetime in itself,—a dreamy, happy lifetime, from the time the morning sun flashed crimson across the waters, till the evening lightning flashed broad and clear behind the clouds that lay on the horizon.

When from this, the equatorial zone, the *Castile* lazed along into the bright waters of the Indian Ocean, surely never ship looked so bright and clear and lovely. Now-a-days we have wretched steam! Just think of the difference.

Look on this picture and then on that! In the steam-ship—the vessel with those horrid little letters s.s. before her name—I defy the best and cleverest sailor that ever went afloat to keep himself or things about him clean. If there is any wind when under steam, it is nearly sure to be ahead; if there be no wind, the forward motion of the ship throws the smoke aft, and smuts and powdery coal keep falling, falling, falling, all day long. The terrible deposit lies on the deck, on the seats, on capstan, binacle, bulwarks, or rails; you cannot

sit down, or put a hand down anywhere, without getting grimed and smutched.

Down below it is just the same. The black, perfidious powder covers the plates, and the white tablecloth, and the paper you write on, and your water-colour drawing. You eat it, you drink it, and you growl at it from morn till dewy eve, and worry yourself, and feel wicked for doing so, till you hardly can say your prayers.

Then the noise of a steamer! It is like being in an old mill all day, and far worse; for besides the constant grind and gride of the engines, there is the rattling of the cinder and ashes gear, and the voices of the men employed thereon. Ugh!

But look at our *Castile*! She is gliding along over that enchanting sea, with stunsails set low and aloft, for the breeze is but light. The waves are sparkling in the sunshine, as molten crystal would, the few fleecy clouds up yonder in the *himmel* blue cast their shadows here and there on the sea, changing ultramarines to shades of grey and green.

There are skip-jacks dancing from wave to wave, and flying-fish leaping from the water, and now and then a shark may be seen.

On board is no unseemly noise, no grime or dust. The ship's sails look white, and in the sun's rays the decks are like snow. Look at the sheen on that mahogany binacle, see the gold-like glitter of the brass work! The very ropes—all so neatly coiled—are white, so are the capstan bars, and the canvas ventilators that con-

duct the refreshing air to the decks beneath. The guns are polished and black, their carriages and wheels have been scoured, and the lanyards themselves are pipe-clayed.

And the good ship goes nodding and curtseying over the waves, and you can hear the ripple of the water alongside, as if it were sea-nymphs talking to each other in strange but musical voices.

A contrast, indeed, 'twixt the past and the present!

I wonder how many pets there were on board the *Castile* at this time? Let us re-count them.

1. There was little Josh (N.B.—I am taking them as they come, and not in order of merit or precedence)—little Josh, captain of the lee scuppers, assistant cook's-mate, loblolly boy, dog man, hen wife, and general factotum. Everybody liked this mite of a boy, and the livestock thought he was captain of the ship and monarch of all he surveyed. The men used to play ball with him, standing in a hollow square and pitching Josh in all directions. When not on duty, Josh used to be anywhere or everywhere. Perhaps the doctor would sing out to the sentry,—

“Pass the word for Josh.”

Yes, but where was Josh? Well, he would be found at last on the top of the main-truck, perhaps, or astraddle of the jib-boom, or asleep in the fore-top, or over the bows, or under a boat, or in any other queer situation whatever.

Josh was a favourite with every living thing; and

then the way he used to dance attendance on Miss Etheldine!

He was her slave, just in the same way that the Dugald Crayture was slave to Helen McGregor, wife of the bold Rob-Roy, and I believe at any time of the day or night Josh would have risked his life to please this beautiful child.

2. Josh's mangoose. A gift from Dr. Curver, procured at the Cape. A kind of lemur, a long, hairy or furry thing, that on deck would creep after Josh wherever he went, and even attempt to follow him into the rigging. He loved Josh and Josh alone, although Etheldine fed him, and he tolerated her.

"Goozie," as he was called, could not stand the Skye terrier, but would sleep between Orion's paws, and at night curled up with Josh.

3. Jock the Skye: never out of one row till he got into another. He was so long, and so covered with hair, that Eth, when she wanted to give him a morsel of biscuit, was not quite certain which was his head and which his tail; and sometimes, I have been told, the sick-bay man mopped the sick-bay deck with him, or tried to, and got bitten sweetly for doing so. Verdict: serve him right.

4. Orion the Newfoundland. An immense fellow he was, so gentle withal that he was universally loved and respected, even by the ship's cock. Between them, Willie Grant, his little countryman Josh, and the ship's sailmaker, a lady's saddle was made for Orion, and Eth



“The Captain says you are to amuse me.”



used to ride him all round the decks. Only, whenever Orion got tired, he used to sit down; then up went Eth's heels and off she slid.

5. Nelson, the ship's cock. He was a very great favourite, and when his sworn enemy, the Skye terrier, was shut up, used to go where he liked and crow where he liked,—on taffrail or bowsprit or bulwark or binacle, in the wardroom, the gunroom, or cockpit, upstairs or downstairs, or in the lady's chamber, like goosie-goosie gander in the old rhyme. Once this bird fell into the sea, and a boat was lowered for him. No, not one boat, but three; and when he was picked up, he jumped on the thwarts and clapped his wings and crew.

Whenever the ship got into action, Nelson was let out, and he crew all the time, and the louder the cannons thundered, the louder crew the cock. He was a rare old bird!

6. Eth's Cape pigeon. This pretty thing made itself perfectly at home, and began to learn to speak, and was on the whole looked upon with some superstition by the men.

7. Dick-Rae. This midshipmite was adored by the officers. They fully appreciated all his pluck and daring, and, to use Jack's own expression, he was a regular little out-and-outer, and no mistake about it.

8. Dick-Rae's two monkeys. The big and the little, or Beauty and the Beast, as they were called. Beauty was very quiet and docile, and liked to be loved and made much of. It was dressed in a full and complete suit of

sailor's clothes, but these had to be renewed very often, because the Beast used to tease it so.

The Beast, for example, would hold out a bit of biscuit to Beauty, and when innocent Beauty came to take it, the Beast would seize the poor little thing and run up with it into the main or foretop; and then the fun began. Beauty was put to stand against the mast. Then off came the hat; this was carefully examined, Beauty receiving a cuff on the cheek every now and then, to make it stand quiet. As soon as the little hat was examined, it was pitched on deck. Then the Beast would seize Beauty, its tiny trousers would be pulled off, and it had a smacking; then all the rest of its clothes were hauled or pitched off; and after that came the grand finale, for the Beast got Beauty by the tail and swung it round and round and round! At this juncture Josh would run up and hold out a biscuit to the Beast. After making quite sure that Josh had not the corporal's cane behind his back, the Beast would come down and exchange Beauty for the biscuit. To tell half the tricks that monkey played would fill half a dozen chapters. It got hold of the poor Cape pigeon once and half plucked it, grinning with delight as handful after handful of feathers went floating away astern.

9. As a pet, last but not least, came Etheldine herself. She was the sunshine of the ship. I am sure her father was very fond and proud of her, and so for the matter of that was every one on board. But she had her favourites. Willie was the chief, then came Dr. Curver, on whose

knee she delighted to sit and hear him converse to his boys on flying-fish, sharks, porpoises, and all the wonderful creatures of the sea and air around them. She liked Buchanan and the captain, but not Hayes. She was afraid of him, although he often tried to make friends with her.

She was very clever, and just as daring as clever. When lecturing on his stuffed birds and snakes and shells and corals, Dr. Curver had no more attentive listener than little Etheldine Fraser.

In the Indian ocean, in towards the mainland especially, are many lovely little lagoon islands. On a calm sunny day these isles of the ocean look as if they were suspended in mid-air; for you can hardly tell where the sea ends and the sky begins.

Many a little trip was made to these islands when the voyage was interrupted by want of a breeze. It was always Dr. Curver's command, he was collecting specimens for the good of science and the world at large. And his passengers used to be invariably Willie Grant, Etheldine, little Josh, and the great Newfoundland dog.

Once landed on the coral sand—almost as white as snow it is, and quite as dazzling—while accompanied by Josh, the doctor would go away into the interior. Eth and Willie would wander about on the beech, or make little excursions into the bush, hand in hand, Orion following close at their heels. There were no wild beasts, only snakes enough and to spare.

There were great black scoriaceous rocks, that hemmed in the snowy beach in little bays; and seated on one of these, in some lonely spot, with the wavelets lispings on the shore, the soft wind fanning their brows and whispering through the green woods behind them, the two would sit down, and Willie would become a storyteller. He never believed he could tell such beautiful tales till he tried.

“Oh!” said little Eth one day, while seated thus, “I would like to live always here.”

“And I,” said Willie enthusiastically, “would like to live always—always—always here, if you were with me, Eth.”

“Come along, you young dreamers!” cried a manly voice behind them; and looking round, behold! there stood Dr. Curver and little Josh. Curver carried a basket full of beautiful birds, and Josh a dozen dead snakes on a string.

“The boat is waiting, my babes of the wood; come on,” said the doctor.

But even after they had embarked, Dr. Curver would stop the boat as they passed over a coral bank, to let little Etheldine gaze enchantedly on the beauties of a submarine garden,—all seaweeds and masses of coral, but oh! the shapes and the rainbow colours, and the strange fishes, nothing on earth is half so lovely!

Is it any wonder that Willie Grant looked back in after years to all the little events of this—this idyllic voyage? or that he felt sorry when land to the nor’ard hove in

sight at last, and the time was drawing nigh that he should have to part with this child who had charmed him so much? Meanwhile, for a brief time longer,—

“Calmly their happy days flew on,
Unnumbered in their flight;
But as they flew they left behind
One long-continued night.”

CHAPTER XIII.

AMONG PIRATES—DEMONS OF THE SEA.

“FAR on the horizon’s verge appears a speck,
A spot—a mast—a sail—an armèd deck.”



ONE day, while still some distance south of the Maldivè Islands, not one sail but many were reported on the weather bow.

There was that strange gloss on the water that deceives even the best of seamen, as to the size of sails in sight or their distance away.

When Buchanan went into the foretop to have a look, for a time he could make nothing of the craft in sight. At one moment they looked like big ships far away, at the next like fishing-boats close at hand. They were all of a flock, whatever they were, for they kept together and seemed to advance in a regular line. Ten were counted in all.

Captain Oldrey took the precaution to beat to quarters. It was well he did so, for after tacking about at a considerable distance, and sheering off and on, as if uncertain what to do, the whole fleet stood down to meet the *Castile*, the vessel having been kept well up in the wind’s eye.

Large, high-sterned, long two-masted vessels they were, and their decks literally swarmed with dark-skinned, savage-looking armed men, wearing crimson turbans. Perhaps a more awful-looking lot of savages never appeared before or since afloat a vessel or ship of any kind.

They had no flag or distinguishing mark of any kind; but that they meant mischief was evident enough.

For just as the wardroom officers and Captain Oldrey stood wondering what they ought to do, there rose a puff of white smoke from the bows of the centre vessel, which seemed the leader, and this was followed by a general cannonade, and great balls tore through the rigging and sails of the *Castile*.

“Now let them have it, Mr. Hayes; don’t waste a shot!”

The *Castile* was prettily manœuvred, and the pirates got in a line. Then that death-dealing broadside from the frigate must have caused terrible destruction among the murdering flotilla.

They seemed determined, however, not again to be caught napping in the same way. They separated, half surrounded the *Castile*, and poured in their fire from every direction, killing several of our fellows and wounding not a few.

It seemed, however, to be no part of the plan of these daring pirates to stand aloof and continue to try conclusions with the *Castile* by means of guns. If they did so the frigate would assuredly sink them one by one.

There must have been on each of these dhows at least two hundred well-armed men. Whether they had at first mistaken the ship for a merchantman or not, may never be known; it was evident enough, at all events, that they now determined to make the best of their mistake, if mistake it had been. And they were fellows who knew no fear.

They prepared to close around the *Castile* on all points.

“Prepare to repel boarders!” was the shout that now rang fore and aft.

Just at this moment a little figure dressed in white, with flowing hair and tearful eyes, rushed on deck, and going straight to where Willie Grant stood, put her arms around him—it was Eth!—and entreated him to come below. She also asked in a beseeching way for her father.

There was no time to lose. Colonel Fraser was forward and preparing to assist with the marines. He had believed that Eth was safe in his cabin.

Willie Grant took her up in his arms and rushed below and straight down to the cabin. He met Josh and Orion, and took them along, and made all three prisoners in the doctor’s big cabin, the one to solace the other.

By the time he got back the pirates had closed in double tier, the guns on both sides had been fired, and it was now hand to hand, both at the ports and on the upper deck.

I have the history of this terrible fight in an old log-book belonging to a grand-uncle. It is headed, “A Battle with Sea-demons.” It bears the impress of

truth, and I have seldom read anything more awful. The sea-demons not only scrambled over the bulwarks on starboard and larboard, but swarmed in through the ports, and like bees along the jib-boom and bowsprit.

But all their fierceness and *vim* could not overcome the dogged and steadfast courage of our brave sailors and marines.

For nearly half an hour the fight went on, in spite of the fact that several of the pirate vessels were on fire. Still they swarmed on, the living taking the place of the dead and wounded. It was like fighting the dreaded hundred-headed hydra of heathen mythology.

But victory came at last. Those of the pirate vessels that were not on fire drew off. They picked up their men from the sea, despite our musketry fire, and finally set sail and ran before the wind.

The wounded on board—or those among them who could crawl, pitched themselves into the sea, and fell victims to the sharks that had assembled in hundreds to a fearful feast. I fear our fellows helped those of the wounded who wanted to get overboard and could not.

Three of the ten piratical dhows were burned or blown up.

Many of our brave men were wounded, and five were killed, Captain Buckram being among the former.

When Willie ran below to release his prisoners, he found two of them just getting up off their knees.

“As we couldn’t fight,” said little Josh, “we thought we would pray.” And certainly they acted rightly; for

who can say that the prayer of a little child may not be heard and answered at the throne of grace?

As to the demons of the sea, they disappeared and made no sign, and till this day there is something of mystery enshrouding the story.

A similar fleet, though larger, once appeared at Zanzibar; they fired and looted the town, and then went off, no one ever could tell where they had come or whither they had gone.

About a week after the fight with pirates, the *Castile* found herself near the coast of Malay, and many of those sea-robber boats, called prahus, were seized and destroyed close in shore. So close indeed that the crews of these strange crafts nearly always managed to run their vessels close in shore and escape by swimming or in their small boats.

An expedition was formed to follow them up their rivers inland.

Captain Buckram, whose wound was but slight, and bold Buchanan, had command of this raid, with five boats in all, each containing over twenty blue-jackets and marines.

They found the country very mountainous and rugged and wild,—the forests and jungles almost impenetrable, and the rivers only partially navigable.

The Malays hardly made a stand against our fellows, finding it more to their advantage to betake themselves into the interior.

They could not take their houses and villages with

them, however, and these were destroyed by fire, after they had been carefully examined and every bed-ridden or aged person taken out.

Many of these houses were built on poles, so that firing them was very simple work indeed. But once alight, and fanned by a southerly breeze, the destruction of woods and forests caused by these burning villages was appalling in the extreme. Inland, over the country, the flames spread in all directions, sometimes creeping up over the highest hills and leaping even over the streams. By night the scene was magnificent but fearful, and the wild cries of the denizens of those once lovely woods were pitiful to listen to.

We see, then, that in whatever shape or form it comes, war is a terrible calamity!

* * * * *

Early in the year 1809, the *Castile*, after adventures and hairbreadth escapes too numerous by far to mention, cast anchor in the roadstead off Bombay.

The walls in those days still frowned darkly over the water, and there were far fewer English than now, but it was even then a largish city. The ships of many nations at peace with the British were lying here, and all day long the busy native boats went backwards and forwards to and from the bundahs.

The water all around was very blue and clear, the wind had gone down, there was hardly a cloud in the sky, and the distant isles of Elephanta hung like jewels on the horizon.

It was a lovely scene!

General Fraser now landed, and great was the grief of poor little Etheldine to bid all her companions good-bye.

Willie had obtained a week's leave, and was going to Poonah with the general.

The last individual that Etheldine said farewell to was great Orion, the Newfoundland. She hung about his neck, and her tears fell thick on his bonnie brow.

"Good-bye, doggie!" she said. "We have been so happy, but I will never, never see you more."

The crew manned the rigging and gave three lusty cheers as the boat sped away from the ship.

They travelled to Poonah by dak, and a very pleasant journey they found it, especially that portion of it which was accomplished after nightfall; when the woods were all silent except for the strange cries of bird or beast, when the silent stars shone over them and the fire-flies danced in every bush.

Now we have all heard the saying, "Wonders will never cease."

Of course wonders will never cease so long as this world wags, and here now I give a strange proof of it.

The arrival of General Fraser and his escort one forenoon created no little excitement at Poonah, and from tents that stood among the palm trees many soldiers flocked around.

But there was one figure among these—tall, dark, and turbaned he was—that caused Willie to stare for a few moments as if transfixed.

Then he walked slowly up to the man, extended his hand, and said,—

“Poodah!”

“Missa Willie Grant! Missa Willie Grant!” exclaimed the poor fellow. The tears of joy came rushing to his eyes as he pressed Willie’s hand to his lips and brow.

“Come! come! come!” he cried then. “De general himself here. Come!”

“What general?”

Willie felt like one walking in a dream. But he was soon in the presence of a tall, handsome officer of very soldierly appearance,—and this was General Rutherford, and no other!

Willie had a dozen questions on his lips to ask him all at once.

Had he not sailed in the wrecked *Queen of the Sea*, then, after all? How came Poodah here from Scotland? Where was Dem? and——”

“Sit down, my dear boy, and compose yourself,” said Rutherford. “Poodah, fetch coffee. I will tell you all, for you seem to be quite in the dark.”

“I am,” said Willie, “I left the glen after poor father’s sad death.”

“Dear lad, your father lives, and is now on his way home in the good ship *Star of Madras*.”

Willie heard no more just then. Everything seemed to go whirling round, tent and table, and Poodah and all.

When he recovered, the general was holding water to his lips.

“Drink,” he said, “then rest a little on the couch where you lie.”

But Willie sat up.

“No! no! no!” he cried, “I must hear all, *all* now, now at once.”

“So be it then. The *Queen of the Sea*, in which your father and I sailed, and which he commanded, was attacked off the Cape by a French privateer. Your father never would go in convoy. We had the audacity to fight our ship, for we were tolerably well armed; but the privateer raked our decks, hulled us, and finally knocked us pretty nearly into flinders. They lowered their boats and picked us up and those of the crew that had not been killed or sunk.

“Well, after many months we were taken to France, made prisoners, and finally exchanged in the usual way.

“We arrived at Miss McBride’s cottage one morning, to find our birds had fled. Poor Poodah alone was left to tell the sad tale. Not sad, my lad, so far as you are concerned, for you have done well. But James, my dear son, or Dem as you and Poodah call him,—alas! and alas!”

“He is not dead?”

“I know not. I only know this, that he made some childish attempt to get a warrant to join the service as a midshipman, and that failing in this he went to France and threw in his lot with his country’s foes. If not dead, he is afloat, and will be dead to me and to you, my boy, till this war ceases, if not for ever and aye.”

The emotions that this story of General Rutherford's had created in Willie's breast were very conflicting. He was overjoyed to hear of his father being still alive and well, but this joy was sadly chastened by what he was told of his old friend and schoolfellow Dem.

It seemed such a very long time since he had left Scotland, but now all the old times rose up before his mind's eye, and he felt as if he were back once more, a happy boy in the woods and among the wild hills of bonnie Glengair.

He remained long in silence, reclining on the couch where Poodah had placed him when he fainted.

The general sat near him, smoking a great hookah or hubble-bubble, and sipping his coffee, and Poodah, never once taking his eyes from Willie's face, squatted on the floor. He smiled and spoke at last.

"My father would have written somewhere to me?" he asked.

"Yes," said the general, "the letters would be sent to the Admiralty, and may even now be following you about."

Willie smiled again, then he sighed.

"Poor Dem! poor Dem!" he said.

Suddenly from his mat in the corner of the tent up sprang Poodah.

He looked as he stood there, one arm reared heavenwards, in his white trailing garments, like a dark prophet.

"I go seek my boy Dem!" he cried. "Over all the

world I go seek my boy. For ever I will search, but—I—will—find—him !”

He rushed from the tent.

The general simply smoked on and spoke not.

Willie Grant's face had clouded over again ; he was wondering if Poodah were mad.

Presently sunshine, light, and beauty burst into the tent, for little Etheldine came rushing to Willie's side.

Then something seemed to whisper to him these words, “Tell *her* the story of your perplexity.”

And he did. All the story of his life leapt word for word from Willie's lips, and the wide-eyed, wondering child listened and heard it all.

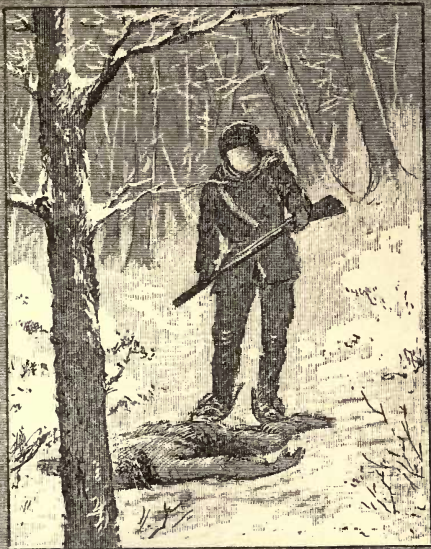
For a moment only did she look serious after he had finished talking. Then the cloud rolled off her brow.

“O Willie !” she said, “all will yet come well : you will find your father and you will find your friend ; I'm going to pray for that.”

The general put down his pipe stem now, and rose, “Come to me, little Ethie,” he said. “I am poor Dem's father, and I want to thank you for bringing us hope and consolation. Come !”

END OF BOOK SECOND.





Book III.

In the Far
West



CHAPTER I.

A HERO'S DEATH.—A JACK TAR'S WEDDING.

“HERE a sheer hulk lies poor Tom Bowling,
The darling of our crew ;
No more he'll hear the billows howling,
For death has broached him to.

His form was of the manliest beauty,
His heart was kind and soft ;
Faithful below he did his duty,
But now he's gone aloft.”

—*Dibdin.*



TIME flew by, and the war rolled on its weary, woeful course.

Three whole years have elapsed since little sunny-haired Etheldine Fraser brought hope and consolation to the tent of Dem Rutherford's father in Poonah.

The *Castile* has weathered many a storm since then, and been in many a battle and many a chase.

Ay, and there has been many a change in our navy, and changes even in the *Castile*.

Captain Oldrey still commands her, and Mr. Hayes walks the quarter-deck as her first lieutenant. Perkins the purser, and Curver, Buckram, and Hunt are still the same.

But, alas! poor Scotch Buchanan is no more. He died as we like to hear of heroes dying. There was no mistake about it this time. While cutting out a French brig with boats, and while in the very act of boarding, he was himself cut down, and fell on the blood-slippery deck of that vessel in the very hour of victory.

They took him aft and laid him on the skylight, with a pillow of captured flags to support his head.

Willie Grant came and sat by him as the ship was being sailed out from under the iron teeth of a couple of batteries which were sullenly firing, the enemy trying now to sink a ship that had been theirs but half an hour ago, quite regardless of the lives of their own countrymen on board.

Buchanan was very faint and pale, and the blood trickled and dropped off the skylight in a miniature cataract.

“We’ll soon get the doctor to see you.”

“It’ll be too late,” murmured the wounded lieutenant. “I’m going to l-lose the n-n-number of my mess this time. Thank God, we’ve got the ship though. I’ve lived a r-r-rough life, Grant, boy, but my hopes are all on Him who was pierced for me.”

“Willie Grant,” he said, “can you say a bit of a prayer?”

The sails had filled, the brig was moving slowly away seawards in the direction of the *Castile*, which was lying in the offing with main-yard aback. The guns still boomed from the port, and Willie knelt beside the dying

sailor, and with a beautiful pathos born of the occasion, and with one arm across Buchanan's breast, prayed earnestly for his shipmate.

Three or four rough sailors had crowded round, and tears that they made no attempt to conceal trickled over their weather-stained faces.

"O heavenly Father!" Willie was praying, "spare our friend; take him not away from us in the strength of his manhood. But if Thou seest good to take his soul to Thee, O enable us to say from our hearts, even in our sorrow, Thy will be done!"

Willie's wrist was clutched here by Buchanan's feeble hand. His lips moved, and all could hear these words:

"Thy w-w-w-will be done!"

The spirit had fled!

The poor Scotch lieutenant was buried at sea. Dick-Rae filled the vacancy as acting-lieutenant, and this was afterwards confirmed by the Admiralty, while almost at the same time Willie Grant was manufactured into a full-blown mate.

Neither he nor his friend may be considered boys any longer. Dick-Rae is nearly twenty years of age, and Willie well on to nineteen; the former, however, has only grown about a couple of inches, but he is smart all over, while Willie Grant is a broad-shouldered, brawny Scot, with a bold and handsome face, and an eye like the eagle's, that can look on the sun. I do not mean to say that Willie Grant can look at the sun with comfort; but

I'm quite sure of one thing, he does his duty and does not fear the face of clay.

Willie has been home for weeks in the old glen. Things are just as he left them. Old Miss McBride is no older apparently than ever. The squire was glad to see Willie, and to have him dine with him night after night, and tell him all the strange events of his brief career in the service, and the world-wide adventures he had already passed through.

Invalid and all as he was, he appeared to postpone shuffling off the mortal coil indefinitely, and really looked brighter than when Willie had seen him last.

Old Saunders, the boatman-fisherman-recluse, was glad to see Willie. He had many things to tell him; one was that the strange star on the mountain had never appeared again, and the question was,—who had taken it?

Willie had wandered up into the mountain, but strange to say he failed to find the cave, that part of the hill seemed all strange to him—new bushes, new boulders, and the old ones gone! It was a mystery of mysteries. It really seemed to Willie now as if the past, including even Dem and Poodah, had been all a dream.

And Willie had met his father, who was at home also for a spell of leave, and soon about to sail again.

“I'm downright proud of you, my boy,” Captain Grant had told his son. “Never fail to do your duty, lad, to your king and country, and trust Him—the great and good and everlasting God, Willie, in every trial and difficulty. He knows what is best for us, depend upon

it; so I say again, lad, trust Him thoroughly, wholly, out and out, and never fear for the future."

* * * * *

The *Castile* was lying at Plymouth. She was soon to be outward-bound to the West Indies in charge of a small convoy of merchant vessels.

Willie got down there in good time to join his ship, but the day of his arrival certainly was not one to raise his drooping spirits.

Drooping, did I say? Yes, and I am right. They tell us that those who live in wild mountain lands like our Scottish Highlands, are more superstitious than the dwellers in flowery plains and bird-haunted woods like those in mid-England. Perhaps it is the case; however, our hero, when he arrived in Plymouth, was in a strangely gloomy mood. Something seemed hanging over him. If any one had suddenly appeared round the corner of a street and told him that he would never return from sea, he would have believed it at once.

The day was dark and dull, the clouds heavy, and showers passing ever and anon over the town, driven on the wings of a sou'-westerly wind, which was nearly half a gale, and frothed and whitened all the bay.

Night came on, too, a full hour sooner than usual, a dreary night it turned out to be, and Willie was all alone in his hotel.

He tried a turn out of doors. Yes, it was a dreary night, and a depressing night of fog and gloom. The greasy oil lamps that glimmered here and there in the

streets looked ghastly and far away, their rays were speedily swallowed up in the black watery mist which had succeeded the day of storm, and the people—few they were indeed who were abroad—seemed at a little distance like gigantic demons or spectres, only taking on the appearance of human beings as they emerged with a leap, as it were, from the fog-bank, were seen for a moment and swallowed up behind you. An ugly night!

But on going aboard next morning, the reunion with his messmates, and the look of home that everything about him presented, soon banished the effects of the night's depression, and Willie found himself walking rapidly up and down the stone-white decks, talking and laughing as merrily with Dick-Rae as if there never had been anything but sunshine in the world.

"Signal came this morning," Dick-Rae was saying, "to tell us we would not sail for a fortnight yet. The convoy—and I do detest a convoy, Grant—won't be ready for more than a week, and we've got to dance attendance on them."

"Well," said Willie, "it doesn't matter a great deal, anyhow."

"No; but the best of it is, we have got to slip round to-night to Portsmouth. The wind is fair, and all that sort of thing, and I had a dinner party on which I'm glad to get clear of."

"But why are you glad to get to Portsmouth?"

"Oh, I haven't told you yet! It is all on account of dear Old Benbow. There have been *such* doings!"

“Tell me all about them.”

“Come down to the wardroom then; there is nobody there.”

Down they went.

“You see,” said Dick-Rae, as soon as they got seated, “you see, the course of true love never did run smooth. It hasn't in Benbow's case. We could hardly expect it. After an absence of three or four years, and bushels of letters following our Benbow all over the world, as you know, Benbow comes home, gets leave, goes to the Flounces, and finds the door shut in his face. Fact is, Mrs. Flounce would never have permitted the engagement had she not firmly believed that Jack Williams would either be killed, drowned, or die by yellow fever. Old Benbow hasn't done either. He comes home to claim his bride. Meanwhile a wealthy pork-butcher, with a beautiful villa at Fareham and a yacht at Haslar, has appeared on the scene, and Julia is to be *made* to marry this dealer in pork-dab and slush.”

“But Julia loves Benbow!”

“She does really. He is still to her the hero, gallant, good, and true, her own, own Jack, and all the rest of it. But, *nolens volens*, she marries old Slush in a week's time. Now, Willie Grant, what do you think of Walter Scott's poem,—

“Oh, young Lochinvar has come out of the west,
In all the wide border his steed was the best.”

“It is grand!” said Willie.

“Well,” said Dick-Rae, “we'll have it all over again.

I got Old Benbow into this love affair, and I'll see him out of it, if money and daring can do it."

"Bravo! Dick-Rae."

"Now, I'll tell you how the matter stands at present. Benbow is willing to do anything; so is Julia. She has been communicated with, and when we get round to Portsmouth we shall have letters every day."

"How do you expect to have them delivered?"

"Your boy Josh; he gets up as a watercress seller first-rate, and I have Mrs. Flounce's kitchen-maid on my side. Mind, we are all debarred from the Flounces. Not a blue-jacket or marine, officer or man, dare come near. Old Slush is always at the house, and it is part of the plan that Julia is to pretend to be resigned to her fate. We'll have some fun, you'll see. Hark! What is that? Away, side boys! Captain's coming, Willie; I must go and receive him."

When the ship got round to Portsmouth, Dick-Rae sent Josh on shore every day, and he duly sold the Flounces watercresses, and exchanged communications with Julia through the medium of the kitchen-maid.

Dick-Rae had gone to the city (London) for a few days. His rank in life gave him influence at the Admiralty, and in a short time Old Benbow was not only promoted to mate, but granted three months leave on full pay.

"For," explained Dick-Rae, "if we do succeed in the 'young Lochinvar' business, it would be altogether a pity if Old Benbow was to be done out of his honeymoon."

Now the wealthy pork-butcher whom the Flounces determined "their gal" should marry, was by no means a bad fellow in his way. A portly personage he was, with a red fat face and a wealth of waistcoat, and a pound-weight of gold seals dangling from his fob. Not only was he a pork-butcher, but a bit of a poet in his way; so, having a soul above slush, he proposed to Mrs. Flounce that Julia and he should be married, not in Portsmouth, or Southampton even, but in the bonnie wee church of the sweet little town of Lyndhurst, in the New Forest, where his mother lived.

This was agreed to; the days were still fine, and the drive from Southampton to Lyndhurst would be delightful. Then they would be married "all so gaily, O!" and drive to Lymington, embark in his yacht which lay near by, and sail away to Ireland to spend the happy honeymoon!

Of all these intentions Julia duly apprised Dick-Rae and her lover by means of the maid and the watercress seller. And Dick-Rae made his arrangements accordingly.

He, too, had a yacht stationed near Lymington—his brother's, which he had borrowed, and he put Benbow and a crew of trusty blue-jackets in charge thereof. They had nothing to do but keep silence and wait.

Well, the day that Mr. Slush fondly hoped would be big with his fate duly arrived. The whole party had arrived in Southampton the night before, and on the eventful morning, it is almost needless to say the happy Mr. Slush was up and dressed in good time. Better

dressed, at least more gaily, than ever: a flowered waistcoat, and a white stock fastened so tightly that it almost threatened suffocation.

About ten o'clock, steering for the west, four open carriages, each with postillions and four horses, went prancing away from Southampton. The first contained Mr. Slush and his friend, the others the Flounces and party.

The day was very beautiful, and the drive through the trees and ferns and flowers and forest most invigorating. But that wealthy pork-butcher and his friends would not have talked so loudly or laughed so lightly had they known the danger on ahead.

They were within some miles of Lyndhurst, and at a very lonely spot indeed, when suddenly a wild shout rang through the forest, and a cordon of ten armed and masked men was drawn across the road, while five others advanced to meet the carriages. They also were masked.

The gentlemen in front at once sprang up and levelled their pistols.

"It is not a bit of use," said one of the masked men, who, though determined in gait and bearing, was a singularly little fellow; "the charges were all drawn from your pistols before you left."

"By what authority," cried Mr. Slush, spluttering and getting black in the face, "do you dare, sir, to stop me on my marriage day?"

"Marriages were made in heaven," was the reply. "Now keep quiet, or you'll get hurt."

This man advanced to the ladies' carriage and ordered Julia to alight.

It is needless to say she required no second bidding. She was at once hurried away into the woods. The masked men disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as they had come.

"On! postillions, on!" roared Slush. "On to Lyndhurst and summon aid!"

Crack went the whips, and away the chariots rolled.

But Dick-Rae's carriage, with, besides himself, Willie and Julia, rolled out of Lyndhurst just as Mr. Slush's appeared.

It was a strange thing, but true, that the mob cheered Dick-Rae's trap, but did everything possible to hinder the wealthy pork-butcher's.

It was also a strange thing that not a constable was to be had for love or money. But Slush got fresh horses, and after some provoking delay, started by himself in pursuit of the fugitives, leaving the ladies behind. Twenty or thirty men on horseback came trooping on behind, just for the fun of the thing, or just as little country boys follow a hunt. Since the days when King Harry hunted the monks from tree to tree, I question if ever that old forest saw such an exciting chase.

Dick-Rae and party were not a mile ahead all the time, and often less, for they were harbouring their horses' strength for a spurt at the finish.

Dick-Rae had brought a bugle, and every now and again he stood up and gave the pursuers a blast that made the forest ring again, and more than once this cruel Julia waved her lily-white hand and handkerchief back towards her laggard lover, as if to beckon him on.

“ This is the best fun ever I had in all my little life,” cried Dick-Rae. “ Hurrah ! ”

“ One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung.
She is won, we are gone over bank, bush, and scaur,
‘ They’ll have fleet steeds that follow,’ quoth young Lochinvar.”

“ And as sure as a sixty-pounder,” continued Dick-Rae, “ yonder comes Lochinvar himself, the gallant Old Benbow—the bold Jack Williams ! ”

So it was, and gotten up, as one might say, regardless of expense. They say sailors cannot ride, but this particular sailor could, and very solid and substantial he looked on that big grey hired horse.

He had a bonnie smile from Julia, and there was love’s own light in her eye when she saw her hero. There was no time for further salutation.

“ Go ahead now, full sweep and full sail ! ” cried Dick-Rae to the postillion.

And away they went at the gallop. A farewell blast was blown on the bugle, a farewell wave of the saucy hand and handkerchief, then on they tore.

Dick-Rae’s party were on board the yacht, the sails

were filling to the breeze, and the pretty little vessel standing out to sea ere Mr. Slush and his friends appeared.

But even then he refused to give up the chase, and his yacht was also unmoored and sail set. And not his alone, but every boat that a bit of canvas could be clapped upon, went out to see how it would all end.

Not until Dick-Rae's yacht was well out at sea did the marriage take place. But *then* the ceremony was duly performed by a clergyman-friend of Dick-Rae's.

No need to hurry now.

The other yacht and a fleet of boats were coming up astern, when suddenly they heard guns—a regular salute—fired on board the runaway, while flags were run up till she looked quite *en gala*.

“It's all up!” said Mr. Slush. “Ready about, lads. I'm sold; done as brown as a Berkshire ham.”

A ringing cheer came up the wind from Dick-Rae's saucy little yacht. The boats took it up, and gave them back three times three, and a small one added for luck. Then a farewell gun was fired, and the happy party filled again, and bore up for the Isle of Wight.

CHAPTER II.

WITH A CONVOY TO THE WEST INDIES.

“ Now the ship is under way,
The breeze so willing
The canvas filling,
The press'd triangle cracks the stay,
So taut to haul the sheet we know.
We fondly gaze on eyes that seem
In parting with big tears to stream.
But come, lest ours should as fast flow ;
To the windlass once more go,
With Yeo! heave ho ! ”

—*Dibdin.*



EVERYBODY liked Archie Fitzgerald the new midshipman, from the very first day he joined the mess, and that was on the afternoon of the runaway match described in the last chapter.

About eighteen years old, Archie was, and Irish,—a tall, fair-haired, well-built lad, with blue eyes and a face of great expression; for like the sunshine and showers that sweep in spring time over his own green island, sadness and mirth seemed to struggle for the mastery on his countenance.

He was polite to a degree that recalled the old days of chivalry ; but any one could see that Archie's politeness was not assumed, it was part of his very nature, the outcome of generous, kindly feelings that would not be hidden.

Archie was very much amused at Willie Grant's account of Benbow's wedding. His eyes sparkled with delight as Willie graphically described the scene of the abduction in the forest and the grand chase through the beautiful woods.

"Oh!" he cried, "isn't it I who would have given worlds to have been there myself. But boys," he added, "it is a common thing in Ireland."

His messmates laughed.

"Yes, indeed," said Archie. "It isn't joking I am, a bit. Sure, the girls prefer it; they like to be run away with."

"What! against the wishes of their parents?" said Willie.

"No, I don't say that; and there's where the fun comes in. The parents may be as willing for the match as any of them; but the young lady lets on that they aren't. So there is a grand elopement some fine moonlight night, with the priest, maybe, waiting twenty miles away, in some old castle, and everything as neat and pretty as shoes and buckles on a fair maid's feet.

"Well, as soon as the youngsters in their carriage or car have got a fair start, out comes the father in his carriage, postillions and all complete.

“ ‘Now,’ he says to the boys, ‘don’t overtake them for the loife av ye. ’Twould spoil the fun.’ ”

“Crack go the whips. ‘Hurrah!’ cry the postillions, and away they go, helter-skelter, up hill and down dale. Then, may be, towards the end there is a bit of a breakdown in the pater’s carriage. This is all sham, sure enough, and the indignant father comes rushing in, whip in hand, just as the proceedings are concluded, as neat as you please. Then he forgives and blesses them, and home they all go together, and the dancing and fun are kept up for a fortnight. That’s the way they do it in the west of old Ireland.”

Dick-Rae dropped in after dinner, and took his old seat.

“ In three days we are off with this convoy.”

“ Tell me, sir,” said Archie Fitzgerald, “ what this convoying business is like. I’ve never had the honour, you know. Is it pleasant at all ? ”

“ Well,” replied Dick-Rae, “ it all depends upon taste. Some might think it pleasant. *I* don’t. Now for instance, we are off to the West Indies, with about a dozen craft of different kinds. Imagine yourself, then, on shore having to walk a distance of three miles from church in charge of and escorting four or five old maids and half a dozen children of various ages. There is nobody but yourself to protect them, and the road is very lonely and lined with tramps. You yourself are hungry, and there is the certainty of an excellent dinner when you get home ; but these old maids won’t walk more than

a mile and a half an hour, while your usual form is four to five. They keep starting, too, at every waving bush, or saying, 'Oh! I'm sure there's an awful man behind that tree, we shall all be murdered.' You have got to assure them over and over again there is no danger, and if a tramp does come swaggering along, and look at them, you have got to fight him with all your convoy hanging on to your coat-tails."

"A pleasant picture!" said Archie.

"Yes; and some of the small fry are for ever dropping behind, and you've got to cruise round after them and bring them up, like a collie dog with straggling sheep. That is a picture of conveying on shore. Convoying by sea is much the same—only worse."

* * * * *

The comparison drawn above by Dick-Rae in the gun-room mess was indeed a good one. However, on this long and lazy voyage to the West Indies every one, fore and aft, was determined to enjoy themselves to the utmost.

Captain Oldrey and the wardroom officers seemed bent on making things as comfortable and pleasant for all hands as possible. But the duty was strictly carried out, nevertheless, and midshipman Fitzgerald turned out to be an excellent young officer.

He used to be up in the morning, both he and Willie Grant, long before there was really any occasion if their watches were below. But they liked to paddle about the decks during the time the hose was playing around, with naked feet and trousers rolled up to the knees. Then

they would have a hose-bath, that is they had the hose played over them; so that what with one thing and another, they used to go down below to breakfast with the appetites of a couple of old hunters.

This wholesome, healthful way of spending their morning was in strange contrast to the method adopted by Mr. Smart—the poor lazy youth who spent his existence poring over never-to-be-learned logarithms—and the dandy purser's clerk, Mr. Salmon. Neither ever appeared till breakfast was well through; then they only dawdled over it, very often grumbling and growling because the viands were not more savoury.

Between England and the Azores, at which islands a call was to be made for water, the weather was about on its worst behaviour. A gale first, and too much of it by far, albeit it blew in the right direction. It required all the skill and seamanship of the skippers of the various vessels to enable them to sail with anything like an equality of speed. Some were ahead of the *Castile*, others far astern, and long Tom Thumb the signalman was at work nearly all day, and every day, till he declared that little more would finish him.

“What a trate for the sharks you'd be, Tom,” said Paddy Flint. “It is two of them could dine off ye aisily enough—one at each end, ating away till they came to the centre.”

But long Tom was not the only one who was hard worked, for a very bright look out had to be kept, both by night and day, and all kinds of lights kept burning.

If a strange sail was sighted, especially if she looked a bit suspicious, it was marvellous to see how speedily the little fleet crept together, till assured by long Tom that all was safe ; then, like birds when the hawk flies away to his woods, they would scatter again.

After the gale of wind a series of terrible squalls occurred.

No one who has not been on board a ship struck by a white squall can have the remotest idea of the imminence of the danger if the vessel has not had sail taken in, in time. Why they call it a white squall I cannot say, unless from the fact that a long white line with a misty cloud over it on the horizon is often the first indication one gets of the approach. That white line is broken water, and in a very short time your vessel will be in the midst of it, and the wind roaring and howling and shrieking through the rigging, as if a whole menagerie of wild beasts had suddenly boarded you. If sails have not been taken in with sufficient celerity, woe betide you if they are not rent in ribbons, going off like guns, and continuing the racket with a noise like platoon firing.

In one of these squalls a brig went down. She was visible in the rear before it came on, when it blew over there was no vestige of her to be seen. With all her brave crew she had gone beneath—taken aback, in all probability ; she had died and made no sign.

The weather was fine for days before the lofty Mount Pico was sighted, which towers to a height of nearly eight thousand feet above the level of the blue sea.

It was off the island of San Miguel that the *Castile* and her convoy lay while water and fruit were taken on board. Many of the *Castile's* crew were sick, and so were others in the fleet, so* that oranges and good water were things to be thankful for.

Although time was an object, still Captain Oldrey did not hinder his officers from having several cruises on shore.

One whole day was spent by Dick-Rae, Willie Grant, and Archie, the new midshipman.

I wish I could tell you a tenth of all the strange and beautiful that met their gaze wherever they went, or a fifth part of the fun they had.

The quaint streets and houses of Ponto Delgado, the curiously dressed men and women that thronged the thoroughfares, mostly Portuguese, with a sprinkling of the nigger element. The lovely gardens, the orange-groves, and pine-apple plantations, the fish ponds alive with golden and silver fish ; and out in the country the terribly wild scenery, the splendid forests, the yawning gulfs, the volcanic craters spouting forth mud and steam, the ever-changing views, the ferns, the flowers, and the azure sea itself, with its blue waves breaking in silvery lines on the beach or thundering against the awful and dizzy cliffs. From beginning to end, that day on shore was like one long, bright, busy, happy dream.

Lights were twinkling in the town, and here and there on the sea, when the boat at last left the shore ; and over all the scene a broad moon shone down, and land

and water, and the distant mountains on which white clouds were resting, were bathed in its dreamy light.

With little adventure worth relating, and without danger of any kind,—the sun shining bright all day long, the stars or moon as clear at night, the sea at times resplendent with phosphorescent light that turned even sharks into fishes of fire, and sparkled on the long fin-wings of flying fish, with a glorious breeze and a rippling ocean,—the *Castile* and her convoy made good way, and touched at Bermudas fifteen days after they had left the Azores.

One vessel took the ground here, and as it happened to be high water at the time, it was found impossible to get her off; at all events the *Castile* would not wait, but had to leave her to the tender mercies of others. Indeed, when the tide receded, she was high if not dry, for on the coral reef around her men could walk.

The boys and Dr. Curver spent one or two very pleasant days on shore here, and other parties went fishing. Some of the fish caught were too beautiful to eat, others far too grotesque in shape.

Dr. Curver of course was collecting specimens with the help of his boys, among whom was Josh, a very busy-body of a boy indeed. I am sure the boys enjoyed themselves, for the good doctor kept them laughing, and he fed them well, and they returned to the *Castile* singing "Auld lang syne."

But one little adventure which Curver had in pursuit of science I must permit him to relate in his own

words. It was at mess on the same evening he told his yarn.

“Mr. Purser Perkins,” he said, laughing.

“Sir to you,” said Purser Perkins.

“You must tell that dandy clerk of yours I want a pair of shoes.”

“Why,” said the purser, “I let you have a pair only yesterday.”

“That you did, Perkins, and they are gone. I sigh when I think of it. Pass the pine-apple, Perkins.”

“Yes, but tell us about your shoes.”

“Yes,” cried Dick-Rae, “spin us a yarn, doctor.”

“It isn’t much of a yarn,” said Curver; “but you know I and my boys landed to-day on a bonnie little bit of an island that didn’t seem inhabited. I left the lads to bathe and enjoy themselves, and cook the tiffin, while I started for a run into the interior. I should tell you that, except in the little cove where the boat was drawn up, the island is surrounded by black, hard, beetling cliffs.

“Well, off I started, and soon found a little beast-trodden path that led me for a whole mile through one of the tangliest, scrubbiest bits of jungle I ever remember. The path was very narrow, and I had to bend very low to get along at all. I came out at last into a clearing, in what I suppose was the centre of the island. There were a few bread-fruit trees growing here, but nothing more interesting was to be seen; so I started back again for the beach. I had not gone many yards before I dis-

covered a snake, of very questionable appearance, depending from a bough right over my path. A morsel of wood or chip of bark would have dislodged it, but happening to spy another footpath that apparently led beachwards, I struck into that and continued on. There were many other little paths in the jungle, and I took those I considered right, with the result of soon getting completely lost, bewildered, and unable to tell east from west. There was nothing for it now but to shout, which I did with a will, and by-and-by the men answered me, and I immediately commenced struggling through the tanglement in the direction of the sound. With torn clothes and bleeding face and hands, I got out at last on to the top of the cliff that overhung the sea, and found myself about a quarter of a mile from the little bay where the boats were. Now, I have walked on many strange places in my time, but never before on such a surface as that cliff-top presented. It resembled an immense petrified honeycomb or sponge, with edges sharp as knives. I had not gone a hundred yards before the uppers of my shoes were completely cut away from the soles.

“What now was to be done? I was indeed in a difficulty, not to say on the horns of a dilemma. To proceed even a few paces without shoes would have resulted in fearful laceration of the feet. I couldn't stand there all day, and to sit down would have been worse. Happily my presence of mind did not desert me. I quickly divested myself of my jacket, which I folded

up and laid down a yard in front of me. Leaving the remains of my shoes behind, I stepped nimbly on to my jacket, and proceeded to take off and fold up my only other available garment, placing it down in front, and stepping on to it in turn. Thus stepping from garment to garment, putting each one in front alternately, my mode of progression was slow but safe. But, bare-legged, upon that breezy cliff-top, in such scanty *déshabillé*, I must have presented a singular sight. I don't wonder that some of the boys, after looking at me for a moment, had to lie down on the sands to laugh, and I forgave the lot of them for cheering me. It was fun to them, but a very serious business to the principal actor. Verily the pursuit of science in foreign countries leads one many a droll dance."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the merry purser, "it was well for you, doctor, there were no pleasure-boats cruising about."

"For goodness sake, Perkins! the bare idea of such a possibility would have caused me to faint on the cliff-top.

CHAPTER III.

CONTAINING MANY STRANGE ADVENTURES.

“STILL onward, fair the breeze, nor rough the surge,
The blue waves sport around the stern they urge.”

—*Byron.*



IT was a lovely evening, just enough wind—or rather warm air—to raise a gentle ripple on the waters and keep the sails well full; almost every vessel of the convoy carried stunsails, so that before the sun went down, and from a distance, the fleet must have looked like a flock of gigantic sea-birds afloat on the water.

Far away on the western horizon were the hills of Jamaica, barely distinguishable against a rock-work of clouds behind which the sun was declining in rosy splendour.

Lower and lower it sank, till it disappeared behind the cloudland, edging the upper portion with a broad line of gold.

Long after he had sunk, one crimson cloudlet stood high in the air, like a pillar of fire, but this changed at

last to purple, and then to grey, and stars came out in the east, and a half moon shed its silvery light on the waves. The convoy at sunset was well together, and the signals had been made to take in sail and make all snug for the night; for safety now was more to be considered than speed itself.

It might have been about ten o'clock, although four bells had not struck, when suddenly over the water, from one of the vessels in the rear, rang out the boom of a signal gun.

Something was wrong, that was evident enough.

The *Castile* was rounded to with all speed, and hardly had the sails been adjusted, and silence once more restored, than from the direction in which the *Walbeck*—a barque—lay came the noise and din as of a fierce conflict. There were wild shouts, and the clashing of swords, a heaving, thudding noise, as of timbers being knocked about, and every now and again a blood-curdling shriek, as if from some one in an agony of pain and terror.

“Stand by the bow-chasers!” cried Captain Oldrey.
“All ready on the main-deck?”

“All ready, sir, and the men at the guns.”

On tacked the *Castile*, but all was now silent as the grave on the *Walbeck*, and even her lights were lowered.

When the frigate got near enough to see anything distinctly, they noticed a long, low, lateen-rigged vessel leave the *Walbeck's* side, and go off like a bird before the wind. The barque, too, had altered her course, and was standing out to sea.

“That is a picaroon,” said Mr. Hayes, “and the *Walbeck* is captured.”

“Let her have it, if you can, Hayes,” said the captain.

Not to alter the course of the *Castile*, broadside guns were fired, but it was like trying to bring down a night-hawk with bullets, and the picaroon sheered rapidly out of range.

All efforts were now directed to the recapture of the *Walbeck*.

This itself would have proved in vain had not the wind—as it sometimes does in those seas—gone down almost suddenly.

The sails on the *Walbeck* flapped or shivered, and her way was stopped. Not so that on the picaroon, for oars were got out, and away she went, and was soon lost to view in the starlight.

“Away boats!”

Men never obeyed a summons with greater alacrity.

“Tumble up, lads! tumble up!” cried Dick-Rae cheerily.

“Ee—ee—reepity, peepity—ee—ee,” went the boatswain’s pipe, and in less than ten minutes five boats were manned and armed, and being swiftly rowed towards the *Walbeck*.

There were red marines in each, and blue-jackets, burning for the fray.

Captain Buckram was coolly smoking a cigar in the stern sheets of Dick-Rae’s boat.

As they advanced, and the hull of the *Walbeck* showed darker and higher in the water, they were received by a volley of musketry.

A ringing cheer was the reply.

“We’re coming!” cried Dick-Rae. “Be with you in a minute. Don’t be impatient.”

The men laughed, and sure enough, in about a minute Dick’s boat was alongside.

Buckram threw away the end of his cigar, drew his sword and was among the first to leap on board.

The vessel swarmed with desperadoes, and the battle was a fiercer, tougher one than had been anticipated. Victory was achieved at length, however, though with some loss on our side. Five were taken prisoners. These fellows, who turned out to be the principal officers of the picaroon, locked themselves up in the cabin of the ship, and threatened to fire the magazine.

A spare spar was silently handled by half a dozen marines. One blow from this impromptu battering-ram shivered the door into flinders, and the desperadoes were quickly overpowered and bound hand and foot.

But where was the crew of the *Walbeck*? Gone, to a man,—butchered where they stood, or pitched overboard alive to feed the sharks that in these seas, like vultures, seem to sniff the battle from afar.

The calm that had enabled the *Castile* to recapture the *Walbeck* was of short duration. Hardly had the boats returned to the ship, a crew being of course left on the merchantman, than from the westward great white and

grey clouds began to drift upwards and over the moon; when the latter did shine out, it looked very bright indeed, and the sky around was of an intense blue, almost approaching to black.

Soon the sails began to fill again. Signals were made to the convoy to close-reef and stand out seawards, steering south and by east.

At first it was feared a hurricane was approaching, but although before many hours were over the wind was blowing and tearing through the riggings of the ships, and masts were bending before it like fishing-rods or snapping like reeds, it never approached to anything like the violence of those awful circular storms; nor, owing to the suddenness, probably, with which the gale had commenced, was the sea unusually high.

Willie Grant had been left in charge of the *Walbeck* with a picked crew—good men, but in numbers somewhat few to fight so strong a storm. He had two men at the wheel, and just as little sail as could be done with.

The prisoners were ironed and in the cabin still. About two o'clock in the morning, Willie was walking along the upper deck when he noticed that the light had gone out in the cabin. At the same time he thought he noticed a dark figure creep stealthily past the sentry and make its way to the hatch that led to the lower deck. Here was the spirit room, and right above it the magazine, though in different decks; merchant ships were obliged to carry arms, and stow them where they could.

Willie went hastily down below. The sentry had seen nothing. He took a light and entered the cabin. One prisoner was gone, and the others grinned at him in hateful defiance.

Now Willie had been all over the ship twice already; he could find his way in the dark, and as this would give him an advantage over a cunning foe—himself carrying no light—he did not hesitate a moment, but slipping off his shoes dived below. With the exception of the creaking of the rudder hinges and the jerking sound of the ship's timbers there was but little noise down here.

But look along the narrow passage; there crouches a man, his face visible in the light of a dimly burning lantern. There is near him a heap of tow. He is arranging it, and about to apply the light, when, like a young tiger, Willie springs on him from behind. The light goes out. Then in the darkness of that narrow passage there is a fearful struggle for life.

There is a dagger in the hands of the desperado, and twice Willie feels its cold touch on his neck.

How the struggle might have ended it is impossible to say,—for one is armed, and fierce as a tiger cub, the other has but his own young strength and limbs to depend upon; but a light soon appears on the scene, and the would-be murderer is rolled senseless with the butt end of a musket.

It is needless to say that the prisoners had no further chance given them of escaping.

It seemed strange that instead of liberating the other

prisoners, when he himself got free, the desperado should have bent his energies to an attempt to fire the ship.

The longest night has an end, and Willie was glad indeed when the sun once more rose up through a yellow haze, and shone over the Caribbean Sea, and gladder still when from the mast-head he saw the *Castile*, and every vessel of the convoy safe and sound. The wind had gone down, and in two days' time the ships were under the protection of Port Royal batteries, and the *Castile's* duties were over for a time.

In a few weeks time she would return with a convoy.

Meanwhile the prisoners from the *Walbeck* were tried on shore and condemned to death, and to die by the rope on board the unfortunate barque they had caused to be stained with blood.

The desperadoes—Cubans they were of the worst and most reckless type—were returned to the ship, and next morning brought on deck to meet their doom. Stern, pale, but reckless withal, they appeared. They glanced around them, and appeared to take some interest in the preparations, but refused all spiritual consolation. The marines, with fixed bayonets, stood by the gangways, officer and men of the *Castile* on the quarter-deck, facing forward. There were many armed boats alongside, and the riggings of every ship were manned, while the water was covered in all directions with noisy shore-boats and their gabbling crews of sightseers. The platform was erected on the fo'c'sle, the men mounted with slow but

firm step. The signal gun was fired. It was a startling report, and almost at the same moment the wretches were hoisted aloft, and soon were no more as far as this world is concerned.

* * * * *

As the *Castile* would not leave Jamaica for nearly three weeks, there was ample time for both officers and men, who were so inclined, to see something of life on this strange and beautiful island.

Great changes have taken place since the time in which the scene of my story is laid, but travelling in those days was usually performed—by those who could afford it—on horseback.

Dr. Curver and his boys were on shore many times, and as they could not have horses, and had to walk, the doctor tramped alongside them.

On some of these trips into the interior, Curver and his little men were joined by that trio of officers who seemed determined to see all that could be seen wherever they went, Willie, Dick, and Archie. The heat during the day, however, was intense, and in some parts the dust aggravated the discomfort.

But the scenery was sublime, enchanting! Let me try to describe one day on shore.

It was meant for a picnic, so the doctor determined to ride to-day, taking with him only a few of his strongest boys to carry luncheon, and these could walk or run if they chose. Long before the sun rose, or was dreaming

of rising, the boats started for Kingston. A gentle breeze was blowing, and it was made the most of; and while it bowled the boats along, it refreshed all hands and made every one happy and cheerful.

They got well away into the interior before sunrise, along a lovely valley, over roads that certainly were rough enough, but the shrubs and hedgerows of cactus, and the banks were adorned with a wealth of floral beauty that is simply indescribable, and once seen can never be forgotten.

But the main road was exchanged at last for mountain climbing, and horses had to be left in charge of the accompanying negroes, faithful hired fellows, who seemed delighted to do anything for "de buckree sailor gem-lums."

The hill top is reached at last, just as the sun, for some time heralded by clouds of gold and crimson, rose majestically over the distant peaks of the Blue Mountains. Mists now, that had been lying low in valleys and looked like vast sheets of water, begin to dissolve.

It is quiet and still up here, but signs of life and activity already begin to show in the beautiful landscape beneath. Smoke rolls slowly up from the plantations. Gangs of negroes go merrily fieldwards to the cane brakes, and droves of lowing cattle appear in the pasture lands, as the fog lifts off. It is as if a curtain was raised from nature's own stage. The whole scene, let the eye rest wherever it likes, is wild, romantic, and lovely. In the plantations and copses not far beneath, birds are

trilling their soft low morning songs, interrupted every moment by the insolent chattering of parrots. Far to the south is the blue, quiet sea itself, while the sky above is almost cloudless.

There is a delightful breeze up here at this early time of day, but by-and-by the birds will cease to sing, and retire to sit open-mouthed and panting under the green shade of the plaintain groves, and the cattle will seek shelter under those splendid trees that bound their pasture-lands.

And now second breakfast is eaten and relished, the first was a mere offput.

Then the business of the day, and that is sight-seeing or the collection of strange specimens of natural history, is gone into with as much zeal as if it were a duty.

It is in the mountain regions where the grandest scenery is to be found, for this island is not *all* a paradise by any means; but long before night our visitors are satiated with pleasure, aye, I may as well tell all the truth, and say tired; and though at sunset the beauty of the landscape around them, and the calm serenity of the evening hour, threw a glamour over many that kept them silent, still the harsh greeting voices of the parrots, and the insolent inquisitiveness of mosquitoes somewhat marred the effect, albeit the air was laden with the odours from a thousand bright flowers now closing their petals for the night.

On the way back, Dr. Curver was telling his boys of

adventures he himself had engaged in some years before, when our troops were on the warpath in these very glens against the savage maroons or aborigines of the island. He was recounting how our fellows often came off second best in fights against these wild men—who after all were only defending their hearths and homes against the tyranny of their oppressors—because they marched through the villages with flags flying, and drums beating, exposed to attacks from every side by a ruthless enemy who seldom allowed himself to be even seen.

A few days after this, hot though it was, Dick-Rae and party went shooting, and having succeeded in getting a good guide—a Maroon,—although the sport was very fatiguing, they managed to get a good bag, including some species of wild duck, plover, quails and pigeons.

But the great event of the day rested in the fact that poor little Josh got all but gobbled up by an alligator. Nobody saw the occurrence, and had the awful reptile succeeded in his intentions—there would have been no Josh left. As it was, the *monster horrendus* snapped a well-filled bag of game clean off the boy's back; he was content to swallow that, so Josh got away.

“Well, what matters it, an inch of a miss is as good as a mile.” That is what Willie told his friend. “You may be glad,” he added “that it wasn't your head he got hold of, instead of the bag.”

“Would he have swallowed me whole?”

“Oh! no, not quite, at least not just then. He would

have put you in his cupboard under a stone beneath the water, till tender."

When the party returned on board, however, and Josh's adventure was related, science stepped in, in the shape of Dr. Curver, who informed our hero that the Jamaica alligator, though sometimes reaching a length of nearly fifteen feet, lived principally on fish, and only came on shore during the hottest hours of the day. The creature, therefore, who snapped at Josh must have done so in defence of her young ones, that might have been near her.

While Willie was having breakfast next morning, he received a summons to the captain's cabin.

"I'm sorry to say, Mr. Grant," said Captain Oldrey, "we are going to lose you for a time, if not for ever."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes; but it ought to be good news to you. You are wanted to fill the position of acting third lieutenant on the *Dardanelle*. I trust you will like it, do well, and be promoted as soon as you return to England."

Willie said little more than "Thank you, very much, sir." Then he retired.

He went back and finished his breakfast almost in silence, then he ran up on deck, where he found Dick-Rae.

"We'll be sorry to lose you," said Dick.

"And on my honour, I'll be sorry to go. It may be for my good, and my advancement, but indeed, indeed, I doubt; I'd rather be a midshipman on the dear old

Castile than flag-lieutenant to an admiral. But," he added, "duty is duty."

"Yes," said Dick-Rae, with a bit of a sigh; "duty is everything. Though I'm sorry just the same."

CHAPTER IV.

“AMEN! GOD BLESS YOU, DEM!”

“HE! when insult hisses near,
Or scorn drops hemlock on the ear,
Or fraud has triumphed over right,
Or gentleness is mocked by might—
Then in a whirlwind chafes along
The soul beneath a sense of wrong.”

—Tupper.



AS far as the actual comfort of ship-life went, Willie Grant was better off on the 64-gun ship *Dardanelle* than he had been on the *Castile*. But having seen so much service in the latter, he looked upon her as his home; while in the new ship

“. . . it was a change,
Faces and footsteps, and all things strange.”

No, not quite everything, for he had begged leave to take Josh with him as his servant, and this was granted.

But as he had said, he would have preferred swinging in a hammock on the orlop deck of the *Castile* to sleeping in a cot in a main-deck cabin of this lordly sixty-four.

He found his new messmates everything that could be desired: that was a comfort. The ship had been several years in commission, and had done no end of daring deeds, with that splendid audacity for which our navy has been famed from its very infancy.

It may sound like boasting on my part, but I do but write as I feel, and I assuredly believe that the British navy of the present day is infinitely superior to any other in the courage and dash of its blue-jackets. Other nations may get as good ships. Money will buy a ship, but cannot purchase sailors, and it takes centuries to make them. The British navy has a pedigree: a story is entwined in its banner, a story that beats all stories that have ever been written since the creation of the world, penned with cutlass, gun, and boarding pike, transcribed with the blood of heroes, dead and gone. No officer or man can tread our decks without feeling the honour and responsibility of the sacred trust that has been bestowed upon him, and feeling that death were to be preferred to anything that should tarnish that honour, or dim for a moment a ray of the halo which surrounds the

“Flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze!”

At the time our Willie Grant joined the *Dardanelle*, the war had been raging for some time between America and Britain.

I never can read the history of this fratricidal struggle without my eyes filling with tears. No matter who was

in fault—and honestly speaking, I do not think it was the Americans—it was an unnatural war. It gives me the same sort of shuddering “grue” to think of it, that I once experienced in seeing a father fly cruelly at his son, and that son with tears in his eyes hitting the old man back again.

However, war had been declared, and already the Americans had proved themselves chips of the old block, daring bold sons of illustrious progenitors.

We had lost battles by sea. What brooks it to say that the vessels that beat us were better manned and heavier gunned than ours, or to hint that a certain Yankee novelist drew largely upon his imagination in describing these sea-fights. Let us rather give honour to whom honour is due, and admit we met for the first time in our history

“Foemen worthy of our steel.”

* * * * *

The first night of Willie Grant’s promotion to cabin and cot was a very restless one indeed. It was his night “in”; it might just as well have been his night out, for sleep was impossible till far into the “wee short ’oors” of morning.

When his waking thoughts got composed at last, they merged into toilsome, wearying, and harassing dreams. He was home again in Glengair, but all seemed changed in the place, clouds and gloom hung over hills and glens, the woods were of an ugly olive green, and no longer resounded with the song of birds, but with mournful

notes of night-hawk and owl, the streams that used to go lispig and murmuring on over their pebbly beds, were now brown and swollen, and went dashing on over boulders and rocks and fallen trees, now overflowing their banks and sweeping through the broom and furze, now settling into sullen-looking pools at the bottom of which he could see ugly faces grinning up at him. Anon he was toiling up the mountain side, where that strange star used to shine, toiling on after——was it a spirit? No, it was Poodah; but what a weird, unearthly look he had! The heather they trod among was in bloom, but oh, see, the crimson bells drop blood!

Willie started in agony; but he was tired now, and presently he slept again. Once more Poodah appeared in his dream. He beckoned him on and on, and presently they stood in the cave on the mountain side. Poodah pointed to the doorway. Willie rushed in, and there, lying on a couch, but stark and stiff, was the friend of his schooldays, poor Dem!

He awoke again, and slept no more.

It was soon evident to Willie that his step had not brought him happiness. From the first he had two enemies on board: one was a man called Harness; the other was the captain, Harness's uncle, and bearing the same name.

The captain was a type of the old bully, not then nor for years after extinct in the service,—a fellow who still kept up many of the old brutal customs, such as sending the bo's'n to hit the men right and left, as if they had

been hounds, as they went into the rigging or came up to keep a watch. A man whose very language was unprintable, and a disgrace to a king's quarter-deck.

But why should he be at enmity with our hero? Simply because he considered that his nephew ought to have been promoted to the acting vacancy. Had it occurred at sea, he would have been so; but it happened in harbour, and the admiral of the station had naturally enough something to say in the matter.

From the moment he stepped on board, young Harness set himself to hate Willie. This mate was a second edition of his uncle—a rough, uncouth cub, and a bully into the bargain.

One sentence which he spoke *at* Willie on the second day is enough to prove what young Harness was. Harness was smoking forward with some of his messmates when Willie Grant came and leant for a moment near the fore-rigging, and close to the group.

“Third lieutenant indeed!” cried Harness, “as I was saying, boys, I could manufacture a better officer than he out of a ball o’ spun yarn.”

Then, turning immediately round to the gentleman he had insulted, he doffed his cap with an insolent bow and leer, and said, in what he considered humorous English, “Ho! I begs your parding ’umbly, sir. Didn’t know as how you was a-listening. Last lieutenant, sir, never condescended to play the spy, sir, on we poor gun-roomites.”

Willie turned quietly on his heel and walked away.

Nothing that he did or could do pleased the captain, who ordered him about as if he had been a galley slave.

An invitation to dinner, in company with two other wardroom officers and young Harness, was sent by the captain one day. Willie thought surely this would help to bring about a better understanding, and he entered the captain's quarters with quite a cheerful aspect.

Alas! and alas! he was mistaken. The meal was a ghastly one; not that the viands were not excellent, or the wine as well, but there was a cloud over the table. The captain maintained his coarse, domineering manner, every one toadied to him or feared him, the very servants started and trembled when he addressed them.

After dinner, when dessert came on, both he and his pretty nephew drank more wine than they ought to have done, and the latter told anecdotes that pained Willie to hear.

This was bad enough, but when the captain began to pull the officers of the *Castile*, one by one, to pieces, in a most offensive manner, Willie's blood began to boil.

"You forget, sir," he said, "they are my old ship-mates."

"Don't be so thin-skinned!" cried the captain.

"Nor so lady-like," added Harry Harness.

The attack on the Castilites, as the captain called them, was now renewed. Willie started up at last.

"Excuse me, sir," he said to the captain, "but I wish to retire."

"Then," shouted Captain Harness, "by heavens! you

shall not, sir. I order you to sit down. The service has come to a pretty pass when a junior cub of a lieutenant dares to dictate to a post-captain in his own ship."

Willie Grant slowly sat down. Then he took an orange and began to cut it up, saying calmly, as he did so,—

"See, sir, I obey you. I am at your table, I am eating with you now; and, sir, if I know anything of the customs of society, either on shore or afloat, I sit with you on terms of *equality*, and I should think there was little danger of so refined and courteous an officer as Captain Harness forgetting the duties incumbent on a host towards his guest. I regret if I have given offence."

The captain looked at him for a moment, then burst into a horse laugh.

"Ha! ha! ha! Well! well! well! well!" he cried. "Never mind. Give us a song, Harry."

* * * * *

Three weeks after this refined and elegant dinner party, the *Dardanelle* was cruising off the coast of Newfoundland. French privateers had been heard of in that direction. Where is it that they were not heard of, I wonder, in those dashing days of old?

It was in the early part of 1813, and the weather, even for the climate and season of the year, was wildly inclement. Snow fogs were frequent, often the frost was intense, and the drift blowing about on the decks as it might on a moor or shore.

Little Josh was in the mate's watch. I still call him little Josh, for although now sixteen years of age, he was

still to all appearance the little waif of the wilds we first found him. He was strong and hardy, however, although small; he really possessed eyes that seemed to see what no one else could. He was, therefore, very frequently placed on the outlook in the fore-top or fore-masthead, and kept there for hours. This would have been bad enough in any climate, but in weather such as was now encountered, it was killing even to a lad with a constitution like Josh's. But this was not the worst. Harness knew he was Willie's servant when off duty, and therefore took every chance of brutally ill-using the poor boy, even to kicking him, so that Willie Grant bitterly repented having taken this faithful little henchman of his away from the *Castile*, where he was happy and a favourite.

One day Willie was standing talking to Josh by one of the main-deck guns when the mate came along.

“Hurry up, you young muff,” cried Harness to the boy. “It's your watch.”

“The bell has not gone, sir,” said Willie Grant angrily; “but go on, Josh.”

Away went the boy.

“I'll make you move quicker,” Willie heard the mate cry. “I'll make you move.”

Next moment Josh received a foul blow on the neck from the mate's clenched fist, and that, coupled with the impetus of his own forward movement, brought him to the deck with fearful violence. His brow struck a ring bolt, and he lay still, stunned and bleeding.

"Get up!" roared the mate, lifting his foot for a kick.

But that blow never fell, for next moment he was dragged back with such a will that, tripping against a gun-wheel, he measured his length on the deck.

"Coward!" hissed Willie, "to strike a child."

Harness started to his feet. He cared not then that Willie was his superior officer, he flew at him like a wild cat. Willie kept his temper, and the mate went down with a badly bleeding nose. Up again,—and down again. He was not so lively now. A look of fearful hate came into his face as he hissed out the words,—

"You shall live to rue this."

The doctor came up.

"I have seen all," he said quietly, "and heard your words, Mr. Harness. If your uncle were not captain, Mr. Grant might try you by court-martial. As it is, you can go, but don't forget my words."

Poor Josh was put on the sick list, and as far as he was concerned Harness's tyranny was at an end.

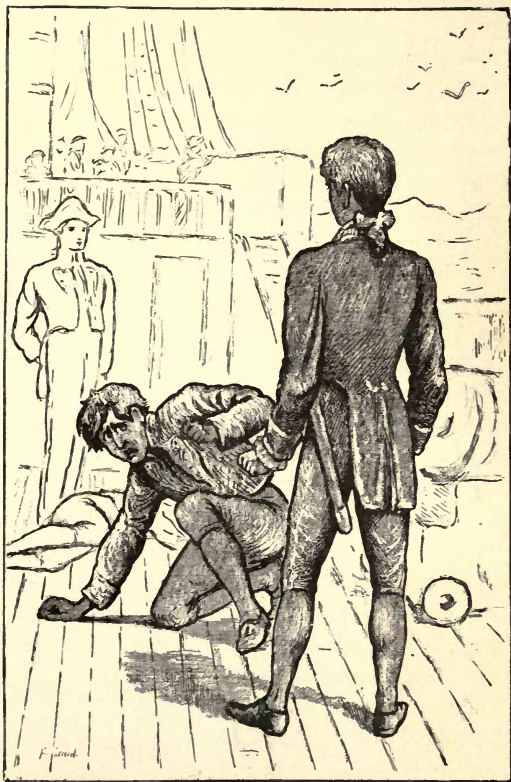
That same evening Willie found, on entering his cabin after dinner, a card lying on his chest of drawers, and written on it these words,—

"I'll be revenged on *you*, H. H."

Willie laughed. "He's been drinking again, I suppose," he thought.

He was about to tear the card up when the doctor entered.

"Come and have a smoke, old man."



Willie kept his temper, and the mate went down with a badly bleeding nose.

Willie handed him the card.

“Keep that,” said the doctor. “It might come in handy. I could swear to the scoundrel’s handwriting even if it were not initialed.

It is often the case that when things begin to go wrong with one, sorrows do not come singly, and the end is nearer at hand than could be anticipated.

Harry Harness had not long to wait for his revenge, though the opportunity was not of his own seeking. The *Dardanelle* was at anchor and in shelter from a storm in a little bay off the coast of Newfoundland. The crew were employed making and mending clothes and mending sails, but several boats had gone to fetch water, for at the head of the little bay was a village. Harness was in charge of the working boats. Willie was off duty, and had gone on shore, taking Josh with him. They left the small village, which was far from attractive, and went for a long walk together across country.

“It is just like being back again in old Scotland,” said Josh.

The bracing mountain air blew in the faces of both, and made them happy and light-hearted for a time.

Harness had seen them going off. The men were having their dinner.

“I’m bothered,” he said to himself, “if I don’t follow them; that I will.”

He looked at the priming of his pistol as he spoke. One of the men’s knives was lying on a thwart of the boat. He slyly put that in his girdle.

"I might have to use it," he thought, "in self-defence. Oh, only in self-defence! I'm not going to do anything mean. But that fine lieutenant might miss his footing and tumble over a cliff into the sea. He *might*. Then the sea-birds would sing his dirge."

The man was meditating murder, though he would not allow himself to admit it.

Willie Grant had been gone about an hour, but Harness had noticed the direction taken by him.

Presently he told a bos'n's mate to see to the work until he returned, he was going for a stroll.

Then he started. He walked briskly at first, then more slowly, kicking the snow in a thoughtful mood.

"I don't know what I may do, he said to himself, if I go alone. I'll take a witness. A quarrel may then seem just."

He returned.

"Cleaver," he called, "I want you with me."

This Cleaver was his body servant, a marine, and allowed by all to be what was called a "bad hat."

Let us follow Willie and Josh. They wandered about among the hills for a time, then took a direct course across a neck of land which in about half an hour brought them to a bay.

To Willie's great astonishment here in this bay lay a heavily-armed brigantine. She carried no flag, but there was no mistaking what she was. A French privateer without a doubt.

While still meditating on this strange discovery, and

uncertain what to do, armed men sprang from behind a rock, and both Josh and he were immediately made prisoners.

This was all very sudden and surprising, but the surprise was not to end here, for at that moment there approached them from a hut near at hand an officer in the uniform of a French navy captain.

Brisk and energetic looking, small in stature, but handsome withal, he approached the prisoners, and lifting his hat, smiled and held out his hand.

"Willie Grant!" he said. "God hath given me this long-prayed-for pleasure."

Willie staggered as if shot.

"Dem!" he cried. "My old friend and schoolfellow, and in that uniform! I know not what to think or do."

Dem laughed one of his old merry laughs, and looked quite the boy again.

"There is only one thing to be done, Willie,—shake hands. And you, too, little Josh! Why there is no change in you. Now let us go apart where we may talk uninterruptedly. My fellows are staring with astonishment, but let them. I am captain out yonder."

Dem led the way to the head of the bay, and both sat down among the rocks, a good half-mile from the boat on the beach.

Willie felt like one in a dream.

But the ice once broken, he forgot everything else except the joy at meeting his friend again. First Dem told his long, strange story. Then Willie told his.

Poor, impulsive Dem! he burst into tears when he heard his father was still alive.

"I could not have believed it," he said. "Oh! had I only known, it might have been different. But the war cannot last for ever; and though I am now a nationalized son of France, I may yet meet my father."

And Dem smiled again.

"I am so glad to have met you," he said.

"And I, Dem, but could have wished it had been under different circumstances."

"True, true! And you saw old Miss McBride? and she is looking well. And poor old superstitious Tibbie? And Granite and Fomart and Dominic Reed?"

"All, Dem; and of course they all asked anxiously about you, but I had nothing to say, nothing to tell them."

"No; but how I should like to be once more in the dear, bonnie glen!"

So the young men sat and talked on for fully an hour about old times and places.

While speaking thus, and thinking only about each other, they did not observe two figures that crept stealthily along the beach till only the jutting end of a rock divided them. Nor did they notice that two faces more than once peered round that rock.

Dem started up at last.

"Now," said he, "I must not detain you longer."

"But I am your prisoner."

“I am captain of my own vessel. Go, and do your duty.”

“Yes,” said Willie, sadly; “I’ll do my duty. I will go on board my ship and tell my captain all the truth.”

“Do,” said Dem emphatically. *That is* your duty, and I could not respect you if you stepped aside from it in one iota, even were I your brother.”

“Dem, you are my brother, all I have for one. And now farewell.”

“Farewell! and may Heaven soon end this cruel war.”

“Amen! God bless you, Dem!”

CHAPTER V.

INNOCENT—BUT PREPARED TO DIE.

“THE tempest comes, while meteors red
Portentous fly ;
And now we touch old ocean’s bed,
And now we reach the sky !

She splits, she parts, through sluices driven
The water flows ;
Adieu, ye friends ! have mercy Heaven !
For down she goes.”

—*Dibdin.*



THE winter’s day was wearing to a close when Willie Grant and little Josh once more stood on the beach near the village on the bay. The wind had gone down and the sky was clear, the sun sinking in a purple haze, and just sufficient wind blowing from landwards to cause a ripple on the water.

All the boats were gone except that which waited for him, and somewhat to his surprise he noticed an unusual bustle on board. Sails were being set, and the crew were preparing to get up the anchor.

“Jump in, Josh, quickly,” cried Willie, a shadow falling over his spirits.

It was the dark shadow of a coming event, and though he knew it not then, Harness, the mate, the man who had gone out after him with a murder-wish in his heart, had found safer means to crush his foe.

“Shove off men. Bear a hand. We’re evidently getting ready for sea.”

“Yes, sir,” said the coxswain. “Mr. Harness came off half an hour or so ago, and brought word that a French privateer lay in the adjoining bay to here.

As soon as Willie got on board, he hurried aft and demanded instant audience of the captain. The captain was on the quarter-deck, and before Willie could speak to him, he sent the midshipman of the watch to summon all the wardroom officers who were not on duty.

As soon as they arrived,—

“Now, Mr. Harness,” he said, “step forward.”

“Gentlemen,” he continued, “this is not a drum-head court-martial, though I have the power to make it so. Call it rather a drum-head court of inquiry. I want to deal fairly and honestly and humanely, but I have my duty to perform. Mr. Harness, make your statement.”

“Yes sir,” said the mate. “This officer’s actions to-day struck me as strange. He went on shore accompanied only by the boy Josh. He had no gun with him to go shooting, but took his way across the snow to the neighbouring bay, some six miles off. I followed him

out of curiosity. I took a man with me in case Mr. Grant might attack me, as he has before done (sensation). I found lying in the bay a French man-of-war or privateer. The captain came from a hut and addressed and shook hands with Mr. Grant. Leaving the lad Josh, they went alone to the extreme end of the bay, and we followed them, after making a long detour to avoid being seen."

Harness paused for a moment, as if hesitating whether he could commit the sin he meditated.

"Well," said the captain. "You heard them talking?"

"Yes, sir."

"And concocting some plan?"

"Yes, sir; it seemed to me like a—a—a plot to—to spike our guns or something."

"Anyhow," said the captain, "to assist in handing over His Majesty's ship *Dardanelle* to the enemy?"

"Yes, sir."

Willie made a step forward.

He was as pale as death, and trembling like an aspen leaf.

"Let me explain, sir. I demand a hearing. That officer lies. He means to swear my life away."

"This before me!" roared Captain Harness. "I have half a mind to try you now, sir, by drum-head court-martial, sir. By Jove I have! What say you, gentlemen?"

"Do nothing rash," said the first lieutenant. "There

may be two sides to this story, dark as it looks against Mr. Grant."

"Thank you!" cried the captain. "Send for a file of marines, and place Mr. Grant in the cells; and Mr. Harness, you will bring his sword to my cabin."

Away went poor Willie Grant, with hanging head, bowed in spirit, and almost broken-hearted.

So this it seemed was to be the end to all his ambition—a few weeks in a felon's cell, then execution by martial law.

"Now, Mr. Harness," said the captain, "do you consider the boy Josh implicated in the charge?"

"Not at all, sir," returned the mate briskly. "The boy is a mere dupe, and was doubtless taken with Mr. Grant as a blind. He is little more than a child, sir."

"Very well. Gentlemen, you can now go."

Josh the boy—the child, as this fiend afloat called him—was not accused. No, it would not have served Harness's purpose to have him implicated. He had another use for him.

By this time the *Dardanelle* was under sail, and moving slowly out to sea, with the intention of rounding the headland and attacking the French privateer.

But as soon as she was well off the land, in the dark of the gathering night, that same privateer could be seen under all sail far away down to leeward. Soon after she was sighted a puff of white smoke rose from her stern, the sound of a big gun came booming over the water, and a round shot went ricocheting past the *Dardanelle*.

Willie Grant in his lonely cell heard the sound, and knew the meaning of it better than any one on board. The gun spoke to him.

“Ay,” said he, half aloud. “Good-bye, Dem! But how vexed and grieved you would be did you know the terrible position our meeting has placed me in!”

And the truth is, had Dem really known what had occurred, and were it possible for his evidence to be taken against that of the mate, he would willingly have risked his life to give it.

The *Sang Froid*, for so this French privateer was well named, carried lights all the night, as if inviting the *Dardanelle* to chase her; which she did, but the *Sang Froid* distanced her by many miles. The lights died away on the horizon, and she was seen no longer.

For more than a week the *Dardanelle* cruised about looking for her insolent adversary, then bore up for the St. Lawrence river.

The doctor was the only officer who was allowed to visit poor Willie in his cell; but he was very kind, saw to his comfort in every way, and used to sit and talk with him for hours.

Willie told him the plain, unvarnished tale of his meeting with Dem, his old friend, and of Dem's generosity in setting him free when he might have kept him prisoner.

“I wish he had kept you, Grant.”

“You fear the worst then?”

“I do; and if I were you I should be prepared for it.

We are on our way to Quebec; there you will be tried, and matters look very black against you."

"I am innocent," said Willie, "but—I am prepared to die."

"It is sad, so young. But cheer up, Grant; where there is life there is hope, and I must add that in the wardroom we all believe you innocent and believe the mate to be a villain."

Harness's manner towards little Josh now underwent a complete change. He was "the child" now, and put to all kinds of easy work, and Harness used to spend a whole half-hour sometimes chatting to him. But Josh—the waif of the wilds—might have looked a little soft, but he certainly was no fool, he could see as far through a stone as a mason, and knew perfectly well what Harness meant.

The mate tried to cajole him first and pump him, he even put words into the boy's mouth, or rather he tried to; but Josh was true to his master and true to himself. Then Harness went away on the other tack, and tried threats. He told Josh that his master would be shot, and that he, Josh, would be hanged if he did not clear himself and turn king's evidence.

Josh was just as deaf to his threats as he was to his cajolery.

The *Dardanelle* struggled on up the gulf, against contrary winds, through fog and gloom and ice. The island of Anticosti would, if visible, have been bearing about a nor'-nor'-west from them, when one evening, while the

wind—a seven-knot breeze—was almost right ahead, the ship suddenly struck heavily on a rocky bottom.

Down in his cell Willie knew what that awful rasping, bumping sound meant.

Almost at the same time the wind began to die down.

The sails were put aback, all to no purpose. Then an anchor was got out, and by this means an attempt was made to heave her off. Had the wind kept up she might have moved; as it was she refused to budge.

There would be no moon to-night, and although by-and-by the fog lifted and stars were seen, it was dark enough nevertheless.

The captain stamped up and down the quarter-deck more like a caged wild beast than anything else. He blamed everybody, and swore at all in turn.

Meanwhile, as the night wore on, the rasping and bumping continued, as the ship went farther and farther on to the rocks with a rising tide, for the anchor seemed to slip along the smooth, rocky bottom.

Then the ominous wind began to rise and moan through the rigging. Sails were taken in, for it blew from the south-east, and speedily increased to the force of half a gale.

That nothing could save the good ship now was soon evident to all on board. The waves began to thunder against her sides, to lift her, and to dash her on and on, and still farther on, towards two parallel lines that stood out on the dim horizon: one was white, and represented the breaking of the waves on the beach; the other was

black,—the coast line itself, covered with trees and shrubs.

What was to be done? Could boats live in that sea? It was indeed doubtful, but an effort must be made at all events.

So the boats were called away.

Discipline had been maintained up till now, but as soon as the boats were lowered, I am sorry to have to relate that the cry was "Every one for himself!"

In the rush overboard and into the boats several were smashed to flinders, and scores were thus drowned.

High over the howling wind, the thundering of the keel on the rocks, and the smashing noise of timbers, Willie in his lonesome cell could hear alongside the bubbling cry and death-shriek of drowning men.

Why, it may be asked, could not discipline have been maintained? The answer is a sadly simple one. The *Dardanelle* was manned anyhow, manned in a hurry, with merchant sailors for the most part, men who had never heard a shot fired in anger; and all because the Admiralty thought "anything was good enough to crush so small a maritime power as America."

Many boats got clear away, however, and landed their occupants; then by some officer in charge a call would be made for volunteers, and back through breakers and surf they boldly rowed, and thus at least one half the officers and crew were finally landed. But the scene on board when the spirit room was broken into is beyond my power to describe.

To add to the horrors of this awful night the ship took fire, and scores of poor drunken wretches perished in the flames.

And what about our hero? Alas! his good friend the doctor was washed off the fo'c's'le early in the night, and Willie was—forgotten!

To die like a rat in a trap, to be drowned in a cell, was a terrible fate. But he prepared to meet his doom.

He was on his knees praying, when suddenly a series of smashing blows was heard on his door, and in a minute it was broken in. There stood Josh, axe in hand.

“Come on, master, come on!” he cried. “They have all gone away; there is no one left alive in the ship but you and me. But I have dragged the dingey forward out of the fire, and I think we may manage to lower her. Come on. Thank God you are saved!”

Josh—the waif of the wilds—seemed a boy no longer, but a man—and a hero. Hand in hand, as if brothers, went Josh and Willie on deck.

The wind seemed already to have abated somewhat of its fury, and the grey dawn was beginning to creep upwards in the east.

The stern of the vessel was sheeted in flames, the smoke and sparks of which rolled fiercely over the sea landwards.

A battle was going on betwixt the two dread elements

—good servants both, but terrible masters!—fire and water.

Willie stood for a moment near the fo'c's'le, and gazed around him. It was a terrible sight, this half-dismantled ship, with her masts gone, the foaming seas, the steam, the smoke and flames and sparks.

But Willie took a sailor's view of the situation. The fire could not reach the magazine for some time to come yet, for the powder was kept below forward, and so, as the wind was lessening every minute, he determined to stick to the wreck for a time.

The vessel had heeled over to one side, that farthest from the breaking seas, and Willie and his little mate managed to drag the boat—a very small one—forward. They made her fast by the stern to the winch. She now lay on an incline, with her bows pointing downwards towards the bulwark.

“Now the axe, Josh!” cried Willie Grant.

Josh handed it to him, and he immediately commenced hacking down the bulwarks in front of the boat. The boy slipped below, and presently staggered back with a big saw; so that, working like galley slaves, they succeeded in clearing away the bulwarks in a short time.

They were now in a position to launch the dingey clear off the deck, by merely cutting the rope astern of her, and permitting her to glide downwards into the sea.

Day dawned at last, and the wind went down, but still

the battle 'twixt fire and sea was raging on, the fire, however, now creeping farther forward as the seas became less violent.

The shore about a mile distant, a long, low, wooded coast, with a fringe of foaming breakers.

As the wind went down the fog descended or crept seawards from the island, and soon the shore was no longer visible.

The fire now began to creep uncomfortably near, so preparations were made for a start. The binacle compass was got out and placed in the boat, and food and water, blankets, guns and ammunition, etc. Then both jumped in and, watching a chance, cut the rope and slipped quietly away into the sea on the bosom of a big, unbroken wave.

“ Shall we pull right in, sir ? ”

“ No, Josb, no ; the little boat would be smashed to atoms among the breakers. Besides, my friend, life is sweet—to an innocent man.”

They headed the boat partially seawards therefore ; and though for a time they made but little way, they managed to keep well off the shore, and by-and-by they were enabled to hoist a small sail and skirt along the coast, Willie being determined to put as many miles as possible betwixt himself and his friends on shore.

About noon they landed in a little cove, and dined. The fog had once more disappeared, and the wind held, but it was bitterly cold.

In an hour's time they once more embarked. The

sail was hoisted, and away they went, keeping well out to sea, in order to avoid increasing their sailing distance by having to round the headlands.

“How will it all end?” said Willie to his friend, as they landed at sunset and drew up their boat.

“Ah, never fear!” replied Josh. “Besides, I’m happy now, and I know you are hopeful.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE CRUSOES OF ANTICOSTI.

“In lowly dale, fast by a river’s side,
With woody hill on hill encompassed round;
Where blackening trees, aye waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood.”

—*Thomson.*



DUDDLED together for warmth in a cave among the rocks on the shore, Willie and Josh slept soundly till far into next day.

Into this cave they had carried all their provisions, and it was well they did so, for there was evidence enough that bears had been prowling round during the night.

So numerous were these brutes on this island in the year 1814, when my grandfather, who lived three weeks here,—having been shipwrecked,—that fires had to be kept up all night to prevent them from attacking the camp.

My own personal experience has been chiefly among the Arctic bears, but although but few accidents occur now, even beyond the rocky mountains, old hunters used

to relate—and there was every reason to believe them—tales of terrible encounters with these monsters.

Next to the polar bear, probably the most ferocious and difficult to deal with is the brown bear, or *Ursus Arctos*. He is a native now principally in the wilder mountainous regions of Europe and Asia. In a book by Mr. T. C. Atkinson, called “Oriental and Western Siberia,” the following graphic account is given of an adventure with one of these animals:—

“Two men, one of whom was an experienced hunter, had succeeded in surprising a bear. The hunter fired, and the ball struck, though not in a vital part. In an instant the wounded animal charged. The other man, less accustomed to the chase, reserved his fire till within twenty yards of his assailant. Unfortunately his rifle missed. The brute immediately raised himself on his hind legs, and, tearing the earth beneath him, rushed on his first assailant, striking him down with a blow that stripped his scalp and turned it down over his face. Then seizing his arm, he began to gnaw and crush it to the bone, gradually ascending to the shoulder.

“In this strait the man called to his companion to load and fire; but he, when he saw his friend so fearfully mangled, flew in a panic of terror, and abandoned him to his fate.

“Late in the evening he reached a neighbouring gold mine, and reported what had occurred; but it was too late to attempt any effort on behalf of the unfortunate hunter.

“At daylight on the following morning, the officer in charge of the station ordered out a large and well-armed party, with the coward for their guide. He led them through the shades of the forest to the spot where the encounter had taken place, but of the victim no remains were visible, except some torn clothing and his rifle. From the marks on the grass it was evident that the man had been carried off into the recesses of the forest. A careful search was therefore made, and at length the den of the bear was discovered. He had dragged the hunter into a thick covert of wood and bushes, and to render his asylum still more secure, had broken off a quantity of bushes and piled them over his victim’s body. These were quickly stripped off, and to the surprise and joy of all, the hunter, though frightfully mutilated and quite insensible, was still living.

“The march back was conducted as quickly as possible. The man was put in a hospital and his wounds dressed. Notwithstanding all he had undergone, he survived; and as soon as his strength was re-established, he started in pursuit of his ursine enemy, tracked him to his retreat and killed him.”

But Willie and Josh soon found that, though only black bears (*Ursus Americanus*), the inhabitants of the woods here were likely to give them trouble enough.

Perhaps they did not see strangers very often, and wanted to make the best of these; besides they were

lean and gaunt and hungry, having only just awakened from their long winter's sleep.

Our Crusoes now set about making themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. There was little fear of any of their late shipmates discovering their whereabouts; they must be ninety miles away at least, and the only other inhabitants of this inhospitable island were bears and wolves.

They determined to make the cave their home. It was large and dry, besides it was near to the beach, and a passing ship would surely see the smoke or blaze of their fire ere long.

They had saved enough biscuits to last them, with economy, for fully two months; then they had salt pork and meat; for further provender they must depend upon their guns.

In the utmost recess of the cave they stowed away their biscuits and meat, and their very first effort at self-preservation was to construct a gate to the cave. This they did from trees, which their axes enabled them to hew down, binding them together with the twisted withes of a sort of willow that grew plentifully near the marsh lands.

In a few days the weather underwent a surprising change: first came foggy rains, and the snow melted; streams that were but trickling rills before being now swollen to roaring burns. But these got less and less, and trees began to bud and flowers to spring up among the green grass and moss, and on the cliff tops sea-birds

became more abundant, and the songs of lovely land birds were heard in the woods.

They found a kind of peat moss bog not far off, and spent a whole day cutting turf, which they carried down to the beach and dried on the sunny side of the rocks. When fairly dry it was stowed in a corner of the cave, and proved, with the addition of wood, excellent firing, having this additional advantage that it kept smouldering all night.

Only once during a whole fortnight did they see a passing vessel. But of what nationality they could not make out. At all events their smoke signals were unobserved. The ship sailed on and made no sign.

Willie and Josh spent a deal of their time fishing. Their method was what is called "guddling" in Scotland. The water in the smaller streams or burns was dammed with turf, leaving the lower parts practically dry; then by wading therein and using the hands the fish could be landed as fast as could be desired.

There was indeed no want of trout, every rivulet teemed with them; so that portion of their bill of fare, called in polite language *poisson*, was abundant enough.

There was plenty of game on this part of the island; our crusoos did not forget that it was the season of spring, however, and only killed but barely enough to supply their daily wants.

As they were entirely without utensils of any kind, cooking was accomplished with some difficulty, and only by fire. They adopted the plan they had seen followed

by some tribes of savages on the African coast, building a kind of wooden tripod over the fire, with bars across the three sides ladder-fashion; on these steps, as we may call them, the fish or game was spread, and in due time most tenderly cooked.

The want of salt was a grievance at first, but one which was speedily overcome; sea-water spread in clear shallow places on the rocks soon evaporated in the sun. More and more water was added, and when all had finally dried off, there was an incrustation of salt found which answered every useful purpose.

Many esculent herbs and roots even were found, which added considerably to the larder, and saved biscuits.

Several excursions into the interior were made, and they found that a march of even half a day took them into a country that was charming in its very primitive wildness: hill and dell, rock and wild wood, lakes and torrents, that in some places put them in mind of the scenery of the land of their birth.

Not unattended with danger, however, were these little trips; for these wilderies, lovely and all as they were with their wealth of flowers, bush, and ferns, were inhabited by wolves and bears, whose very unsophisticatedness, if I may so call it, made them dangerous.

It was pretty evident they had never seen any human beings before, and their curiosity to know a little more about Willie and Josh knew no bounds. I suppose, among themselves, there was a good deal of speculation

as to what our heroes really were, and where they had come from. Several groups of bears were seen one day in different places on the hill sides and in the marshes, squat on the grass, or standing up leaning against rocks, evidently in serious debate.

The burning questions appeared to be:—

I. What were those two curious creatures, with bare white faces, that walked upon one end and carried poles in their paws?

II. Did they drop out of the clouds, or creep up out of the sea?

III. What did they taste like?

On this particular day these interesting and hirsute savages were evidently determined to set the last of these questions at rest for ever, and to find out the flavour of Willie's and Josh's blood.

The two crusoes had wandered farther than ever from the camp. They had been following the banks of a stream, but having left it to make a short detour, they lost it, and after wandering about in an aimless kind of way, made up their minds to bivouac for the night in the open.

Josh gathered fuel, there being no end of dead wood about; and with a flint and steel Willie ignited some gunpowder and dry grass, and soon they had a splendid blaze. They laid three fires in all, and secured wood enough to last all night; then, rolled in their blankets, down they lay and proceeded to enjoy their supper.

By-and-by the stars came out, and a big round moon

rose shedding so soft and mellow a light over all the scene, that they might almost have imagined themselves at home.

It was about home they talked.

“If we had no home, though,” said little Josh, “and no bonnie Scotland to long for, it is just in a place like this I should like to live; always with you, Mr. Willie Grant—always with you.”

Suddenly there was a coughing roar not ten yards away. Willie sprang through the smoke and succeeded in rolling over an immense bear. Then between the two of them they managed to drag the body some thirty yards away.

But it was evident there would be little peace for them for one night, for not only bears but wolves soon surrounded the carcass, and the growling, howling, fighting, and squalling they kept up fairly banished all ideas of sleep.

They kept the fires burning well, and thus succeeded in preventing the brutes from charging on them and finding out how they tasted.

Willie several times fired into the midst of them, but this only made matters worse.

It was nearly morning before these wild beasts sought their dens and jungles and peace was restored.

Then both our crusoes lay down once more. Josh was soon sound asleep, but poor Willie sat thinking—thinking, on how all this would end. Had he done wrong, or had there been ever a doubt about the matter in his mind,

he would have given himself up to the shipwrecked officers of the *Dardanelle*, and willingly have faced the death which would have been but his just guerdon. But he had done no wrong, and why should he throw his young life away?

But what was his future life to be? Home he never again could return; he must be a wanderer, an outcast in a foreign land. What! never to see his father again, never again to see the purple heather and yellow broom that bloomed and blossomed on his native hills? Oh! this was too dreadful. Surely death itself were to be preferred to so weary a life. Was there no hope? Must it be death or perpetual exile? He could not answer the questions, he could not solve the problem. He lay back on the grass with his head resting on his arm. One thing he could do. He could take his sorrows to the throne of mercy and grace.

Ah! there was One on high, a Friend in heaven, who loved him better than a brother, who had guarded and guided him all his life till now, and would not now forsake him.

Musing thus, and while the moon was declining in the west, and while eastern stars were beginning to pale before the first faint dawn of morning, Willie fell asleep.

He was dreaming though. He was back again in General Rutherford's tent, telling his sad story to blue-eyed little Etheldine, and she was smiling through her tears and whispering to him.

“All will yet be well; I will pray for that.”

It was broad daylight when he awoke from the deep, sound sleep into which that happy dream seemed to have plunged him.

Broad daylight, and Josh was laying out the remains of last night's supper for breakfast.

“I didn't like to wake you,” he said. “You did appear to be so fast and sound.”

After breakfast they left their temporary camp, and made the best of their way in the direction in which they knew the river lay.

They found it; but they found also the denizens of the woods did not mean them to retire towards the beach without a sufficient escort.

If there was one gaunt and glaring wolf on their tracks now, there must have been half a score. On they came after the crusoes, growling and menacing. If the young men stood the wolves stopped, if they made a step or two backwards the monsters turned and fled, snarling, biting, and tumbling over each other.

They hurried on and on with these wild beasts in the rear and not far off, never knowing the moment they would be attacked. They still had about ten rounds of ammunition left each; so every now and then, when the wolves pressed closer and looked more threatening, they fired into their midst, then ran on, and the living wolves stayed behind to tear the dead or wounded limb from limb.

One last volley they gave them as soon as they came in

sight of the sea, and were safe in the cave before the brutes again attempted to attack them.

But after this they went no more into the interior; and so aggressive did both wolves and bears become, that one of the crusoes had to stand on guard when the other was gathering wood or fishing.

Two whole months were passed in this way. Their biscuits began to give out, and also their ammunition; and danger seemed in store for them, if not death, by starvation or at the fangs of those fierce and hungry wolves.

One day, however, while Willie was doing something in the cave, and feeling very sad and lonely, Josh came rushing in mad with excitement.

“A sail in sight!” he shouted; “a sail! a sail!”

Willie too was excited now.

Whether foreign or British, he determined to do the best he could to attract attention.

“Heap more wood on the signal fire,” he cried, “and fetch those green boughs. Quick, Josh, quick!”

Josh needed no second telling, and soon dense columns of white smoke rolled up and were wafted away over the woods on the wings of a January breeze. The sail came nearer and nearer for a long time, then went round and away on the other tack, and Willie’s spirits fell to zero.

“But look!” exclaimed Josh, “they are coming round again; they see us, they see us. We are saved! Hurrah!”

Yes, the smoke had been seen on board, and the vessel bore rapidly down towards the island. When within a mile, she must have been in shoal water, for an anchor was dropped and a boat lowered.

Willie soon discovered they were French sailors; then his heart began to beat faster and faster, for seated in the stern sheets was Dem.

And with him was Poodah!

The meeting was indeed a joyous one.

Dem was so brimful of animal spirits, that he must laugh aloud with very joy as he pressed Willie's hand.

"I heard of your mishap," he said, "and sent on a relief ship to your shipwrecked messmates."

"Poor fellows! though," he added, looking serious; "nearly two-thirds are dead."

"Drowned?"

"No; there was a mutiny on shore, the rabble portion of the cut-throat crew rose on the others, and after a terrible fight marched off with all the provisions to the woods. Only two of your officers are saved, the mate and a midshipman."

"Thank God," said Willie, "the mate is saved."

"It was an American frigate I thoughtfully sent to the rescue," said Dem, laughing again; "so your mate, Hornet I think they call him, and the middy will have to languish in a Yankee prison till the war is over. Hornet told me you were drowned."

"Did this—Hornet tell you nothing else?"

“No.”

“Well, I will.”

“But come on board first. You are surely tired of this island. Nothing to eat, I suppose, on it.”

“Nothing very nice; only bears and wolves.”

“Heigho!” said Willie, that same evening, as Dem and he sat smoking in the after-cabin of the *Sang Froid*, “who would have thought we would meet again so soon? Nelson never spoke truer words than these, ‘Nothing is improbable at sea.’ And so,” he added, “you are off again to the coast of France?”

“Yes, I’m off; and as you will not make up your mind to become my prisoner, and let me conduct you to Paris, I will find you mufti, and your boy as well, and put you on board the first British merchant craft we meet bound for Quebec.”

“Thanks,” said Willie, “and I shall begin life anew, not altogether without the hope, dear Dem, of meeting you again under happier auspices.”

“And Poodah,” he added, changing the subject.—
“Poodah, you say, found you in New York?”

“Yes, dear, faithful fellow; he found me at last, after hunting for me for well-nigh four long years. He says he has a story to tell us one of these days, Willie, but will not do so until the war is over. Poodah was always, you know, the man with a mystery. Ha! ha! ha! I laugh when I remember that first scene at poor Miss McBride’s cottage on the evening of Poodah’s first arrival at Glen-

gair. 'A man with a mystery of all things!' said the old lady."

Willie joined in the laugh, and so the evening sped merrily away.

CHAPTER VII.

FIGHTING IN CANADA.

“WHAT art thou, fascinating war,
Thou trophied, painted pest,
That thus men seek and yet abhor,
Pursue and yet detest?
When to the charge the legions fly,
And trumpets cleave the air,
Thy fate demands the gen’rous sigh,
And mine the pitying tear.”

—*Dibdin.*



IT was in the rosy month of June—as poets call it—in the year 1812, that our cousins across the Atlantic declared war on their grandfather’s country, I need place the relationship no nearer. The Government was driven into doing so by the noisy democracy of the country, though it was a pity for America she was not better prepared. Some would call these democrats plucky. So they were; and albeit discretion is the better part of valour, one always does admire courage, and it is wonderful what this virtue can accomplish.

Says Allison: “The gallant and extraordinary

achievements during the contest, both of the American army and navy, are worthy of consideration, as demonstrating how far individual energy and valour can overcome the most serious difficulties, and the tendencies of democratic institutions to compensate by the vigour they communicate to the people, the consequences of the debility and want of foresight which they imprint upon the government."

I will give an example or two of this kind of dashing courage, in far simpler English than that which Allison couches his ideas in.

I saw a bantam, then, the other day declare war against a Cochin China cock.

The bantam first and foremost mounted the fence, which divided the two fields where the rivals were wont to wander and pick up their crumbs. Once on top of the fence the bantam crew; but whether to keep his own courage up, or strike terror into the soul of the Cochin, I cannot tell. He then sprang nimbly into the Cochin's field. The Rubicon was crossed. It must be death or victory. There was no going back.

It was like David going forth to meet Goliath; but the result astonished me, for in five minutes' time the monster cock was running for his life, and never halted till he got into his own barn-yard. Then the bantam remounted the fence, and crew again. No wonder!

Here is a little *jeu d'esprit* I composed and recited at a penny-reading the other evening. I would not insert it here if I could not at the same time assure my readers

that the story is founded on fact, and that the principal event actually occurred under my own eyes. But our Volunteers—whom I very highly respect and believe in—are, I am sure, far too fond of a bit of chaff to take offence at a trifle like that which follows, and which I call—

A LAY OF MARS.

THE great review at length was done,
 A battle (sham) was lost and won,
 And slow went down the autumn sun.
 The troops had all to town retired,
 Warworn and weary, hipped and tired.
 But one brave man had stayed behind,
 French leave he'd taken—never mind.
 Arrayed in uniformal glory,
 With head erect, and thoughts full gory,
 He walked about, and up and down,
 Through every street in Portsmouth town.
 And as he passed along each stree :
 Ah ! many a maiden, young and sweet,
 Peered after him with wistful eye,
 Then blushed a blush, and sighed a sigh ;
 And many a male, with envious glance,
 Wished the bold fellow off to France.

But little recked the soldier boy—
 His mind had, by far, a wilder employ ;
 To his thoughts by day, to his dreams at night,
 Came many a brave, but terrible sight—
 Of fights on many a foreign strand ;
 Of battles at sea, and sieges on land ;
 Of gallant deeds dared and victories won ;
 Of war clouds grey, obscuring the sun ;

Of forlorn-hopes led, and garments gory ;
And his name handed down in his country's story ;
The Victoria Cross gained, and a monument brave,
And the moon shining down on a warrior's grave.

Ah ! little thought this Volunteer
That danger was at all so near ;
Or that so soon in battle's strife
He'd have to risk his precious life.

There was a hen—

“ A hen ? ” you cry,
“ A *hen*, most certainly,” I reply—
She was a hen of breed and fame,
Her sire from Brahma-Pootra came.
This hen essayed to cross the street,
With twice ten chickens at her feet ;
For which she gently was tick-tucking,
For need I say, this hen was clucking.

The feathered flock our soldier, spying,
Rushed instant forward, boldly crying,
“ Thus would I vanquish every foe,
And scatter to the winds—Hullo ! ”
“ Hullo ! ” indeed he well might say,
The chickens fled—their mother—nay !
With sudden dash and wild skirrew !
Full bang into his face she flew.

The charge in vain his courage stayed,
Discreet, though brave, he turned and fled ;
While she pursued with hottest haste,
And down the street the foeman chased,
Not by the *hen*—I'm proud to tell,
But by his own good *sword* he fell ;
It got entangled 'tween his feet,
And brought the warrior to the street.

Then, oh! how Tuckie tore his hair—
His nose—his eyes—but I would spare
Your feeling, friends—altho', I'm blowed,
One cock-chick clapped its wings and crowed.

When weary Tuckie had retired,
Once more again by bravery fired,
Our hero from the dust arose,
(The dark blood trickled from his nose):
"Aha!" he cried, "she's out of range,
But!"—he shook his fist, "*I'll have revenge!*
I'll to mine inn—I'm out of breath—
Drink just one glass, and then for Death!"

He drank one glass, he called for more,
He boldly swallowed three or four;
His sword upon a cushioned chair
He ground till it could cut a hair.

A will he made—it was not long—
The while he hummed a martial song;
His courage soon by whisky rallied,
He paid his bill—then forth he sallied.

Poor Tuckie, heedless of her fate,
Had barely reached the court-yard gate,
When, whish! a sword at once was bare,
A savage war-cry rent the air,
A head flew off—'twas Tuckie's own,
And drooped her bleeding body down.

The soldier stooped the head to grasp
Which scarcely yet had ceased to gasp;
He held it by the comb on high—

Whoe'er my foes, thus may they die!
With this remark he sheathed his blade,
And calmly staggered home to bed.

A deed like this must surely prove
The soldier's pluck—the patriot's love ;
It proves, he knows nor doubt nor fear,
Our gallant British Volunteer.

Well, now to cross the Atlantic once again, we find that early in July, General Hall, with a force of two thousand five hundred men, crossed the river Detroit, and, invading Canada, marched upon Sandwich. Here he acted pretty much as the bantam did on the fence. He clapped his wings and crew.

In other words, he issued a proclamation declaring that he was going to " whip all creation," or words to that effect, and threatened a war of extermination if Indians should be employed against him. So far General Hall was like the bantam—but he had not the bantam's courage.

General Hall puts one in mind of Mr. Macpherson in Professor Aytoun's clever verses :—

" Macphairson swore a feud
Against the clan MacTavish ;
And marched into his land
To murder and to ravish.

He swore a solemn oath,
To extirpate the vipers
With five-and-twenty men,
And five-and-thirty pipers."

Well, General Hall, like Mr. Macpherson, was beaten back over his own boundaries ; obliged to retire to Fort Detroit ; was invested there by General Brock, who had

only 700 men and a handful of Indians, and had to capitulate; 2,500 men, with thirty pieces of cannon, becoming the prisoners of a little bold army of not half their number.

This little episode will remind my Scottish readers of the battle of Prestonpans, betwixt General Cope and Bonnie Prince Charlie, and McGregor Simpson's spirited and humorous song:—

“Cope sent a letter to Dunbar,
Saying, Charlie, meet me gin ye dare;
And I'll show to you the art of war,
If you'll meet me in the morning.

The first lines Charlie looked upon,
He drew his sword the scabbard from,
Crying, follow me, her peautiful men,
Och! she'll be such a tooce of a morning.

When Charlie arrove at Prestonpans,
So sheneral-like, she assembled the clans;
And when she did give the word o' commands,
Och! they fought like the lions in the morning.

Then Sir John and his men they couldna stay,
And O! they looked both old and wae,
And they thought far better to run away,
Than get their heads tookit off in the morning.”

But if General Hall was beaten, America was not. A second invasion of Canada, however, was also repelled, and a third in November met with no better success. Meanwhile, however, victory attended the arms of the States at sea. This was entirely the fault of the British—not of our brave officers, but of the wretched and

niggardly Government that sent out the worst ships, manned by undisciplined sailors, to fight against America's long frigates and carefully drilled gunners.

That our fellows fought splendidly, however, even the Yankees will admit; and in the cases where our vessels were beaten, the enemy was stronger in guns and men, as the following facts from English and American history will prove.

The historians were James and the novelist Cooper.

I. The *Java* was beaten by the American *Constitution*.

	<i>Java.</i>	<i>Constitution.</i>
Broadside guns	24	28
Weight in lbs.	517	768
Crew, men only	344	460
Tons	1092	1533

II. The American *Hornet* beat the British *Peacock*.

	<i>Peacock.</i>	<i>Hornet.</i>
Broadside guns	9	10
Weight in lbs.	192	297
Crew, men only	110	162
Tons	386	460

III. The British brig *Boxer* was beaten by the American brig *Enterprise*.

	<i>Boxer.</i>	<i>Enterprise.</i>
Guns	14	16
Men	66	120

IV. A more nearly matched fight took place between the *Pelican*, a British brig, and the American brig *Argus*, in the Irish Channel; but notwithstanding the slight superiority of the American vessel, she was beaten.

	<i>Pelican.</i>	<i>Argus.</i>
Broadside guns	9	10
Weight in lbs.	262	228
Crew, men only	101	122
Tons	385	316

V. Then I need hardly mention the gallant battle between the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake*. Every schoolboy knows all about it, both in this country and in America.

	<i>Shannon.</i>	<i>Chesapeake.</i>
Broadside guns	25	25
Weight in lbs.	538	590
Crew	306	376

This marvellous fight occupied only about fifteen minutes from the time the first gun was fired till the *Chesapeake* was entirely in the hands of the British. But these fine old fights serve to point a moral, as well as adorn a tale. And the lesson they teach ought to be remembered by the big guns who wag their wise heads in the Admiralty, as long as the British navy floats.

Meanwhile it would ill become any writer of an historical novel to boast of the success of the arms of his country, especially against so gallant a nation as America. On the other hand, he ought to take a bold and fair stand, and prevent with all the power of his pen the quondam enemy from crowing more than is necessary. We met with reverses it is true, but how boldly the Canadians fought!

“The absorbing interest,” says Alison, “of the contest, yet doubtful and undecided in the Peninsula, and the

urgent necessity of sending off every sabre and bayonet that could be spared, to feed the army of Wellington, rendered it a matter of impossibility to despatch an adequate force to the Canadian frontier, and compelled the Government, how reluctant soever, to intrust the defence of those provinces mainly to the bravery and patriotism of their own inhabitants."

Nor was the confidence reposed in vain; although, as the Americans had now accumulated a considerable force on the frontier, the struggle was more violent, and victory alternated with disaster.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WHITE OWL TO THE RESCUE.



MUCH of the interest of this lamentable and fratricidal war centred in and around the lakes, especially Ontario and Erie. A glance at any map will show the position occupied by these inland seas.

They were seas in every sense of the term, and both the British and Americans had fleets thereon, but the former soon were found to be inferior in every way to those of the enemy.

One of the first successes of the Americans was accomplished in April, 1813—while Willie Grant and Josh were still crusoes on Anticosti. In this month the enemy, with fourteen vessels, sailed from Sackett's harbour, and after a sharp fight at Fort Toronto, landed and beat back General Sheaffe through the forests and hills, he making a bold show though only possessed of eight hundred men and Indians. General Pike, the American, and two hundred of his men were blown into the air by the explosion of a powder magazine. Even this event,

however, did not gain for General Sheaffe the victory, and the Yankees retired triumphant, though with great loss.

One of the smartest actions ever fought on an inland sea took place on Lake Erie between Captain Barclay, of the British navy, and Commodore Parry, of the American. After three hours of fearful fighting victory declared itself in favour of the enemy, all our ships being captured, but not before the extraordinary proportion of one-third our total number were killed or wounded.

But even Parry, splendid sailor though he was, had no occasion to boast of this victory considering the disparity in numbers, and not in numbers only, for the crews of the British vessels hardly mustered one seaman to a gun, the rest being landsmen, who knew nothing of the working of a ship in a sea-way.

The following is the anatomy of the squadron, to us a surgical phrase :—

	British.	American.
Ships, brigs and schooners	6	8
Broadside guns	34	34
Weight of metal in lbs.	459	928
Crews	345	580
Tons	1,250	960

From this table it will be seen that in the aggregate our squadron was heavier in tonnage. This made matters worse, seeing that our fellows were mostly land-lubbers, who allowed Commodore Parry not only to get the weather-gage of them, but to rake their vessels fore and aft.

The Americans were now completely masters on Lake Erie, and at the same time that they became so a flotilla of our schooners, carrying men, was captured on Lake Huron.

The war was now carried on on shore with great vigour.

Our troops and Indians were entirely cut off from York and Kingston, and obliged to beat a retreat to the river Thames (*vide* map of Canada), after dismantling and destroying all the forts beyond the Grand River.

A sad and melancholy retreat it was, the army toiling, half-starved and wholly weary and beaten, out through the wild and endless forests for nearly a fortnight, pursued by the troops of Harrison. This officer overtook the British rear at last, and Proctor then made a stand. It was but a forlorn hope at the best, the Americans being well fed and in vastly superior numbers.

How could it end but in disaster to our arms? The Americans took nearly seven hundred prisoners, and the woods were everywhere sprinkled with dead and dying. Our Indians fought well, and their brave and true-born chief, Tecumseh was among the first to fall.

The elation of the Americans was now so great that another invasion of Canada, on a far grander scale, was decided on.

It is a matter of history that the invasion of Lower Canada was frustrated and the Americans hurled back before the splendid charges of our British bayonets.

The invasion of Upper Canada was also a failure; so

our arms were victorious along the whole frontier, a line of nearly a thousand miles in length, and this notwithstanding that we had but three thousand regular troops, against the twenty thousand regulars of America.

“To have repelled,” says Alison, “all the efforts of the Americans, in such circumstances and with such forces, is of itself distinction; but it becomes doubly glorious when it is recollected, that this distant warfare took place during the crisis of the contest in Europe, at the close of a twenty years’ war, when every sabre and bayonet which could be spared were required for the devouring Peninsular campaigns.

* * * * *

Our story takes a stride. It would be easy indeed to lose one’s self in the history of the bloody war by land and sea between America and Britain, and quite the reverse of impossible to interest and instruct the reader at the same time; for the whole tale of this fearful war reads like a wild romance from beginning to end.

It is a tale that I myself have listened to, with rapt attention, from the personal narrative of my grandfather, who fought in Canada for a year and a half, and underwent not only all the dangers and difficulties of the campaign, but all the fun of it. Many a humorous story he used to tell me, as I sat by his knee when a child, of life in the woods in summer and in winter, and of the *agreméns* of camp life, or life around the log fires. I think, though, that I enjoyed the stories of Indian

manners and customs most,—tales about tomahawks, scalping knives, wigwams, moccasins, snow-shoes, and tobogins.

A piper of his regiment disappeared in a most mysterious manner one night. He had been spirited away, his comrades thought, leaving no trace behind. The facts of the case are these. One night, after all in the camp were wrapt in a slumber born of hard work in the woods all day, three figures might have been seen gliding along through the bush, or crawling through the grass, taking advantage of every bit of cover, for the moon was shining brightly.

They might have been seen—but they were not, the nearest approach to their being discovered was when Tom Sinclair, a Banffshire lad, who was doing sentry-go, heard some twigs crack not far off.

“Fa’s there?” cried Tom.

The melancholy yelp of what he took for an Indian dog was all the reply, and the sentry leant against the tree and began to think about home again. But Sandy McKay, the piper, was sleeping out of doors, for it was summer, and close by him was his instrument, for he had to be early astir; when suddenly a hand was clapped on his mouth, and next moment he found himself lifted off the earth and borne rapidly down through the forest. When about a quarter of a mile from the camp he was permitted to walk. He now found himself a prisoner, his captors, however, being friendly Indians. He and they had a long march, but they gave Sandy

some fire-water, and about eight in the morning they reached a distant village, which for some reason or other was *en gala*. Several chiefs were there, and white men's scalps were fluttering from poles near the tent doors; there was plenty of tobacco smoke about, and fire-water flowed freely. Sandy soon discovered that he had been made prisoner in order to play.

But the drawback was this, there was no end to it; and for three days and two nights, at the end of which time a party of soldiers found and released him, poor Sandy was kept playing. Certainly his—

“Hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels
Put life and mettle in their heels.”

But it was tiresome for the piper. He had plenty of food and plenty of fire-water, and the uncomfoting assurance that if he did not continue to play, he would be tomahawked as a useless member of society.

Well, I pick up the thread of my narrative, after all this digression, and once more bring Willie Grant and Josh on the boards towards the last act in the war—namely, the autumn of 1815.

Where have they been since last we saw them? And what have they been doing?

In the first place, Willie's friend Dem, captain of the dashing *Sang Froid*, was as good as his word; he put them both on board a British merchant vessel which he captured, and might have burned but for his promise, and in due time they were landed in Quebec.

Here they took up their quarters for a time, Willie being still somewhat exercised in his mind as to what he ought to do for the best. His desire was to do his duty. No cowardly fear of death prevented him from at that very time delivering himself up and demanding the ordeal of a court-martial, but this he felt would have been wilfully throwing his life away.

His next thought was to change his name and enter the ranks as a private soldier, for to fight for his king and country he was determined. The war was now going on, and troops, volunteers and others, were every day being hurried away to the frontiers.

"Let us go, anyhow," said Josh to him one day. "Let us move west with the crowd; we will never do any good here."

"Just what I was thinking, Josh, my boy. We'll move west."

And to the west they went, and in a month's time found themselves far away on the borders of Lake Erie. This country was but sparsely peopled then, and where cities now stand there were then only log huts or hamlets in clearings of the forest land.

"Our money will not hold out very long," said Willie one evening to Josh, "so we must be thinking of a move of some kind."

Fortune seemed to decide what the move was to be, for while out shooting in the woods the very next day, they came upon an Indian lying groaning under a bush. By the bursting of his gun three fingers of his left hand

had been blown to atoms. That he was a chief was evident from his dress, and his paint showed he was on the war-path.

Willie did all for him in his power, and helped him to camp, where the surgeon attended to his wounds.

Now an Indian never forgets a favour. "Once a friend, never a foe," is a motto with the red man.

This chief would be unable to fight for many a day, and he determined to return to his village, that the wise medicine women of his tribe might heal his grievous wounds.

Would Willie and his friend accompany him? he asked. They should be as welcome as brothers, and the hills and valleys in his country abounded with game.

"Come," he added; "come! My brothers will come?"

Willie was just in that position that it mattered little where he went, and in that frame of mind that he did not care. So both accepted the Indian's invitation.

Their life for the next two or three months was indeed a new one; but, born and brought up as they had been in the wild Scottish Highlands, and accustomed to rough it in all ways and all countries and climates, they very soon settled down to their new mode of existence, and actually began to like it. Indeed, they found there was "a pleasure in the pathless woods" that was very much to their taste.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, all things considered, Willie Grant became an amateur Indian chief,

with Josh as his lieutenant, and that he was dubbed "The White Owl."

He learned the tactics of the Indians, and not only this, but he taught them in turn many of the methods of fighting in use among the white men, and drilled a body of warriors a thousand strong.

Having done so, he marched upon Lake Erie, and had soon the pleasure and pride of having his services accepted by the generals in command.

Willie was now happy and contented; his conscience was at rest. He could not accuse himself of having left his country's service; he was still fighting for the glory of old England and the integrity of her Canadian dominions.

His Indians were better drilled and equipped than any other body of red men employed in the war; and so all through the sanguinary conflict he fought, and the name of "The White Owl" became famous, for wheresoever his band of warriors came, victory seemed to come along with them.

December, 1815, came at last, and with it rumours of peace.

The American invasions of Canada had been frustrated one by one, and for a time there was a lull. Many outlying forts and stations were however still menaced by hostile savages, and scouts one day brought word that a British general, with a company of the Scottish regiments, was beleaguered near Lake St. Clair, that there were many women and children in the camp and fort,

and that unless assistance arrived soon, surrender and butchery was inevitable.

No one who has not read facts instead of fiction about red Indians of the hunting districts of America, can form any idea of the vindictive cruelty they practise upon prisoners, male and female, who have the terrible misfortune to fall into their hands.

Willie knew this; he had been a witness of it more than once, and when he heard the news of this beleaguered garrison, his desire to deliver his countrymen led him at once to seek audience of the commander of the British forces, who gladly accepted his services to go forthwith to the rescue.

The enemy was said to be three thousand strong, as opposed to about one hundred and twenty white men within the fort and a small body of friendly Indians.

All our hero asked for was about fifty British soldiers, with a large supply of provisions and ammunition. This was at once granted, and in a few days the expedition started.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE AT THE FORT.

“ON Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow;
And dark as winter was the flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden showed another sight
When the drums beat at dead of night,
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.”



HERE was a distance of nearly one hundred and fifty miles to be traversed before they reached the beleaguered fort; and this through forests, over hills and rivers, and all in the dead of winter. The whole country was buried in soft, powdery snow, and the frost was intense.

But Willie made his preparations well, and with the skill of a born general. He had liberty to choose his white soldiers, and he did so cautiously and carefully—men of physique only, and Scots all. We must try to forgive the White Owl for being so ultra-patriotic.

No fire-water was to be carried, except for the use of the sick, and it was under the charge of the British lieutenant and surgeon of the soldiers.

The Indians, hardier than Arabs, were dressed in their own wild, uncouth fashion; and the white soldiers were extra well clad; their clothes were woollen of the warmest, they wore fur caps and worsted mittens, and had a large supply each of the best woollen stockings; they also had moccassins supplied them of the best moose-deer, well tanned hide, and each man was provided with a pair of snow-shoes.

The Indian moccassin is a kind of large slipper, capable enough of holding the foot encased in three socks. To be perfect for winter use, the hide must not only be well tanned, but soaked in strong salt and water for twenty-four hours, and when half dry steeped for days in train oil; it is then snow-proof and pliable at the same time.

The snow-shoes were formed after the plan on which lawn-tennis bats are made. Each shoe is about one yard long by fifteen inches wide, the framework being of the best hickory, with two cross-bars; the network is of the best dressed deerskin, and drawn exceedingly tight, so that it may be elastic without giving too much.

The foot is secured nearly mid-way on the shoe, there being an opening about nine inches from the fore-part, behind the cross-bar, to admit of the play of the toes, and a strap over this to keep the foot in position; a

piece of skin or list is used to secure the foot to the shoe.

A peculiar motion is necessary to comfort, and if one trips or falls, he has to untie a shoe, place it on the snow, and lean on it while he scrambles up and readjusts the affair.

Travelling on snow-shoes is rather fatiguing at first, especially to the tendon behind the heel; but, like skating or 'cycling, such a mode of progression is learned in time; then its advantages are duly appreciated.

A kind of *tobogin*, or Indian sledge, was used for carrying the provisions, blankets, and ammunition.

With many a good wish and hearty cheers from the comrades they left behind them, the expedition started silently away, and soon disappeared in the depths of the primeval forest.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, how fared it with those in the fort?

It was early in November, before the snow had begun to fall, that the commandant first got word that hostile Indians were on the war-path, and might soon be expected to cross the river St. Clair, and advance in force. The position he held, however, was an important one, and not at that time considered to be untenable. The general, therefore, determined to hold it even against fearful odds, being satisfied in his own mind that as the Americans had been virtually defeated and hurled back

into their own country, his fort and camp would soon be relieved.

He had not been idle for weeks back. In a wild country like this it is folly not to be always prepared for the worst.

The camp was situated in the middle of a clearing in the forest, with a tributary of the Thames bending half round it. It consisted of a number of strong log huts, and the fort itself, of wood and stone, and so massively built as to look almost impregnable without the aid of artillery.

The commandant, however, had made assurance doubly sure, and a double rampart with massive gates was erected, not only on the forest-face of the encampment, but along the river's edge itself; and added to this, pits were dug and sharp-pointed stakes driven in; and, in a word, everything that ingenuity could devise was done to make the position a safe one.

Provisions were not over plentiful, however; but buffalo and bear meat was collected and salted, so that if the worst came to the worst, the garrison could fall back on that.

Luckily, ammunition was plentiful, and, terrible though it be to think of and relate, a magazine was laid beneath the fort, that could be fired in an instant; for, well knowing the terrible tortures inflicted on prisoners by these savages, the commandant had determined those tenderly nurtured British ladies and children should never fall alive into their hands.

It was after all preparations had been completed that a gloom, which it was impossible to dispel, began to settle down on the fort. Even the Indians, generally so lively, seemed dull and depressed.

Scouts had been sent out, but many of them never returned, having been met and slain by the spies of the advancing foe.

Other Indians had been despatched to the forts near Lake Erie, but the commandant of the beleaguered garrison had, of course, no means of ascertaining whether they had ever reached their destination.

The stillness and solitude of their surroundings, and the uncertainty of their coming fate, greatly oppressed the garrison.

The general determined to build an out-work beyond the gates. This was little else save a ditch and palisaded rampart, commanded by the fort, which mounted three pieces of ordnance.

When this was accomplished there was nothing else to do save to wait.

For days and days there had not been a sound of life in the forest, except the occasional shrill scream of some startled bird, and at night the mournful moaning of the forest owl, with now and then the yelp of a wolf. It was the fall of the year, or rather the year had fallen, and there was not a leaf left on the trees, and nature herself seemed waiting—waiting for winter.

For days and days there had not been a breath of wind to move a branch or snap a twig.

One afternoon a scout came in, and with grave face announced the fact that the enemy was within a day's march of the fort; but his account of their numbers was so dubious that the commandant determined to send one of his officers out to reconnoitre.

He would have gone himself had his daughter not been in the fort; but he was fearful that, stealing a march upon him, the savages might attack in his absence.

Who would volunteer on this dangerous exploit? Hugh Dawson came at once to the front. He was a slightly built, wiry Highlander,—a sort of a fellow that would volunteer to lead a forlorn hope,—and was never so happy apparently as when in danger.

“Hugh,” said the general, “you will need all your cunning and strength, too, if you fall in with the scouts of these red-skins.”

“All right, sir,” said Hugh cheerfully. “I'm ready to be off; and if I die, I have neither chick nor child to mourn for me.”

So away went Hugh Dawson westward, guided by the sun. It still wanted three hours of sunset, and before daylight departed he hoped to reach a distant ridge of hills, which commanded the enemy's whole position, and look down from these into their camp.

He hurried on, disregarding all precautions, not creeping stealthily from tree to tree, as do the Indians. No,

Hugh left plenty of trail, if there were any savage in the forest to pick it up; in fact, he trusted to speed of foot and daring more than anything else. And so far he was successful. He gained the desired position just as the sun was going down over the distant woods, and saw, far away in the plain beneath him, the whole Indian army in camp. They seemed at rest for the night, for the horses were hobbled, and sentinels set, and most of the savages were lying down in their blankets near the camp fires. He reckoned their numbers as not a man less than two thousand. He carefully noted their position, and every coign of advantage or disadvantage on the ground, and had just raised himself from the grass, and was about to retire, when a puff of white smoke rose from a neighbouring thicket, and at the same moment a musket bullet went with a ping past his ear.

Hugh Dawson threw up his arms and dropped to the ground as if shot.

Completely taken off his guard, the Indian left his place of concealment and rushed forward with drawn knife, an eager look of victory on his face. He had come for Hugh's scalp!

Hugh was on his knees in a instant, and had fired his musket; without effect, however, for next moment the savage was on him, and the two were engaged in a grapple for dear life.

The Indian was like an eel, and more than once Hugh felt the touch of cold steel on his neck; but after a time

he managed to disarm his antagonist, then summoning all his strength for a final spurt, he dashed the savage on the hard rocky ground, and there he lay stunned.

It would have been easy now for Hugh to have finished his foe, but he disliked striking a fallen man.

"I'll make sure of you, at all events," said Hugh to himself.

He dragged the inanimate form up to the brow of the hill, and sent him rolling down the ridge. It was a bare, steep bluff, and Hugh had the satisfaction of seeing the Indian safely at the foot of it; that is, safely as far as he—Hugh—was concerned.

Then he picked up his musket, reloaded, and at once went off down the hill fort-ways to the forest.

Hugh's adventures were not yet over, however, for no sooner had he reached the woods than the wind began to lift up its voice and moan ominously through the trees. It was a rising gale.

An hour afterwards the storm seemed to have reached its height. It was inky dark too. As he had come along in the morning, he had boldly barked the trees, regardless of his own safety in doing so, and leaving a trail that a child could follow.

For hours he managed to guide himself through the woods by means of the barked trees; then he lost himself completely, having only the wind and rain to direct him. He had been beating against this, and continued to do so.

The wind appeared even yet to gather strength, roaring through the bending trees with a sound like a raging gale at sea. If wild beasts had been in the forest, their voices would have been drowned in the surge of the awful storm. Every now and then a huge branch would snap or a tree itself come down; then high over the howling of the wind rose the noise of crashing timber, as the falling tree crushed others with its weight.

Still Hugh pushed on, feeling his way in the intensity of the darkness with his extended musket. When fairly beaten out and gasping for breath, suddenly to his joy he found himself in a clearing, and not far in front of him shone the signal light of the fort.

Half an hour afterwards bold Hugh Dawson was safe in camp and had made his report.

There was no saying now how soon or from what direction the hostile Indians might make their attack, so the sentries were doubled all round the ramparts.

Shortly after midnight the gale sensibly lessened, and by next morning the whole country was buried in a white cocoon of beautiful snow.

Days and nights went on, and still no savages appeared; but although no more snow fell, the frost got more intense every hour.

At length, much to the consternation of every one, the river itself became covered with a solid sheet of ice.

Here was a danger that had not been reckoned on, and it was doubtless for this that the Indians had been

waiting. There was nothing for it, however, but to strengthen the palisades on the river bank, which, trusting to the river as a protection, the commandant had left weaker than any other part of the fortifications.

The Indians of the fort and the white men had been engaged at this work all the day, and had sought their couches worn out and weary.

It was a bright, clear moonlight night, and nothing unusual occurred, nor did any sound break the stillness till far into the morning hours, when suddenly the sharp crack of a sentinel's musket rang out in the clear air, and next moment the drum was beating to arms and the whole camp was astir.

The trembling women and children were placed in the innermost room of the fort. Then men speedily bade their wives and children a hurried and affectionate adieu, and the commandant said adieu to his daughter, commending her to God.

She was a beautiful girl, of about seventeen or eighteen, who had come into these wilds with her father purely for the love she bore him, and through no wish to meet with adventure.

The whole clearing now seemed alive with savages, shouting, howling, brandishing their weapons, and hurrying on to the attack.

What a blessing the moonlight proved to the garrison! for it enabled them after an hour's hard fighting to repel the terrible assault. The savages retired discomfited,

beaten, leaving hundreds of dead and their wounded to crawl away as best they might, or perish among the snow.

The cannons had done great execution among the retiring hordes, loaded as they were with canister shot.

The attack was renewed again the next day, and the next; but if any advantage accrued to the savages, it lay in the fact that although repelled, they managed to weaken the little garrison considerably.

The fourth and fifth days passed off quietly, but it was only the quiet that preceded the hurricane.

The next attack was made under the darkness of the early part of the night, and it was a fearful one. The whole force of it was directed at first to burning down the gates. In spite of a well-directed fire from the guns, the enemy succeeded in dragging wood from the forest and piling it up against and over the gateway.

The danger was extreme.

By dint of hard work and wonderful exertion a gun was detached from the fort and hauled close to the gates. Again and again the savages rushed onwards with fiery brands to fire the woodwork, and again and again were they hurled back, literally blown from the gun.

The moon rose at last, and though its light gave a better opportunity of pointing the cannon, it also gave the enemy a better chance of picking off the men. So the little force was falling fast.

If they carried the gate, all was lost!—there was nothing left but to blow the fort up.

Even when the din of battle was at its loudest, and when hope itself was sinking, the general found time to draw Hugh Dawson aside and give him some orders.

Despite all the efforts to restrain the hostile Indians, the pile was fired at last, and now it became but a matter of a few minutes.

The flames leapt high in air, and the smoke and sparks rolled in a dense cloud to leeward, obscuring even the moon itself. There came a lull in the fight now; you could hear the fire hissing and the wood crackling; then the gate fell, and through the smoke and the flames leapt the Indians like very fiends and furies.

Before joining in the awful *mélée* that now ensued, the general raised his hand to Hugh Dawson, and the man glided away on his awful mission.

He is turning to enter the doorway, when even above the din of battle he thinks he can hear the noise of firing far in the rear, and a shout such as never came from the throats of Indians. He listens; it is repeated again and again.

He rushes to the top of the fort. Yes! yes! yonder they are, redcoats advancing rapidly towards the gate, while the hostile enemy is being beaten back into the woods by men dressed almost like themselves.

Then answering hurrahs are sent back from the fort.

The men still contesting the gate hear it, and cheer and fight with redoubled fury.

The women and children in the fort hear it, and with

smiles and hope lighting up their faces shout, "Saved! saved!"

In fifteen minutes more all was over. In fifteen minutes more General Fraser, for it was no other, stood in the inner room of the fort holding Willie Grant by the hand as he presented him to his daughter Etheldine, who had thrown herself into her father's arms and was smiling through her tears.

CHAPTER X.

LIKE A BIRD ON THE WAVE.

“Now wild war's deadly blast is blown,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' many a sweet babe fatherless,
And many a widow mourning.”

—*Burns.*

“DEAR land of my birth, far from thee I have been,
By streamlets so flowery and valleys so green,
In vain seeking pleasure ; for still, as of yore,
The home of my heart is the vale of Stretthmore.”

—*Ballantine.*



VEN a landsman, had he gone on board H.M.S. A—— on that particular forenoon, could have told that there was something very unusual taking place in the ship. He could have told it before he mounted the ladder even, for yonder, fast to the boom, were officers' boats, with their sprucely dressed crews, from many other ships in the fleet.

There were very few officers on the quarter-deck, the sentries everywhere looked solemn and subdued. On the

main deck and on the lower deck there was an unusual hush, less laughing and less talking, and an entire absence of practical joking. Officers stood in groups on the after part of the main deck, and there were two sentries outside the captain's cabin.

Let us enter.

We do so, and see a sight. A sight that would please ladies at all events.

A court martial!

The pomp and panoply, the fixed and glittering bayonets, the clanking swords, the splendid uniforms of scarlet, blue, and gold, the dignity of the presiding captain and the seriousness of the other officers, who are seated at the two sides of a long green baize-covered table, and the youth and handsome appearance of the prisoner, who between a file of armed marines stands at the other end facing the court,—all make up a picture that is at once imposing and effective.

And the prisoner is our hero Willie Grant!

The war is over, French and English and Americans are friendly powers once more. Willie had sought and obtained passage home in the dear old *Castile*, on board of which he had found many of his old messmates, including the redoubtable Dick-Rae, the gallant good Dr. Curver, bold Old Benbow, and Captain Oldrey.

Arrived at Portsmouth, he had demanded to be tried by court martial, and his trial was now proceeding.

“The prisoner was accused—by his own desire—of holding communication with the enemy in Newfound-

land," said the prosecutor for the Crown; "and but for the unfortunate wreck of the *Dardanelle*, the case would have been decided years ago, and he, the prisoner, would not now be standing at the foot of that table. The prisoner," he might add, "had demanded this court martial, and at first blush this may seem in his favour, he may appear as if he wished to clear his character. When however the court had heard what the witnesses had to say, affairs would appear in a different light, and they would find that the only things they could give the prisoner credit for, were a boldness almost akin to impertinence, and an utter disregard for his own life. The first witness he should call would be Lieutenant Harness, who at the time of her wreck was mate of the *Dardanelle*."

Harness was now brought to the board. He gave the prisoner one glance which was returned with haughty interest.

The officers leant earnestly over the table now, and every eye was fixed on Harness.

He stood steadily enough, and gave his evidence unflinchingly, only appearing a little uneasy at times when he heard the scratching sound of quills on paper, and knew that his every answer was being taken down.

His accusations against the prisoner were precisely the same as those he gave on the quarter-deck of the *Dardanelle*.

"Have you any questions to put to this witness?" said the president.

"Not at present, sir."

Harness gave a sigh of relief apparently, and retired.

The next witness was the marine, Cleaver.

He appeared strangely confused, and his answers were sometimes hardly intelligible.

“Have you any questions to ask, prisoner?”

“Only one or two now, but I may want him re-called. Were you not,” he said to Cleaver, “twice flogged for drunkenness and once for theft. Answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’?”

“Well, yes, but what has that to do——”

“Silence!” cried the court.

“I beg to ask the court,” continued Willie, “if that man is strictly sober now.”

This question was not allowed, and the man was permitted to stand down.

This was positively all the evidence for the prosecution, but it was enough, if it held good, to condemn the prisoner to death.

The counsel for the prisoner here had a few whispered words with him, and Willie proceeded to address the court in his own behalf. There was a sad look on his face as he rose up, and this was caused by the fact that his principal witness had not yet appeared; but ere yet he had opened his mouth, he heard the glad shout of “Side boys!” and heard the rattle of their footsteps on the ladder; he even heard the expected witness’s voice sing out, “In bow oar!” and “way enough!” as he swept round and came alongside.

There was no more sadness in Willie's face after that, and no tremor in his voice.

He began by reminding the court of his own good character in the service previous to the present accusations, which he would soon prove false, hoping the president would pardon one standing face to face with threatened death, for seeming to boast of his ever-steadfast zeal for the king's service, and his well-known courage in presence of the foe. Was it likely, he asked, that he who had a career before him would attempt so great a crime as that of selling a British ship to the enemy?

He then gave a brief sketch of his own life, and as far as he knew it, that of his friend and almost brother, Dem—*i.e.*, James Rutherford, captain in the navy of a country now a friendly power. He sketched the unexpected meeting of himself and Dem at Newfoundland, a meeting, he added, that could hardly have been premeditated; how he was taken prisoner; admitted that he had talked of old times; and added that he would prove he hurried on board as soon as free to report to the captain of the *Dardanelle* the presence of an enemy's ship in the adjoining bay.

"It might seem strange," he said, "and almost impossible, that the mate Harness should wish to swear his—the prisoner's—life away; but undoubtedly he bore a grudge against him for having been appointed third lieutenant of the *Dardanelle* over his—Harness's—head, and against even the wishes of his uncle the captain.

“Mr. Harness,” he continued, “had hinted that he—the prisoner—had attempted to take his life. He would now call Josh, who was then a boy, to tell what he knew of this.”

Josh, when called, was open-faced, and described most graphically all the tyranny he endured from the mate Harness, wholly because he was Mr. Grant’s servant.

At the prisoner’s desire Harness was now recalled, much to his disgust, and the two witnesses—Josh and he—were confronted.

All the boy’s answers were so frankly given, and Harness prevaricated so much, and contradicted himself so often, that at last it required but the last straw to break the camel’s back of his evidence.

That straw was speedily forthcoming.

“It is most important now,” said the counsel for the defence, “that Mr. Harness shall take pen, ink and paper, sit down, and write a few words that I shall dictate.

Harness sat down and proceeded to do as told.

The counsel dictated the first two words one by one, and Harness wrote them down boldly enough.

“I’ll be.”

The counsel dictated the next word letter by letter, r—e—v—e—n—g—e—d—

“I’ll be revenged.”

Something came rushing back to Harness’s memory now. He turned pale as death, and would have laid down the pen.

But the president ordered him to go on writing :

“ I’ll be revenged on *you*—H. H.”

Harness staggered to his feet, and was told he might stand down.

The counsel then handed the line that Harness had just written in silence to the president.

Then he handed him the card with the self-same words, which Willie had picked up on his chest of drawers, and kept ever since, with a few words of explanation.

Josh was recalled, and gave evidence of Harness’s attempt to buy him over as a witness against his master before the shipwreck.

Next Cleaver was recalled, and the prisoner proceeded to cross-question him.

He answered a few questions doggedly, then, to the surprise of all, burst out with the following exclamation :

“ It’s no use, sir ! It’s no use, Mr. President and gentlemen ! Jim Cleaver’s a bad hat, if you like. He *has* been flogged for getting drunk, and for stealing too, but it was only a tot of rum he helped himself to. Yes, Jim Cleaver’s a bad hat, but he isn’t going to swear a fellow-creature’s life away at the bribe o’ no Mr. Harness. Gentlemen, as far as I’m concerned the prisoner is innocent. All I said before was false, and I retract it. The prisoner and the foreign officer were a-talking when we heard them of old schooldays. Nothing else, s’help me ! and the reason Mr. Harness took me with him that

day was because he carried a pistol, and was afraid if he met the prisoner he would shoot him." (Sensation.)

The president here arose.

"I think, gentlemen, seeing the turn affairs have taken, there is no occasion to proceed further with the case, and if the counsel for the prosecution——"

Willie held up his hand.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, "but I hope—for the perfect clearing of my character—that I may be allowed to call one other and most important witness."

"Certainly, certainly."

A smart-looking, handsome, dark-eyed young officer, in the uniform of a captain of a French man-o'-war, was now ushered in.

He bowed to all, and the prisoner addressed him.

"I am not going to ask you questions," he said, "but desire you to tell the court simply and briefly the story of our boyhood, and of what occurred between yourself and me on the isle of Newfoundland."

In the very simplest of language, Dem, for it was he, did as he was told, and concluded amidst the murmured applause of the court.

The prisoner was then allowed to retire, but in less than five minutes was recalled.

Every one was standing. Willie was not only honourably acquitted, but complimented by the president. His sword was returned, and every officer of the court shook him by the hand.

Poor Willie Grant! Now that it was all over, he could

not prevent the tears from filling his eyes, and was glad when the surgeon of the ship took him away below to the quiet of his cabin.

Lieutenant Harness was ordered under instant arrest. But he was nowhere to be found, and it soon transpired that he had left the ship in a shore boat half an hour before.

He was never seen again—in the service.

As some solatium for the trials he had come through, Willie Grant received a private letter of congratulations from head-quarters, with thanks for the services he had performed during the Canadian war, and the very same post brought his promotion to the rank of commander.

* * * * *

But peace had come, to shower her blessings on all the kingdoms of the world, and for many a long year the olive branch would be honoured as much as the laurel leaf.

Then something had occurred that decided Willie to retire from the service. Old Squire McBride had gone the way of all the earth at last, and left our hero all his broad acres and woods and forests, and islands at sea.

Property has its duties, if it be but the possession of a pet dog or cat; so having so large and valuable an estate to look after, Willie Grant must needs retire. An active life at sea makes a man active on shore, and Willie's life for a time was really a very pleasant one.

The sudden elevation to opulence from comparative poverty might have turned the heads of many young

men. It did not turn Willie's. Not that he despised riches. No one does, and no one ought to, if only for the good that may be done thereby.

Harthill estate had been greatly neglected owing to the illness of its late proprietor, and years must elapse before the farms and holdings thereon would look thriving and wholesome. But the fine old house itself, with its delightful outlook away across the broad Atlantic, and the grounds around it, were speedily put in order.

Josh was installed as Willie—now *Squire*—Grant's head man, overseer, and bailiff,—and a happy young man was Josh!

Willie did not forget old friends and schoolfellows, and Granite and Fomart were granted leases of two of the best farms on the estate; so they were happy too.

It is needless to say that our hero's father took up his residence at Harthill, that the easiest chair was his, and the most comfortable room in the house.

Poor Poodah was killed by an accident. Both Dem and Willie were with him at the last, for he lived but two brief hours after the injuries, which were of the most terrible description.

His story had been a strange one. He had first heard of the star on the mountain from old Saunders the recluse, who had been a soldier, and servant to Colonel Rutherford. His cupidity was excited, for he had all an Oriental's love for diamonds, and he determined, if ever the chance occurred, to go in search of the supposed jewel and the hidden gold. He breathed not a word of this, however,

to Saunders. He really, it seems, had found the gold, and buried it in another place, buried it for his boy Jem, whom he loved with all the deep undying affection of a dog for a kind master. Poor simple Poodah, he knew nothing of the law of treasure-trove! That treasure-trove is buried still! The diamond, if diamond it be, he did not find: probably it was covered up in the *débris* from Poodah's digging. But, strange to say, some years after this strange Indian's death, and after a night of storm and rain, the star once more appeared on the mountain, and they tell me it is to be seen there now, though only on certain nights, and—so the superstitious Highlanders say—only by the good.

There was great rejoicing in the glen, and in all the straths and glens around, when the young Squire arrived from London, bringing home with him as his bride the fair young Etheldine Fraser.

And some months after this an event of only secondary importance to this occurred, for a yacht anchored in the bay of Glengair, bringing a party of Willie's old friends to spend a week at Harthill. Dick-Rae (the Hon. de Grey) was there, looking as merry and jolly as ever. Dem was there, Captain Oldrey and Dr. Curver; and last, but not least, who but plain Jack Williams, dear rattling Old Benbow!

There was so much to be done, so much to be said and seen, that it is no wonder the week was extended to a fortnight, and that even that time flew speedily by.

But the yacht must go at last. She sailed one sum-

mer's evening, and Ethel and Willie sat watching her from the cliffs of Dungrat, as she headed away southward and west, away and away and away, lessening and lessening, till she looked like a bird on the wave.

Then slowly homeward, hand in hand, they went, as gloaming began to deepen around them, and love's own star grew out of the west.



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