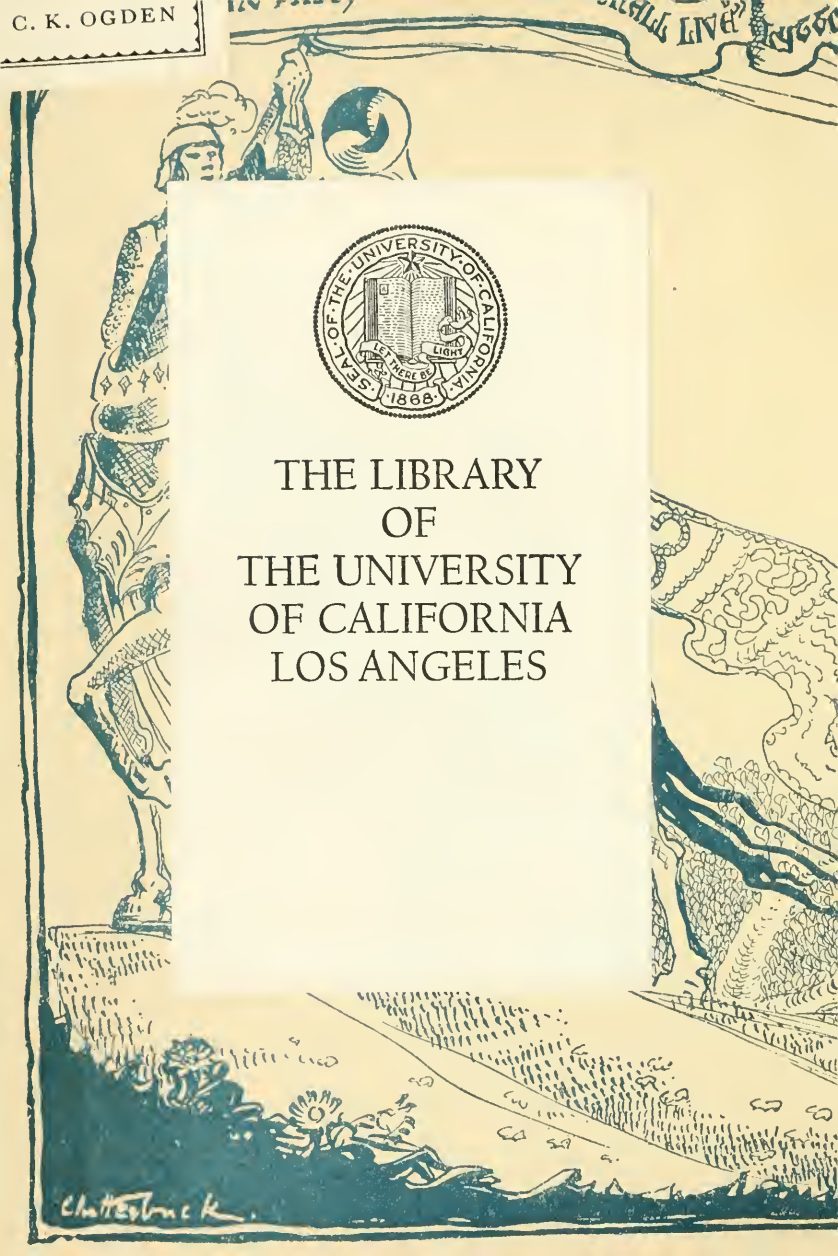

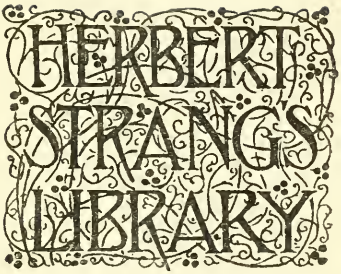
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"MARK HIM, CÆSAR," SAID THE FARMER.

[*See page 27.*

Herbert Strang's Library

MR. MIDSHIPMAN EASY

by

Captain Marryat

HUMPHREY · MILFORD
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· PRESS ·
LONDON

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INTRODUCTION

Like many boys who have not become famous, Frederick Marryat had a rooted objection to school, and an equally strong determination to get away to sea. He ran away three times from an excellent academy at Ponders End because, as he explained, he was obliged to wear his elder brother Joseph's left-off clothes; and when at last he left school and was placed in charge of a tutor he ran away again, although what his reason was on this occasion history does not record. His father, Mr. Joseph Marryat, M.P. and chairman of the committee at Lloyd's, hurried after him and caught him. But he seems to have been so much impressed by his son's determination that he yielded on the point of principle, and in 1806, at the age of fourteen, the boy entered as a midshipman on the frigate *Impérieuse* commanded by Captain Lord Cochrane, and as soon as he got aboard sailed for the Mediterranean.

It was on the *Impérieuse* that Marryat accumulated the great store of personal experiences upon which he drew in after life in writing his inimitable romances of the navy. Trafalgar had shattered the naval power of France and Spain so far as great fleets were concerned. The war had become a war of blockade, of single-ship actions, of cutting-out; and the

Mediterranean was the principal scene of these operations. Marryat was particularly fortunate in his captain, for Lord Cochrane (afterwards Lord Dundonald) was a giant among giants as a frigate commander. During his three years' service on the *Impérieuse* Marryat witnessed more than fifteen engagements, including the capture or destruction of three warships and twelve merchant vessels, and the demolition of a fort.

"The cruises of the *Impérieuse*," he tells us, "were periods of continual excitement, from the hour in which she hove up her anchor till she dropped it again in port; the day that passed without a shot being fired in anger was with us a blank day; the boats were hardly secured on the booms than they were cast loose and out again; the yard and stay tackles were for ever hoisting up and lowering down. The expedition with which parties were formed for service; the rapidity of the frigate's movements, night and day; the hasty sleep, snatched at all hours; the waking up at the report of the guns, which seemed the only key-note to the hearts of those on board; the beautiful precision of our fire, obtained by constant practice; the coolness and courage of our captain, inoculating the whole of the ship's company; the suddenness of our attacks, the gathering after the combat, the killed lamented, the wounded almost envied; the powder so burnt into our faces that years could not remove it; the proved character of every man and officer on board; the implicit trust and the adoration we felt for our commander; the ludicrous situations which would occur even in the extremest danger and create mirth when death was staring you in the face; the hair-breadth escapes, and the indifference to life shown by all—when memory sweeps along those years of excitement, even now my pulse beats more quickly with the reminiscence."

Introduction

After six years as a midshipman Marryat was appointed lieutenant, and in 1815 he became commander. Twelve years later he retired from the navy, having seen probably as much fighting as any man of his rank, and carrying with him no fewer than twenty-seven certificates, recommendations and votes of thanks for saving the lives of others at the risk of his own. On leaving the navy he devoted himself to literature and began to issue the series of romances that made him the first and greatest of our novelists of the sea. *Frank Mildmay*, *The King's Own*, *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful*, *Mr. Midshipman Easy* and others followed one another in quick succession, until in 1841 Marryat abandoned the writing of adult novels and with *Masterman Ready* began his almost equally famous stories for children.

Mr. Midshipman Easy, although written for the grown-ups, has been the delight of generations of youngsters; but for the reading of boys and girls the story has seemed to me to need some considerable editorial pruning. This treatment will not, I venture to hope, render it less enjoyable to young readers. Their elders can obtain the original text.

HERBERT STRANG.

MR. MIDSHIPMAN EASY

CHAPTER I

Mr. Nicodemus Easy was a gentleman who lived down in Hampshire; he was a married man, and in very easy circumstances. He had no children; but he was anxious to have them, as most people covet what they cannot obtain. After ten years, Mr. Easy gave it up as a bad job. Philosophy is said to console a man under disappointment; so Mr. Easy turned philosopher, the very best profession a man can take up, when he is fit for nothing else. For some time, Mr. Easy could not decide upon what description his nonsense should consist of; at last he fixed upon the rights of man, equality, and all that; how every person was born to inherit his share of the earth, a right at present only admitted to a certain length; that is, about six feet, for we all inherit our graves, and are allowed to take possession without dispute.

While Mr. Easy talked philosophy, Mrs. Easy played patience, and they were a happy couple, riding side by side on their hobbies, and never interfering with each other. Mr. Easy knew his wife could not understand him, and therefore did not expect her to listen very attentively; and Mrs. Easy did not care how much her husband talked, provided she was not put out in her game.

In due course of time, Mrs. Easy presented her husband with a fine boy, whom we present to the public as our hero.

It was the fourth day after that Mr. Easy, who was sitting by the bedside in an easy-chair, commenced as follows: "I have been thinking, my dear Mrs. Easy, about the name I shall give this child."

"Name, Mr. Easy! why, what name should you give it but your own?"

"Not so, my dear," replied Mr. Easy; "they call all names proper names, but I think that mine is not. It is the very worst name in the calendar."

"Well, Mr. Easy, at all events then let me choose the name."

"That you shall, my dear, and it was with this view that I have mentioned the subject so early."

"I think, Mr. Easy, I will call the boy after my poor father—his name shall be Robert."

"Very well, my dear, if you wish it, it shall be Robert. You shall have your own way. But I think, my dear, upon a little consideration, you will acknowledge that there is a decided objection."

"An objection, Mr. Easy?"

"Yes, my dear; Robert may be very well, but you must reflect upon the consequences; he is certain to be called Bob."

"Well, my dear, and suppose they do call him Bob?"

"I cannot bear even the supposition, my dear. You forget the county in which we are residing, the downs covered with sheep."

"Why, Mr. Easy, what can sheep have to do with a Christian name?"

"There it is; women never look to consequences. My dear, they have a great deal to do with the name of Bob. I will appeal to any farmer in the county, if ninety-nine shepherds' dogs out of one hundred are not called Bob. Now observe, your child is out of doors somewhere in the fields or plantations; you want and you call him. Instead of your child, what do you find? Why, a dozen curs at least, who come running up to you, all answering to the name of Bob, and wagging their stumps of tails. You see, Mrs. Easy, it is a dilemma not to be got over. Any other name you please, my dear, but in this one instance you must allow me to lay my positive veto."

"Well, then, let me see—but I'll think of it, Mr. Easy; my head aches very much just now."

"I will think for you, my dear. What do you say to John?"

"Oh no, Mr. Easy, such a common name."

"A proof of its popularity, my dear."

"I thought, Mr. Easy, that I was to be permitted to choose the name."

"Well, so you shall, my dear; I give it up to you. Do just as you please; but depend upon it that John is the right name. Is it not now, my dear?"

"It's the way you always treat me, Mr. Easy; you say that you give it up, and that I shall have my own way, but I never do have it. I am sure that the child will be christened John."

"Nay, my dear, it shall be just what you please. Now I recollect it, there were several Greek emperors who were Johns; but decide for yourself, my dear."

"No, no," replied Mrs. Easy, who was ill, and unable to contend any longer, "I give it up, Mr. Easy. I know how it will be, as it always is: you give me my own way as people give pieces of gold to children, it's their own money, but they must not spend it. Pray call him John."

"There, my dear, did not I tell you, you would be of my opinion upon reflection? I knew you would. I have given you your own way, and you tell me to call him John; so now we're both of the same mind, and that point is settled."

"I should like to go to sleep, Mr. Easy; I feel far from well."

"You shall always do just as you like, my dear," replied the husband, "and have your own way in everything. It is the greatest pleasure I have when I yield to your wishes. I will walk in the garden. Good-bye, my dear."

Mrs. Easy made no reply, and the philosopher quitted the room. As may easily be imagined, on the following day the boy was christened John.

CHAPTER II

It is very difficult to throw any interest into a chapter on childhood. There is the same uniformity in all children until they develop. We cannot, therefore, say much relative to Jack Easy's earliest days.

To make short work of it, Jack Easy in six months was in shorts. He soon afterwards began to crawl and show his legs; he snatched at everything, squeezed the kitten to death, scratched his mother, and pulled his father by the hair; notwithstanding all which, both his father and mother and the whole household declared him to be the finest and sweetest child in the universe. But if we were to narrate all the wonderful events of Jack's childhood from the time of his birth up to the age of seven years, it would take at least three volumes folio. Jack was brought up in the way that every only child usually is—that is, he was allowed to have his own way.

"Have you no idea of putting the boy to school, Mr. Easy?" said Dr. Middleton, who had been summoned by a groom with his horse in a foam to attend immediately at Forest Hill, the name of Mr. Easy's mansion, and who, upon his arrival, had found that Master Easy had cut his thumb. One would have thought that he had cut his head off by the agitation pervading the whole household —Mr. Easy walking up and down very uneasy, Mrs. Easy with great difficulty prevented from syncope, and all the maids bustling and fussing round Mrs. Easy's chair. Everybody appeared excited except Master Jack Easy himself, who, with a rag round his finger, and his pinafore spotted with blood, was playing at bob-cherry, and cared nothing about the matter.

"Well, what's the matter, my little man?" said Dr. Middleton, on entering, addressing himself to Jack, as the most sensible of the whole party.

"Oh, Dr. Middleton," interrupted Mrs. Easy, "he has cut his hand; I am sure that a nerve is divided, and then the lockjaw——"

The doctor made no reply, but examined the finger:

Jack Easy continued to play bob-cherry with his right hand.

"Have you such a thing as a piece of sticking-plaster in the house, madam?" observed the doctor, after examination.

"Oh, yes—run, Mary—run, Sarah!" In a few seconds the maids appeared, Sarah bringing the sticking-plaster, and Mary following with the scissors.

"Make yourself quite easy, madam," said Dr. Middleton, after he put on the plaster, "I will answer for no evil consequences."

"Had I not better take him upstairs, and let him lie down a little?" replied Mrs. Easy, slipping a guinea into the doctor's hand.

"It is not absolutely requisite, madam," said the doctor; "but at all events he will be kept out of more mischief."

"Come, my dear, you hear what Dr. Middleton says."

"Yes, I heard," replied Jack; "but I shan't go."

"My dear Johnny—come, love—now do, my dear Johnny."

Johnny played bob-cherry, and made no answer.

"Come, Master Johnny," said Sarah.

"Go away, Sarah," said Johnny, with a backhander.

"Oh, fie, Master Johnny!" said Mary.

"Johnny, my love," said Mrs. Easy, in a coaxing tone, "come now—will you go?"

"I'll go in the garden and get some more cherries," replied Master Johnny.

"Come, then, love, we will go into the garden."

Master Johnny jumped off his chair, and took his mamma by the hand.

"What a dear, good, obedient child it is!" exclaimed Mrs. Easy: "you may lead him with a thread."

"Yes, to pick cherries," thought Dr. Middleton.

Mrs. Easy, and Johnny, and Sarah, and Mary went into the garden, leaving Dr. Middleton alone with Mr. Easy, who had been silent during this scene. Now Dr. Middleton was a clever, sensible man, who had no wish to impose upon any one. As for his taking a guinea for putting on a piece of sticking-plaster, his conscience was very easy on that score. His time was equally valuable,

whether he were employed for something or nothing; and, moreover, he attended the poor gratis. Constantly in the house, he had seen much of Mr. John Easy, and perceived that he was a courageous, decided boy, of a naturally good disposition; but from the idiosyncrasy of the father and the doting folly of the mother, in a sure way of being spoiled. As soon, therefore, as the lady was out of hearing, he took a chair, and made the query at the commencement of the chapter, which we shall now repeat.

"Have you no idea of putting the boy to school, Mr. Easy?"

Mr. Easy crossed his legs, and clasped his hands together over his knees, as he always did when he was about to commence an argument.

"The great objection that I have to sending a boy to school, Dr. Middleton, is, that I conceive that the discipline enforced is not only contrary to the rights of man, but also in opposition to all sound sense and common judgment. Not content with punishment, which is in itself erroneous and an infringement of social justice, they even degrade the minds of the boys still more by applying punishment to the most degraded part, adding contumely to tyranny. Of course it is intended that a boy who is sent to school should gain by precept and example; but is he to learn by the angry look and the flourish of the vindictive birch? Why should there be a distinction between the flogger and the floggee? Are they not both fashioned alike after God's image, endowed with the same reason, having an equal right to what the world offers, and which was intended by Providence to be equally distributed? Is it not that the sacred inheritance of all, which has tyrannously and impiously been ravished from the many for the benefit of the few, and which ravishment, from long custom of iniquity and inculcation of false precepts, has too long been basely submitted to? Is it not the duty of a father to preserve his only son from imbibing these dangerous and debasing errors, which will render him only one of a vile herd who are content to suffer, provided that they live? And yet are not these very errors inculcated at school, and impressed upon their

mind inversely by the birch? Do not they there receive their first lesson in slavery with the first lesson in A B C; and are not their minds thereby prostrated, so as never to rise again, but ever to bow to despotism, to cringe to rank, to think and act by the precepts of others, and to tacitly disavow that sacred equality which is our birthright? No, sir, without they can teach without resorting to such a fundamental error as flogging, my boy shall never go to school."

And Mr. Easy threw himself back in his chair, imagining, like all philosophers, that he had said something very clever.

Dr. Middleton knew his man, and therefore patiently waited until he had exhausted his oratory.

"I will grant," said the doctor at last, "that all you say may have great truth in it; but, Mr. Easy, do you not think that by not permitting a boy to be educated, you allow him to remain more open to that very error of which you speak? It is only education which will conquer prejudice, and enable a man to break through the trammels of custom. Now, allowing that the birch is used, yet it is at a period when the young mind is so elastic as to soon become indifferent; and after he has attained the usual rudiments of education, you will then find him prepared to receive those lessons which you can yourself instil."

"I will teach him everything myself," replied Mr. Easy, folding his arms consequentially and determinedly.

"I do not doubt your capability, Mr. Easy; but unfortunately you will always have a difficulty which you never can get over. Excuse me, I know what you are capable of, and the boy would indeed be happy with such a preceptor, but—if I must speak plain—you must be aware as well as I am, that the maternal fondness of Mrs. Easy will always be a bar to your intention. He is already so spoiled by her, that he will not obey; and without obedience you cannot inculcate."

"I grant, my dear sir, that there is a difficulty on that point; but maternal weakness must then be overcome by paternal severity."

"May I ask how, Mr. Easy, for it appears to be impossible?"

"Impossible! By heavens, I'll make him obey, or I'll"—here Mr. Easy stopped before the word "flog" was fairly out of his mouth—"I'll know the reason why, Dr. Middleton."

Dr. Middleton checked his inclination to laugh, and replied, "That you would hit upon some scheme, by which you would obtain the necessary power over him, I have no doubt; but what will be the consequence? The boy will consider his mother as a protector, and you as a tyrant. He will have an aversion to you, and with that aversion he will never pay respect and attention to your valuable precepts when he arrives at an age to understand them. Now it appears to me that this difficulty which you have raised may be got over. I know a very worthy clergyman who does not use the birch; but I will write, and put the direct question to him, and then if your boy is removed from the danger arising from Mrs. Easy's over-indulgence, in a short time he will be ready for your more important tuition."

"I think," replied Mr. Easy, after a pause, "that what you say merits consideration. I acknowledge that in consequence of Mrs. Easy's nonsensical indulgence, the boy is unruly, and will not obey me at present; and if your friend does not apply the rod, I will think seriously of sending my son John to him to learn the elements."

The doctor had gained his point by flattering the philosopher.

In a day he returned with a letter from the pedagogue in answer to one supposed to be sent to him, in which the use of the birch was indignantly disclaimed, and Mr. Easy announced to his wife, when they met that day at tea-time, his intentions with regard to his son John.

"To school, Mr. Easy? what, send Johnny to school! a mere infant to school!"

"Surely, my dear, you must be aware that at nine years it is high time that he learned to read."

"Why, he almost reads already, Mr. Easy; surely I can teach him that. Does he not, Sarah?"

"Lord bless him, yes, ma'am, he was saying his letters yesterday."

"Oh, Mr. Easy, what can have put this in your

head? Johnny dear, come here—tell me now what's the letter A. You were singing it in the garden this morning."

"I want some sugar," replied Johnny, stretching his arm over the table to the sugar-basin, which was out of his reach.

"Well. my love, you shall have a great lump if you will tell me what's the letter A."

"A was an archer, and shot at a frog," replied Johnny, in a surly tone.

"There now, Mr. Easy; and he can go through the whole alphabet—can't he, Sarah?"

"That he can, the dear—can't you, Johnny dear?"

"No," replied Johnny.

"Yes, you can, my love; you know what's the letter B. Now don't you?"

"Yes," replied Johnny.

"There, Mr. Easy, you see what the boy knows, and how obedient he is too. Come, Johnny dear, tell us what was B."

"No, I won't," replied Johnny, "I want some more sugar;" and Johnny, who had climbed on a chair, spread himself over the table to reach it.

"Mercy! Sarah, pull him off—he'll upset the urn," screamed Mrs. Easy. Sarah caught hold of Johnny by the loins to pull him back, but Johnny, resisting the interference, turned round on his back as he lay on the table, and kicked Sarah in the face, just as she made another desperate grasp at him. The rebound from the kick, given as he lay on a smooth mahogany table, brought Johnny's head in contact with the urn, which was upset in the opposite direction, and, notwithstanding a rapid movement on the part of Mr. Easy, he received a sufficient portion of boiling liquid on his legs to scald him severely, and induce him to stamp and swear in a very unphilosophical way. In the meantime Sarah and Mrs. Easy had caught up Johnny, and were both holding him at the same time, exclaiming and lamenting. The pain of the scald and the indifference shown towards him were too much for Mr. Easy's temper to put up with. He snatched Johnny out of their arms, and, quite forgetting his equality and rights of man, belaboured him

without mercy. Mrs. Easy went off into hysterics, and Johnny howled so as to be heard at a quarter of a mile.

How long Mr. Easy would have continued it is impossible to say; but the door opened, and Mr. Easy looked up while still administering the punishment, and perceived Dr Middleton in mute astonishment. He had promised to come in to tea, and enforce Mr. Easy's arguments, if it were necessary; but it certainly appeared to him that in the argument which Mr. Easy was then enforcing, he required no assistance. However, at the entrance of Dr. Middleton, Johnny was dropped, and lay roaring on the floor; Mrs. Easy had rolled on the floor, the urn was also on the floor, and Mr. Easy, although not floored, had not a leg to stand upon.

Never did a medical man look in more opportunely. Mr. Easy at first was not certainly of that opinion, but his legs became so painful that he soon became a convert.

Dr. Middleton, as in duty bound, first picked up Mrs. Easy, and laid her on the sofa. Sarah picked up Johnny, and carried him kicking and roaring out of the room; in return for which attention she received sundry bites. The footman, who had announced the doctor, picked up the urn, that being all that was in his department. Mr. Easy threw himself panting and in agony on the other sofa, and Dr. Middleton was excessively embarrassed how to act: he perceived that Mr. Easy required his assistance, and that Mrs. Easy could do without it; but how to leave a lady who was half really and half pretendedly in hysterics, was difficult; for if he attempted to leave her, she kicked and flounced, and burst out the more. At last Dr. Middleton rang the bell, which brought the footman, who summoned all the maids, who carried Mrs. Easy upstairs, and then the doctor was able to attend to the only patient who really required his assistance. Mr. Easy explained the affair in a few words broken into ejaculations from pain, as the doctor removed his stockings. From the applications of Dr. Middleton, Mr. Easy soon obtained bodily relief; but what annoyed him still more than his scalded legs, was the doctor having been a witness to his infringement of the equality and rights of man. Dr. Middleton perceived this, and he knew also how to pour balm into that wound.

"My dear Mr. Easy, I am very sorry that you have had this accident, for which you are indebted to Mrs. Easy's foolish indulgence of the boy; but I am glad to perceive that you have taken up those parental duties which are inculcated by the Scriptures. Solomon says, 'that he who spares the rod, spoils the child,' thereby implying that it is the duty of a father to correct his children, and in a father, the so doing does not interfere with the rights of man, or any natural equality, for the son being a part or portion of the father, he is correcting his own self only; and the proof of it is, that a father, in punishing his own son, feels as much pain in so doing as if he were himself punished. It is, therefore, nothing but self-discipline, which is strictly enjoined us by the Scriptures."

"That is exactly my opinion," replied Mr. Easy, comforted at the doctor having so logically got him out of the scrape. "But—he shall go to school to-morrow, that I'm determined on."

"He will have to thank Mrs. Easy for that," replied the doctor.

"Exactly," replied Mr. Easy. "Doctor, my legs are getting very hot again."

"Continue to bathe them with the vinegar and water, Mr. Easy, until I send you an embrocation, which will give you immediate relief. I will call to-morrow. By-the-bye, I am to see a little patient at Mr. Bonnycastle's: if it is any accommodation, I will take your son with me."

"It will be a great accommodation, doctor," replied Mr. Easy.

"Then, my dear sir, I will just go up and see how Mrs. Easy is, and to-morrow I will call at ten. I can wait an hour. Good-night."

"Good-night, doctor."

The doctor had his game to play with Mrs. Easy. He magnified her husband's accident—he magnified his wrath, and advised her by no means to say one word, until he was well, and more pacified. The next day he repeated this dose, and, in spite of the ejaculations of Sarah, and the tears of Mrs. Easy, who dared not venture to plead her cause, and the violent resistance of Master Johnny, who appeared to have a presentiment of what

was to come, our hero was put into Dr. Middleton's chariot, and with the exception of one plate of glass, which he kicked out of the window with his feet, and for which feat the doctor, now that he had him all to himself, boxed his ears till he was nearly blind, he was, without any further eventful occurrence, carried by the doctor's footman into the parlour of Mr. Bonnycastle.

CHAPTER III

Master Jack had been plumped down in a chair by the doctor's servant. Dr. Middleton ran over a newspaper, while Johnny sat on the chair all of a heap, looking like a lump of sulks, with his feet on the upper front bar, and his knees almost up to his nose. He was a promising pupil, Jack.

Mr. Bonnycastle made his appearance—a tall, well-built, handsome, fair man, with a fine powdered head, dressed in solemn black, and knee buckles; his linen beautifully clean, and with a peculiar bland expression of countenance. When he smiled he showed a row of teeth white as ivory, and his mild blue eye was the *ne plus ultra* of beneficence. He was the beau-ideal of a preceptor, and it was impossible to see him and hear his mild pleasing voice, without wishing that all your sons were under his protection. He was a ripe scholar, and a good one, and at the time we speak of had the care of upwards of one hundred boys.

Dr. Middleton, who was on intimate terms with Bonnycastle, rose as he entered the room, and they shook hands. Middleton then turned to where Jack sat, and pointing to him, said, "Look there."

Bonnycastle smiled. "I cannot say that I have had worse, but I have almost as bad. I will apply the Promethean torch, and soon vivify that rude mass. Come, sit down, Middleton."

"But," said the doctor, as he resumed his chair, "tell me, Bonnycastle, how you will possibly manage to lick

such a cub into shape, when you do not resort to flogging?"

"I have no opinion of flogging, and therefore I do not resort to it. The fact is, I was at Harrow myself, and was rather a pickle. I was called up as often as most boys in the school, and I perfectly recollect that eventually I cared nothing for a flogging. I had become case-hardened. It is the least effective part that you can touch a boy upon. It leaves nothing behind to refresh their memory."

"I should have thought otherwise."

"My dear Middleton, I can produce more effect by one caning than twenty floggings. Observe, you flog upon a part for the most part quiescent; but you cane upon all parts, from the head to the heels. Now, when once the first sting of the birch is over, then a dull sensation comes over the part, and the pain after that is nothing; whereas a good sound caning leaves sores and bruises in every part, and on all the parts which are required for muscular action. After a flogging, a boy may run out in the hours of recreation, and join his playmates as well as ever, but a good caning tells a very different tale; he cannot move one part of his body without being reminded for days by the pain of the punishment he has undergone, and he is very careful how he is called up again."

"My dear sir, I really had an idea that you were excessively lenient," replied Middleton, laughing; "I am glad that I am under a mistake."

He then detailed to the pedagogue the idiosyncrasy of Mr. Easy, and all the circumstances attending Jack being sent to his school.

"There is no time to be lost then, doctor. I must conquer this young gentleman before his parents call to see him. Depend upon it, in a week I will have him obedient and well broke in."

Dr. Middleton wished Jack good-bye, and told him to be a good boy. Jack did not vouchsafe to answer. "Never mind, doctor, he will be more polished next time you call here, depend upon it," and the doctor departed.

Although Mr. Bonnycastle was severe, he was very

judicious. Mischief of all kinds was visited but by slender punishment, such as being kept in at play hours, etc.; and he seldom interfered with the boys for fighting, although he checked decided oppression. The great *sine quâ non* with him was attention to their studies. He soon discovered the capabilities of his pupils, and he forced them accordingly; but the idle boy, the bird who "could sing and wouldn't sing," received no mercy. The consequence was, that he turned out the cleverest boys, and his conduct was so uniform and unvarying in its tenor, that if he was feared when they were under his control, he was invariably liked by those whom he had instructed, and they continued his friends in after life.

Mr. Bonnycastle at once perceived that it was no use coaxing our hero, and that fear was the only attribute by which he could be controlled. So, as soon as Dr. Middleton had quitted the room, he addressed him in a commanding tone, "Now, boy, what is your name?"

Jack started; he looked up at his master, perceived his eye fixed upon him, and a countenance not to be played with. Jack was no fool, and somehow or another, the discipline he had received from his father had given him some intimation of what was to come. All this put together induced Jack to condescend to answer, with his forefinger between his teeth, "Johnny."

"And what is your other name, sir?"

Jack, who appeared to repent his condescension, did not at first answer, but he looked again in Mr. Bonnycastle's face, and then round the room: there was no one to help him, and he could not help himself, so he replied "Easy."

"Do you know why you are sent to school?"

"Scalding father."

"No; you are sent to learn to read and write."

"But I won't read and write," replied Jack sulkily.

"Yes, you will: and you are going to read your letters now directly."

Jack made no answer. Mr. Bonnycastle opened a sort of book-case, and displayed to John's astonished view a series of canes, ranged up and down like billiard cues, and continued, "Do you know what those are for?"

Jack eyed them wistfully; he had some faint idea that he was sure to be better acquainted with them, but he made no answer.

"They are to teach little boys to read and write, and now I am going to teach you. You'll soon learn. Look now here," continued Mr. Bonnycastle, opening a book with large type, and taking a capital at the head of a chapter, about half an inch long. "Do you see that letter?"

"Yes," replied Johnny, turning his eyes away, and picking his fingers.

"Well, that is the letter B. Do you see it? Look at it, so that you may know it again. That's the letter B. Now tell me what that letter is."

Jack now determined to resist, so he made no answer.

"So you cannot tell; well, then, we will try what one of these little fellows will do," said Mr. Bonnycastle, taking down a cane. "Observe, Johnny, that's the letter B. Now, what letter is that? Answer me directly."

"I won't learn to read and write."

Whack came the cane on Johnny's shoulders, who burst out into a roar as he writhed with pain.

Mr. Bonnycastle waited a few seconds. "That's the letter B. Now tell me, sir, directly, what that letter is."

"I'll tell my *mar*." Whack! "O law! O law!"

"What letter is that?"

Johnny, with his mouth open, panting, and the tears on his cheeks, answered indignantly, "Stop till I tell Sarah."

Whack came the cane again, and a fresh burst from Johnny.

"What letter's that?"

"I won't tell," roared Johnny; "I won't tell—that I won't."

Whack—whack—whack, and a pause. "I told you before, that's the letter B. What letter is that? Tell me directly."

Johnny, by way of reply, made a snatch at the cane. Whack—he caught it, certainly, but not exactly as he would have wished. Johnny then snatched up the book, and dashed it to the corner of the room. Whack,

whack. Johnny attempted to seize Mr. Bonnycastle with his teeth. Whack, whack, whack, whack; and Johnny fell on the carpet, and roared with pain. Mr. Bonnycastle then left him for a little while, to recover himself, and sat down.

At last Johnny's exclamations settled down in deep sobs, and then Mr. Bonnycastle said to him, "Now, Johnny, you perceive that you must do as you are bid, or else you will have more beating. Get up immediately. Do you hear, sir?"

Somehow or another, Johnny, without intending it, stood upon his feet.

"That's a good boy; now you see, by getting up as you were bid, you have not been beaten. Now, Johnny, you must go and bring the book from where you threw it down. Do you hear, sir? bring it directly!"

Johnny looked at Mr. Bonnycastle and the cane. With every intention to refuse, Johnny picked up the book and laid it on the table.

"That's a good boy; now we will find the letter B. Here it is: now, Johnny, tell me what that letter is."

Johnny made no answer.

"Tell me directly, sir," said Mr. Bonnycastle, raising his cane up in the air. The appeal was too powerful. Johnny eyed the cane; it moved, it was coming. Breathlessly he shrieked out, "B!"

"Very well indeed, Johnny—very well. Now your first lesson is over, and you shall go to bed. You have learned more than you think for. To-morrow we will begin again. Now we'll put the cane by."

Mr. Bonnycastle rang the bell, and desired Master Johnny to be put to bed, in a room by himself, and not to give him any supper, as hunger would, the next morning, much facilitate his studies. Johnny was conducted to bed, although it was but six o'clock. He was not only in pain, but his ideas were confused; and no wonder, after all his life having been humoured and indulged—never punished until the day before. After all the caresses of his mother and Sarah, which he never knew the value of—after stuffing himself all day long, and being tempted to eat till he turned away in satiety, to find himself without his mother, without Sarah, without supper—

covered with weals, and, what was worse than all, without his own way. No wonder Johnny was confused, at the same time that he was subdued; and, as Mr. Bonnycastle had truly told him, he had learned more than he had any idea of.

CHAPTER IV

THE next morning Master Jack Easy was not only very sore but very hungry, and as Mr. Bonnycastle informed him that he would not only have plenty of cane, but also no breakfast, if he did not learn his letters, Johnny had wisdom enough to say the whole alphabet, for which he received a great deal of praise, the which if he did not duly appreciate, he at all events infinitely preferred to beating. Mr. Bonnycastle perceived that he had conquered the boy by one hour's well-timed severity. He therefore handed him over to the ushers in the school, and as they were equally empowered to administer the needful impulse, Johnny very soon became a very tractable boy.

A spoiled child is always a source of anxiety and worry, and after Johnny's departure, Mrs. Easy found a quiet and repose much more suited to her disposition. Gradually she weaned herself from him, and, satisfied with seeing him occasionally and hearing the reports of Dr. Middleton, she at last was quite reconciled to his being at school, and not coming back except during the holidays. John Easy made great progress; he had good natural abilities, and Mr. Easy rubbed his hands when he saw the doctor, saying, "Yes, let them have him for a year or two longer, and then I'll finish him myself." Each vacation he had attempted to instil into Johnny's mind the equal rights of man. Johnny appeared to pay but little attention to his father's discourses, but evidently showed that they were not altogether thrown away, as he helped himself to everything he wanted, without asking leave. And thus was our hero educated until he

arrived at the age of sixteen, when he was a stout, good-looking boy, with plenty to say for himself,—indeed, when it suited his purpose, he could outtalk his father.

Nothing pleased Mr. Easy so much as Jack's loquacity. —"That's right; argue the point, Jack—argue the point, boy," would he say, as Jack disputed with his mother. And then he would turn to the doctor, rubbing his hands, and observe, "Depend upon it, Jack will be a great, a very great man." And then he would call Jack and give him a guinea for his cleverness; and at last Jack thought it a very clever thing to argue. He never would attempt to argue with Mr. Bonnycastle, because he was aware that Mr. Bonnycastle's arguments were too strong for him, but he argued with all the boys until it ended in a fight, which decided the point; and he sometimes argued with the ushers. In short, at the time we now speak of, which was at the breaking up of the Midsummer holidays, Jack was as full of argument as he was fond of it. He would argue the point to the point of a needle, and he would divide that point into as many as there were days of the year, and argue upon each. In short, there was no end to Jack's arguing the point, although there seldom was point to his argument.

Jack discovered, one fine morning, on the other side of a hedge, a summer apple-tree bearing tempting fruit, and he immediately broke through the hedge, and climbing the tree, as our first mother did before him, he culled the fairest and did eat.

"I say, you sir, what are you doing there?" cried a rough voice.

Jack looked down, and perceived a stout, thick-set personage in gray coat and red waistcoat, standing underneath him.

"Don't you see what I'm about," replied Jack, "I'm eating apples—shall I throw you down a few?"

"Thank you kindly—the fewer that are pulled the better; perhaps, as you are so free to give them to others as well as to help yourself, you may think that they are your own property!"

"Not a bit more my property than they are yours, my good man."

"I guess that's something like the truth; but you are

not quite at the truth yet, my lad; those apples are mine, and I'll trouble you to come down as fast as you please; when you're down we can then settle our accounts; and," continued the man, shaking his cudgel, "depend upon it you shall have your receipt in full."

Jack did not much like the appearance of things.

"My good man," said he, "it is quite a prejudice on your part to imagine that apples were not given, as well as all other fruit, for the benefit of us all—they are common property, believe me."

"That's a matter of opinion, my lad, and I may be allowed to have my own."

"You'll find it in the Bible," says Jack.

"I never did yet, and I've read it through and through all, bating the 'Poeryfar."

"Then," said Jack, "go home and fetch the Bible, and I'll prove it to you."

"I suspect you'll not wait till I come back again. No, no; I have lost plenty of apples, and have long wanted to find the robbers out; now I've caught one I'll take care that he don't 'scape without apple-sauce, at all events—so come down, you young thief, come down directly—or it will be all the worse for you."

"Thank you," said Jack, "but I am very well here. I will, if you please, argue the point from where I am."

"I've no time to argue the point, my lad; I've plenty to do, but do not think I'll let you off. If you don't choose to come down, why then you may stay there, and I'll answer for it, as soon as work is done I shall find you safe enough."

"What can be done," thought Jack, "with a man who will not listen to argument? What a world is this!—however, he'll not find me here when he comes back, I've a notion."

But in this Jack was mistaken. The farmer walked to the hedge, and called to a boy, who took his orders and ran to the farm-house. In a minute or two a large bull-dog was seen bounding along the orchard to his master. "Mark him, Cæsar," said the farmer to the dog, "mark him." The dog crouched down on the grass, with his head up, and eyes glaring at Jack, showing a range

of teeth, that drove all our hero's philosophy out of his head.

"I can't wait here, but Cæsar can, and I will tell you, as a friend, that if he gets hold of you, he'll not leave a limb of you together—when work's done I'll come back." So saying, the farmer walked off, leaving Jack and the dog to argue the point, if so inclined.

After a while the dog laid his head down and closed his eyes as if asleep, but Jack observed, that at the least movement on his part one eye was seen to partially unclose; so Jack, like a prudent man, resolved to remain where he was. He picked a few more apples, for it was dinner-time, and as he chewed he ruminated.

Jack had been but a few minutes ruminating before he was interrupted by another ruminating animal, no less a personage than a bull, who had been turned out with full possession of the orchard, and who now advanced, bellowing occasionally, and tossing his head at the sight of Cæsar, whom he considered as much a trespasser as his master had our hero. Cæsar started on his legs and faced the bull, who advanced pawing, with his tail up in the air. When within a few yards the bull made a rush at the dog, who evaded him and attacked him in return, and thus did the warfare continue until the opponents were already at some distance from the apple-tree. Jack prepared for immediate flight, but unfortunately the combat was carried on by the side of the hedge at which Jack had gained admission. Never mind, thought Jack, there are two sides to every field, and although the other hedge joined on to the garden near to the farm-house, there was no option. "At all events," said Jack, "I'll try it."

Jack was slipping down the trunk, when he heard a tremendous roar; the bull-dog had been tossed by the bull; he was then high in the air, and Jack saw him fall on the other side of the hedge; and the bull was thus celebrating his victory with a flourish of trumpets. Upon which Jack, perceiving that he was relieved from his sentry, slipped down the rest of the tree and took to his heels. Unfortunately for Jack, the bull saw him, and, flushed with victory, he immediately set up another roar, and bounded after Jack. Jack perceived his danger, and fear gave him wings; he not only flew over the orchard,

but he flew over the hedge, which was about five feet high, just as the bull drove his head into it. "Look before you leap," is an old proverb. Had Jack done so, he would have done better; but as there were cogent reasons to be offered in extenuation of our philosopher, we shall say no more, but merely state that Jack, when he got on the other side of the hedge, found that he had pitched into a small apiary, and had upset two hives of bees, who resented the intrusion; and Jack had hardly time to get upon his legs before he found them very busy stinging him in all quarters. All that Jack could do was to run for it, but the bees flew faster than he could run, and Jack was mad with pain, when he stumbled, half-blinded, over the brickwork of a well.

Jack could not stop his pitching into the well, but he seized the iron chain as it struck him across the face. Down went Jack, and round went the windlass, and after a rapid descent of forty feet our hero found himself under water, and no longer troubled with the bees, who, whether they had lost scent of their prey from his rapid descent, or being notoriously clever insects, acknowledged the truth of the adage, "leave well alone," had certainly left Jack with no other companion than Truth. Jack rose from his immersion, and seized the rope to which the chain of the bucket was made fast—it had all of it been unwound from the windlass, and therefore it enabled Jack to keep his head above water. After a few seconds Jack felt something against his legs, it was the bucket, about two feet under the water; Jack put his feet into it and found himself pretty comfortable, for the water, after the sting of the bees and the heat he had been put into by the race with the bull, was quite cool and refreshing.

"At all events," thought Jack, "if it had not been for the bull, I should have been watched by the dog, and then thrashed by the farmer; but then again, if it had not been for the bull, I should not have tumbled among the bees; and if it had not been for the bees, I should not have tumbled into the well; and it if had not been for the chain, I should have been drowned. Such has been the chain of events, all because I wanted to eat an apple."

CHAPTER V

After all, it must be acknowledged that although there are cases of distress in which a well may become a place of refuge, a well is not at all calculated for a prolonged residence—so thought Jack. After he had been there some fifteen minutes, his teeth chattered, and his limbs trembled; he felt a numbness all over, and he thought it high time to call for assistance, which at first he would not, as he was afraid he should be pulled up to encounter the indignation of the farmer and his family. Jack was arranging his jaws for a halloo, when he felt the chain pulled up, and he slowly emerged from the water. At first he heard complaints of the weight of the bucket, at which Jack was not surprised, then he heard a tittering and laughing between two parties, and soon afterwards he mounted up gaily. At last his head appeared above the low wall, and he was about to extend his arms so as to secure a position on it, when those who were working at the windlass beheld him. It was a heavy farming-man and a maid-servant.

"Thank you," said Jack.

One never should be too quick in returning thanks; the girl screamed and let go the winch; the man, frightened, did not hold it fast: it slipped from his grasp, whirled round, struck him under the chin and threw him over headlong, and before the "Thank you" was fairly out of Jack's lips, down he went again like lightning to the bottom. Fortunately for Jack, he had not yet let go the chain, or he might have struck the sides and have been killed; as it was, he was merely soused a second time, and in a minute or two regained his former position.

"This is mighty pleasant," thought Jack, as he clapped his wet hat once more on his head: "at all events, they can't now plead ignorance; they must know that I'm here."

In the meantime the girl ran into the kitchen, threw herself down on a stool, from which she reeled off in a fit upon sundry heaps of dough waiting to be baked in

the oven, which were laid to rise on the floor before the fire.

"Mercy on me, what is the matter with Susan?" exclaimed the farmer's wife. "Here—where's Mary—where's John?—Deary me, if the bread won't all be turned to pancakes."

John soon followed, holding his under-jaw in his hand, looking very dismal and very frightened.

"Mercy on us, what is the matter?" exclaimed the farmer's wife again. "Mary, Mary, Mary!" screamed she, beginning to be frightened herself, for with all her efforts she could not remove Susan from the bed of dough, where she lay senseless and heavy as lead. Mary answered to her mistress's loud appeal, and with her assistance they raised up Susan; but as for the bread, there was no hopes of it ever rising again. "Why don't you come here and help Susan, John?" cried Mary.

"Aw-yaw-aw!" was all the reply of John, who had had quite enough of helping Susan, and who continued to hold his head, as it were, in his hand.

"What's the matter, missus?" exclaimed the farmer, coming in. "Highty-tighty, what ails Susan, and what ails you?" continued the farmer, turning to John. "Everything seems to go wrong this blessed day. First there be all the apples stolen—then there be all the hives turned topsy-turvy in the garden—then there be Cæsar with his flank opened by the bull—then there be the bull broken through the hedge and tumbled into the saw-pit."

"Aw-yaw-aw!" replied John, nodding his head very significantly.

"We shall get nothing of you. Is that wench coming to her senses?"

"Yes, yes, she's better now.—Susan, what's the matter?"

"Oh, oh, ma'am! the well, the well——"

"The well! Something wrong there, I suppose: well, I will go and see."

The farmer trotted off to the well; he perceived the bucket was at the bottom and all the rope out; he looked about him, and then he looked into the well. Jack, who had become very impatient, had been looking up some time for the assistance which he expected would have

come sooner; the round face of the farmer occasioned a partial eclipse of the round disc which bounded his view, just as one of the satellites of Jupiter sometimes obscures the face of the planet round which he revolves.

"Here I am," cried Jack, "get me up quick, or I shall be dead;" and what Jack said was true, for he was quite done up by having been so long down, although his courage had not failed him.

"There be somebody fallen into the well," cried the farmer; "no end to mishaps this day. Well, we must get a Christian out of a well afore we get a bull out of a saw-pit, so I'll go call the men."

In a very short time the men who were assembled round the saw-pit were brought to the well.

"Down below there, hold on now."

"Never fear," cried Jack.

Away went the winch, and once more Jack had an extended horizon to survey. As soon as he was at the top, the men hauled him over the bricks and laid him down upon the ground, for Jack's strength had failed him.

"Dang it, if it bean't that chap who was on my apple-tree," cried the farmer—"howsomever, he must not die for stealing a few apples; lift him up, lads, and take him in—he is dead with cold—no wonder."

The farmer led the way, and the men carried Jack into the house, when the farmer gave him a glass of brandy; this restored Jack's circulation, and in a short time he was all right again.

After some previous conversation, in which Jack narrated all that had happened, "What may be your name?" inquired the farmer.

"My name is Easy," replied Jack.

"What, be you the son of Mr. Easy, of Forest Hill?"

"Yes."

"He be my landlord, and a right good landlord too—why didn't you say so when you were up in the apple-tree? You might have picked the whole orchard and welcome. All I have to say is this, you are welcome to all the apples in the orchard if you please, and if you prefers, as it seems you do, to steal them, instead of asking for them, which I only can account for by the reason that

they say, that 'stolen fruit be sweetest,' I've only to say that I shall give orders that you be not interfered with. My chaise be at the door, Master Easy, and the man will drive you to your father's—make my compliments to him, and say that I'm very sorry that you tumbled into our well."

Jack wished the farmer good-night, and allowed himself to be driven home.

The pain from the sting of the bees, now that his circulation had fully returned, was so great, that he was not sorry to find Dr. Middleton taking his tea with his father and mother. Jack merely said that he had been so unfortunate as to upset a hive, and had been severely stung. He deferred the whole story till another opportunity. Dr. Middleton prescribed for Jack, but on taking his hand found that he was in a high fever, which, after the events of the day, was not to be wondered at. Jack was bled, and kept his bed for a week, by which time he was restored; but during that time he had been thinking very seriously, and had made up his mind.

But we must explain a circumstance which had occurred, which was probably the cause of Jack's decision. When Jack returned on the evening in question, he found seated with his father and Dr. Middleton, a Captain Wilson, a sort of cousin to the family, who but occasionally paid them a visit, for he lived at some distance; and having a wife and large family, with nothing but his half-pay for their support, he could not afford to expend even shoe-leather in compliments. The object of this visit on the part of Captain Wilson was to request the aid of Mr. Easy. He had succeeded in obtaining his appointment to a sloop of war (for he was in the king's service), but was without the means of fitting himself out, without leaving his wife and family penniless. He therefore came to request Mr. Easy to lend him a few hundred pounds, until he should be able, by his prize-money, to repay them. Mr. Easy was not a man to refuse such a request, and always having plenty of spare cash at his banker's, he drew a cheque for a thousand pounds, which he gave to Captain Wilson, requesting that he would only repay it at his convenience. Captain Wilson wrote an acknowledgment of the debt, promising to pay upon his

first prize-money, which receipt, however binding it may be to a man of honour, was, in point of law, about as valuable as if he had agreed to pay as soon "as the cows came home." The affair had been just concluded, and Captain Wilson had returned into the parlour with Mr. Easy, when Jack returned from his expedition.

Jack greeted Captain Wilson, whom he had long known; but, as we before observed, he suffered so much pain, that he soon retired with Dr. Middleton, and went to bed.

It was on the eighth day that Jack left his bed and came down into the drawing-room. He then detailed to his father the adventures which had taken place, which had obliged him to take to his bed.

"You see, Jack," replied his father, "it's just what I told you: the world is so utterly demoralised by what is called social compact, that any one who opposes it, must expect to pass the life of a martyr; but martyrs are always required previous to any truth, however sublime, being received, and I am willing to sacrifice my only son in so noble a cause."

"That's all very good on your part, father, but we must argue the point a little. The fact, in few words, is simply this. In promulgating your philosophy, in the short space of two days I have been frightened out of my wits by a bull-dog—been nearly killed by a bull—been stung to death by bees, and twice tumbled into a well. Now, if all that happens in two days, what must I expect to suffer in a whole year? It appears to be very unwise to attempt making further converts, for people on shore seem determined not to listen to reason or argument. It is, then, only upon the ocean that I am likely to find that equality and rights of man, which we are so anxious to establish on shore; and therefore I have resolved not to go to school again, which I detest, but to go to sea, and propagate our opinions as much as I can."

"I cannot listen to that, Jack. In the first place you must return to school; in the next place, you shall not go to sea."

"Then, father, all I have to say is, that I swear by the rights of man I will not go back to school, and that

I will go to sea. Who and what is to prevent me? Was not I born my own master?—has any one a right to dictate to me as if I were not his equal? Have I not as much right to my share of the sea as any other mortal? I stand upon perfect equality," continued Jack, stamping his right foot on the floor.

What had Mr. Easy to offer in reply? He must either, as a philosopher, have sacrificed his hypothesis, or, as a father, have sacrificed his son. Like all philosophers, he preferred what he considered as the less important of the two, he sacrificed his son; but—we will do him justice—he did it with a sigh.

"Jack, you shall, if you wish it, go to sea."

"That, of course," replied Jack, with the air of a conqueror, "but the question is, with whom? Now it has occurred to me that Captain Wilson has just been appointed to a ship, and I should like to sail with him."

"I will write to him," said Mr. Easy mournfully, "but I should have liked to have felt his head first;" and thus was the matter arranged.

The answer from Captain Wilson was, of course, in the affirmative, and he promised that he would treat Jack as his own son.

Our hero mounted his father's horse, and rode off to Mr. Bonnycastle.

"I am going to sea, Mr. Bonnycastle."

"The very best thing for you," replied Mr. Bonnycastle.

Our hero met Dr. Middleton.

"I am going to sea, Dr. Middleton."

"The very best thing for you," replied the doctor.

"I am going to sea, mother," said John.

"To sea, John, to sea? no, no, dear John, you are not going to sea," replied Mrs. Easy, with horror.

"Yes, I am; father has agreed, and says he will obtain your consent."

"My consent! Oh, my dear, dear boy!"—and Mrs. Easy wept bitterly, as Rachel mourning for her children.

CHAPTER VI

As there was no time to lose, our hero very soon bade adieu to his paternal roof, as the phrase is, and found his way down to Portsmouth. As Jack had plenty of money, and was very much pleased at finding himself his own master, he was in no hurry to join his ship, and five or six companions not very creditable, whom either Jack had picked up, or had picked up Jack, and who lived upon him, strongly advised him to put it off until the very last moment. As this advice happened to coincide with Jack's opinion, our hero was three weeks at Portsmouth before any one knew of his arrival, but at last Captain Wilson received a letter from Mr. Easy, by which he found that Jack had left home at the period we have mentioned, and he desired the first-lieutenant to make inquiries, as he was afraid that some accident might have happened to him. As Mr. Sawbridge, the first lieutenant, happened to be going on shore on the same evening for the last time previous to the ship's sailing, he looked into the Blue Posts, George, and Fountain Inns, to inquire if there was such a person arrived as Mr. Easy. "Oh, yes," replied the waiter at the Fountain—"Mr. Easy has been here these three weeks."

"The deuce he has," roared Mr. Sawbridge, with all the indignation of a first lieutenant defrauded three weeks of a midshipman; "where is he; in the coffee-room?"

"Oh dear no, sir," replied the waiter, "Mr. Easy has the front apartments on the first floor."

"Well, then, show me up to the first floor."

"May I request the pleasure of your name, sir?" said the waiter.

"First lieutenants don't send up their names to midshipmen," replied Mr. Sawbridge; "he shall soon know who I am."

At this reply the waiter walked upstairs, followed by Mr. Sawbridge, and threw open the door.

"A gentleman wishes to see you, sir," said the waiter.

"Desire him to walk in," said Jack: "and, waiter, mind that the punch is a little better than it was yesterday; I have asked two more gentlemen to dine here."

In the meantime Mr. Sawbridge, who was not in his uniform, had entered, and perceived Jack alone, with the dinner-table laid out in the best style for eight, a considerable show of plate for even the Fountain Inn, and everything, as well as the apartment itself, according to Mr. Sawbridge's opinion, much more fit for a commander-in-chief than a midshipman of a sloop of war.

Now Mr. Sawbridge was a good officer, one who had really worked his way up to the present rank, that is to say, that he had served seven-and-twenty years, and had nothing but his pay. It may therefore be easily imagined that his bile was raised by this parade and display in a lad, who was very shortly to be, and ought three weeks before to have been, shrinking from his frown. Nevertheless, Sawbridge was a good-hearted man, although a little envious of luxury, which he could not pretend to indulge in himself.

"May I beg to ask," said Jack, who was always remarkably polite and gentlemanly in his address, "in what manner I may be of service to you?"

"Yes, sir, you may—by joining your ship immediately. And may I beg to ask in return, sir, what is the reason you have stayed on shore three weeks without joining her?"

Hereupon Jack, who did not much admire the peremptory tone of Mr. Sawbridge, and who during the answer had taken a seat, crossed his legs and played with the gold chain to which his watch was secured, after a pause very coolly replied:

"And pray, who are you?"

"Who am I, sir?" replied Sawbridge, jumping out of his chair—"my name is Sawbridge, sir, and I am the first lieutenant of the *Harpy*. Now, sir, you have your answer."

Mr. Sawbridge, who imagined that the name of the first lieutenant would strike terror to a culprit midshipman, threw himself back in the chair, and assumed an air of importance.

"Really, sir," replied Jack, "what may be your

exact situation on board, my ignorance of the service will not allow me to guess, but if I may judge from you behaviour, you have no small opinion of yourself."

"Look ye, young man, you may not know what a first lieutenant is, and I take it for granted that you do not, by your behaviour; but depend upon it, I'll let you know very soon. In the meantime, sir, I insist upon it, that you go immediately on board."

"I'm sorry that I cannot comply with your very moderate request," replied Jack coolly. "I shall go on board when it suits my convenience, and I beg that you will give yourself no further trouble on my account."

Jack then rang the bell; the waiter, who had been listening outside, immediately entered, and before Mr. Sawbridge, who was dumb with astonishment at Jack's impertinence, could have time to reply:

"Waiter," said Jack, "show this gentleman downstairs."

"By the god of war!" exclaimed the first lieutenant, "but I'll soon show you down to the boat, my young bantam; and when once I get you safe on board, I'll make you know the difference between a midshipman and a first lieutenant."

"I can only admit of *equality*, sir," replied Jack; "we are all born equal—I trust you'll allow that."

"Equality—I suppose you'll take the command of the ship. However, sir, your ignorance will be a little enlightened by-and-by. I shall now go and report your conduct to Captain Wilson; and I tell you plainly, that if you are not on board this evening, to-morrow morning, at daylight, I shall send a sergeant, and a file of marines, to fetch you."

"You may depend upon it, sir," replied Jack, "that I also shall not fail to mention to Captain Wilson that I consider you a very quarrelsome, impertinent fellow, and recommend him not to allow you to remain on board. It will be quite uncomfortable to be in the same ship with such an ungentlemanly bear."

"He must be mad—quite mad," exclaimed Sawbridge, who astonishment even mastered his indignation. "Mad as a March hare."

"No, sir," replied Jack, "I am not mad, but I am a philosopher."

"Twenty years have I been in the service," roared Sawbridge, "and,——but he's mad—downright, stark, staring mad." And the first lieutenant bounced out of the room.

Jack was a little astonished himself. Had Mr. Sawbridge made his appearance in uniform it might have been different, but that a plain-looking man, with black whiskers, shaggy hair, and old blue frock-coat and yellow cashmere waistcoat, should venture to address him in such a manner, was quite incomprehensible;—he calls me mad, thought Jack, I shall tell Captain Wilson what is my opinion about his lieutenant. Shortly afterwards, the company arrived, and Jack soon forgot all about it.

In the meantime, Sawbridge called at the captain's lodgings, and found him at home: he made a very faithful report of all that had happened, and concluded his requests by demanding, in great wrath, either an instant dismissal or a court-martial on our hero, Jack.

"Stop, Sawbridge," replied Captain Wilson, "take a chair. As for the court-martial, it will not hold good, for Mr. Easy, in the first place, has not yet joined the ship, and in the next place, could not be supposed to know that you were the first lieutenant, or even an officer for you went to him out of uniform."

"Very true, sir," replied Sawbridge, "I had forgotten that."

"Then, as for his dismissal, or rather, not allowing him to join, Mr. Easy has been brought up in the country, and has never seen anything aquatic larger than a fish-pond, perhaps, in his life; and as for the service, or the nature of it, I believe he is as ignorant of it as a child not a year old—I doubt whether he knows the rank of a lieutenant; certainly, he can have no idea of the power of a first lieutenant, by his treatment of you."

"I should think not," replied Sawbridge dryly. "And now, Captain Wilson, pray what is to be done?"

"We must get him on board, but not with a file of marines—that will do more harm than good. I will send a note, requesting him to breakfast with me

to-morrow morning, and have a little conversation with him. I do not wish to frighten him: he would not scruple to run back to Forest Hill—now I wish to keep him if I possibly can."

"You are right, sir; his father appears his greatest enemy. What a pity that a man with so good a heart should be so weak in the head! Then, sir, I shall take no notice of this at present, but leave the whole affair in your hands."

"Do, Sawbridge; you have obliged me very much by your kindness in this business."

Mr. Sawbridge then took his leave, and Captain Wilson despatched a note to our hero, requesting the pleasure of his company to breakfast at nine o'clock the ensuing morning.

CHAPTER VII

The next morning Jack Easy would have forgotten all about his engagement with the captain, had it not been for the waiter, who thought that, after the reception which our hero had given the first lieutenant, it would be just as well that he should not be disrespectful to the captain. Now Jack had not, hitherto, put on his uniform, and he thought this a fitting occasion, particularly as the waiter suggested the propriety of his appearance in it. Whether it was from a presentiment of what he was to suffer, Jack was not at all pleased, as most lads are, with the change in his dress. It appeared to him that he was sacrificing his independence; however, he did not follow his first impulse, which was to take it off again, but took his hat, which the waiter had brushed and handed to him, and then set off for the captain's lodgings. Captain Wilson received him as if he had not been aware of his delay in joining his ship, or his interview with his first lieutenant, but before breakfast was over, Jack himself narrated the affair in a few words.

Captain Wilson then entered into a detail of the duties

and rank of every person on board of the ship, pointing out to Jack that where discipline was required, it was impossible, when duty was carried on, that more than one could command; and that that one was the captain, who represented the king in person, who represented the country; and that, as the orders were transmitted from the captain through the lieutenant, and from the lieutenant to the midshipmen, who, in their turn, communicated them to the whole ship's company; in fact, it was the captain alone who gave the orders, and that every one was *equally* obliged to obey. Indeed, as the captain himself had to obey the orders of his superiors, the admiral and the admiralty, *all* on board might be said to be *equally* obliged to obey. Captain Wilson laid a strong emphasis on the word *equally;* indeed, he contrived to show that all the grades were levelled, by all being equally bound to do their duty to their country, and that, in fact, whether a seaman obeyed *his* orders, or he obeyed the orders of *his* superior officer, they were in reality only obeying the orders of the country, which were administered through their channels.

Jack did not altogether dislike this view of the subject, and the captain took care not to dwell too long upon it. He then entered upon other details, which he was aware would be more agreeable to Jack. He pointed out that the articles of war were the rules by which the service was to be guided, and that everybody, from the captain to the least boy in the ship, was *equally* bound to adhere to them—that, although there were, of necessity, various grades necessary in the service, and the captain's order were obliged to be passed and obeyed by all, yet still, whatever was the grade of the officer, they were *equally* considered as gentlemen. In short, Captain Wilson, who told the truth, and nothing but the truth, without telling the whole truth, actually made Jack fancy that he had at last found out that equality he had been seeking for in vain on shore, when, at last, he recollected the language used by Mr. Sawbridge the evening before, and asked the captain why that personage had so conducted himself. Now, as the language of Mr. Sawbridge was very much at variance with equality, Captain Wilson was not a little puzzled. However, he first pointed out that

the first lieutenant was, at the time being, the captain, as he was the senior officer on board, as would Jack himself be if he were the senior officer on board; and that, as he before observed, the captain or senior officer represented the country. That in the articles of war, everybody who absented himself from the ship, committed an error, or breach of those articles; and if any error or breach of those articles was committed by any one belonging to the ship, if the senior officer did not take notice of it, he then himself committed a breach of those articles, and was liable himself to be punished, if he could not prove that he had noticed it; it was therefore to save himself that he was obliged to point out the error; and if he did it in strong language, it only proved his *zeal* for his country.

"Upon my honour, then," replied Jack, "there can be no doubt of his zeal; for if the whole country had been at stake, he could not have put himself in a greater passion."

"Then he did his duty; but depend upon it it was not a pleasant one to him: and I'll answer for it, when you meet him on board, he will be as friendly with you as if nothing had happened."

"He told me that he'd soon make me know what a first lieutenant was: what did he mean by that?" inquired Jack.

"All zeal."

"Yes, but he said, that as soon as he got me on board, he'd show me the difference between a first lieutenant and a midshipman."

"All zeal."

"He said my ignorance should be a little enlightened by-and-by."

"All zeal."

"And that he'd send a sergeant and marines to fetch me."

"All zeal,"

"That he would put my philosophy to the proof."

"All zeal, Mr. Easy. Zeal will break out in this way; but we should do nothing in the service without it. Recollect that I hope and trust one day to see you also a zealous officer."

Here Jack cogitated considerably, and gave no answer.

"You will, I am sure," continued Captain Wilson, "find Mr. Sawbridge one of your best friends."

"Perhaps so," replied Jack: "but I did not much admire our first acquaintance."

"It will perhaps be your unpleasant duty to find as much fault yourself; we are all equally bound to do our duty to our country. But, Mr. Easy, I sent for you to say that we shall sail to-morrow: and, as I shall send my things off this afternoon by the launch, you had better send yours off also. At eight o'clock I shall go on board, and we can both go in the same boat."

To this Jack made no sort of objection, and having paid his bill at the Fountain, he sent his chest down to the boat by some of the crew who came up for it, and attended the summons of the captain to embark. By nine o'clock that evening, Mr. Jack Easy was safe on board his Majesty's sloop *Harpy*.

When Jack arrived on board, it was dark, and he did not know what to do with himself. The captain was received by the officers on deck, who took off their hats to salute him. The captain returned the salute, and so did Jack very politely, after which the captain entered into conversation with the first lieutenant, and for a while Jack was left to himself. It was too dark to distinguish faces, and to one who had never been on board of a ship, too dark to move, so Jack stood where he was, which was not far from the main bitts; but he did not stay long; the boat had been hooked on to the quarter davits, and the boatswain had called out:

"Set taut, my lads!"

And then with the shrill whistle, and "Away with her!" forward came galloping and bounding along the men with the tackles: and in the dark Jack was upset, and half a dozen marines fell upon him; the men, who had no idea that an officer was floored among the others, were pleased at the joke, and continued to dance over those who were down, until they rolled themselves out of the way. Jack, who did not understand this, fared badly, and it was not till the calls piped belay, that he could recover his legs, after having been trampled upon by half the starboard watch, and the breath completely jammed out of his body. Jack reeled to a carronade

slide, when the officers, who had been laughing at the lark as well as the men, perceived his situation—among others, Mr. Sawbridge, the first lieutenant.

"Are you hurt, Mr. Easy?" said he kindly.

"A little," replied Jack, catching his breath.

"You've had but a rough welcome," replied the first lieutenant, "but at certain times, on board ship, it is every man for himself, and God for us all. Harpur," continued the first-lieutenant to the doctor, "take Mr. Easy down in the gun-room with you, and I will be down myself as soon as I can. Where is Mr. Jolliffe?"

"Here, sir," replied Mr. Jolliffe, a master's mate, coming aft from the booms.

"There is a youngster come on board with the captain. Order one of the quartermasters to get a hammock slung."

In the meantime Jack went down into the gun-room, where a glass of wine somewhat recovered him. He did not stay there long, nor did he venture to talk much. As soon as his hammock was ready, Jack was glad to go to bed—and as he was much bruised he was not disturbed the next morning till past nine o'clock. He then dressed himself, went on deck, found that the sloop was just clear of the Needles, that he felt very queer, then very sick, and was conducted by a marine down below, put into his hammock, where he remained during a gale of wind of three days, bewildered, confused, puzzled, and every minute knocking his head against the beams with the pitching and tossing of the sloop.

"And this is going to sea," thought Jack; "no wonder that no one interferes with another here, or talks about a trespass; for I'm sure any one is welcome to my share of the ocean; and if I once get on shore again, the devil may have my portion if he chooses."

Captain Wilson and Mr. Sawbridge had both allowed Jack more leisure than most midshipmen, during his illness. By the time that the gale was over, the sloop was off Cape Finisterre. The next morning the sea was nearly down, and there was but a slight breeze on the waters. The comparative quiet of the night before had very much recovered our hero, and when the hammocks were piped up, he was accosted by Mr. Jolliffe, the master's

mate, who asked, "whether he intended to rouse a bit, or whether he intended to sail to Gibraltar between his blankets."

Jack, who felt himself quite another person, turned out of his hammock and dressed himself. A marine had, by the captain's orders, attended Jack during his illness, and this man came to his assistance, opened his chest, and brought him all that he required, or Jack would have been in a sad dilemma.

Jack then inquired where he was to go, for he had not yet been in the midshipmen's berth, although five days on board. The marine pointed it out to him, and Jack, who felt excessively hungry, crawled over and between chests, until he found himself fairly in a hole infinitely inferior to the dog-kennels which received his father's pointers.

"I'd not only give up the ocean," thought Jack, "and my share of it, but also my share of the *Harpy*, unto any one who fancies it. Equality enough here! for every one appears equally miserably off."

As he thus gave vent to his thoughts, he perceived that there was another person in the berth—Mr. Jolliffe, the master's mate, who had fixed his eye upon Jack, and to whom Jack returned the compliment. The first thing that Jack observed was, that Mr. Jolliffe was very deeply pockmarked, and that he had but one eye, and that was a piercer; it appeared like a little ball of fire, and as if it reflected more light from the solitary candle than the candle gave.

"I don't like your looks," thought Jack—"we shall never be friends."

But here Jack fell into the common error of judging by appearances, as will be proved hereafter.

"I'm glad to see you up again, youngster," said Jolliffe; "you've been on your beam ends longer than usual, but those who are strongest suffer most—you made your mind up but late to come to sea. However, they say, 'Better late than never.'"

"I feel very much inclined to argue the truth of that saying," replied Jack; "but it's no use just now. I'm terribly hungry—when shall I get some breakfast?"

"To-morrow morning at half-past eight," replied

Mr. Jolliffe. "Breakfast for to-day has been over these two hours."

"But must I then go without?"

"No, I do not say that, as we must make allowances for your illness; but it will not be breakfast."

"Call it what you please," replied Jack, "only pray desire the servants to give me something to eat. Dry toast or muffins—anything will do, but I should prefer coffee."

"You forget that you are off Finisterre, in a midshipman's berth: coffee we have none—muffins we never see—dry toast cannot be made, as we have no soft bread; but a cup of tea, and ship's biscuit and butter, I can desire the steward to get ready for you."

"Well then," replied Jack, "I will thank you to procure me that."

"Marine," cried Jolliffe, "call Mesty."

"Pass the word for Mesty," cried the marine—and the two syllables were handed forward until lost in the fore part of the vessel.

The person so named was a black man who had been brought to America as a slave, and there sold.

He was a very tall, spare-built, yet muscular form, and had a face by no means common with his race. His head was long and narrow, high cheek-bones, from whence his face descended down to almost a point at the chin; his nose was very small, but it was straight and almost Roman; his mouth also was unusually small; and his lips thin for an African; his teeth very white, and filed to sharp points. He claimed the rank of prince in his own country, with what truth could not of course be substantiated. His master had settled at New York, and there Mesty had learned English, if it could be so called: the fact is, that all the emigrant labourers at New York being Irishmen, he had learned English with the strong brogue and peculiar phraseology of the sister kingdom dashed with a little Yankeeism.

Having been told that there was no slavery in England, Mesty had concealed himself on board an English merchant vessel, and escaped. On his arrival in England he had entered on board of a man-of-war.

Mesty was soon seen coming aft, but almost double

as he crouched under the beams, and taking large strides with his naked feet.

"By the powers, Massa Yolliffe, but it is not seasonable at all to send for me just now, anyhow, seeing how the praters are in the copper, and so many blackguard 'palpeens all ready to change net for net, and better themselves by the same mistake."

"Mesty, you know I never send for you myself, or allow others to do so, unless it is necessary," replied Jolliffe; "but this poor lad has eaten nothing since he has been on board, and is very hungry—you must get him a little tea."

"Is it tay you mane, sir?—I guess, to make tay, in the first place I must ab water, and in the next must ab room in the galley to put the kettle on—and 'pose you wanted to burn the tip of your little finger just now, it's not in the galley that you find a berth for it—and den the water before seven bells. I've a notion it's just impassible."

"But he must have something, Mesty."

"Never mind the tea, then," replied Jack, "I'll take some milk."

"Is it milk massa manes, and the bumboat woman on the oder side of the bay?"

"We have no milk, Mr. Easy; you forget that we are on blue water," replied Jolliffe, "and I really am afraid that you'll have to wait till dinner-time. Mesty tells the truth."

"I tell you what, Massa Yolliffe, it just seven bells, and if the young gentleman would, instead of tay, try a little out of the copper, it might keep him asy. It but a little difference, *tay* soup and *pay* soup. Now a bowl of that, with some nuts and a flourish of pepper, will do him good, anyhow."

"Perhaps the best thing he can take, Mesty; get it as fast as you can."

In a few minutes the black brought down a bowl of soup and whole peas swimming in it, put before our hero a tin bread-basket full of small biscuit, called midshipmen's nuts, and the pepper-castor. Jack's visions of tea, coffee, muffins, dry toast, and milk, vanished as he perceived the mess; but he was very hungry, and he

found it much better than he expected; and he moreover found himself much the better after he had swallowed it. It struck seven bells, and he accompanied Mr. Jolliffe on deck.

CHAPTER VIII

When Jack Easy had gained the deck, he found the sun shining gaily, a soft air blowing from the shore, and the whole of the rigging and every part of the ship loaded with the shirts, trousers, and jackets of the seamen, which had been wetted during the heavy gale, and were now hanging up to dry; all the wet sails were also spread on the booms or triced up in the rigging, and the ship was slowly forging through the blue water. The captain and first lieutenant were standing on the gangway in converse, and the majority of the officers were with their quadrants and sextants ascertaining the latitude at noon. The decks were white and clean, the sweepers had just laid by their brooms, and the men were busy coiling down the ropes. It was a scene of cheerfulness, activity, and order, which lightened his heart after the four days of suffering, close air, and confinement, from which he had just emerged.

The captain, who perceived him, beckoned to him, asked him kindly how he felt: the first lieutenant also smiled upon him, and many of the officers, as well as his messmates, congratulated him upon his recovery.

The captain's steward came up to him, touched his hat, and requested the pleasure of his company to dinner in the cabin. Jack was the essence of politeness, took off his hat, and accepted the invitation. Jack was standing on a rope which a seaman was coiling down; the man touched his hat and requested he would be so kind as to take his foot off. Jack took his hat off his head in return, and his foot off the rope. The master touched his hat, and reported twelve o'clock to the first lieutenant—the first lieutenant touched his hat, and

reported twelve o'clock to the captain—the captain touched his hat, and told the first lieutenant to make it so. The officer of the watch touched his hat, and asked the captain whether they should pipe to dinner—the captain touched his hat and said, "If you please."

The midshipman received his orders, and touched his hat, which he gave to the head boatswain's mate, who touched his hat, and then the calls whistled cheerily.

"Well," thought Jack, "politeness seems to be the order of the day, and every one has an equal respect for the other." Jack stayed on deck; he peeped through the ports, which were open, and looked down into the deep blue wave; he cast his eyes aloft, and watched the tall spars sweeping and tracing with their points, as it were, a small portion of the clear sky, as they acted in obedience to the motion of the vessel; he looked forward at the range of carronades which lined the sides of the deck, and then he proceeded to climb one of the carronades, and lean over the hammocks to gaze on the distant land.

"Young gentleman, get off those hammocks," cried the master, who was officer of the watch, in a surly tone.

Jack looked round.

"Do you hear me, sir? I'm speaking to you," said the master again.

Jack felt very indignant, and he thought that politeness was not quite so general as he supposed.

It happened that Captain Wilson was upon deck.

"Come here, Mr. Easy," said the captain; "it is a rule in the service, that no one gets on the hammocks, unless in case of emergency—I never do—nor the first lieutenant—nor any of the officers or men—therefore, upon the principle of equality, you must not do it either."

"Certainly not, sir," replied Jack, "but still I do not see why that officer in the shining hat should be so angry, and not speak to me as if I were a gentleman, as well as himself."

"I have already explained that to you, Mr. Easy."

"Oh, yes, I recollect now, it's zeal; but this zeal appears to me to be the only unpleasant thing in the service. It's a pity, as you said, that the service cannot do without it."

Captain Wilson laughed, and walked away; and

shortly afterwards, as he turned up and down the deck with the master, he hinted to him that he should not speak so sharply to a lad who had committed such a trifling error through ignorance. Now Mr. Smallsole, the master, who was a surly sort of a personage, and did not like even a hint of disapprobation of his conduct, although very regardless of the feeling of others, determined to pay this off on Jack, the very first convenient opportunity. Jack dined in the cabin, and was very much pleased to find that every one drank wine with him, and that everybody at the captain's table appeared to be on an equality. Before the dessert had been on the table five minutes, Jack became loquacious on his favourite topic; all the company stared with surprise at such an unheard-of doctrine being broached on board of a man-of-war; the captain argued the point, so as to controvert, without too much offending, Jack's notions, laughing the whole time that the conversation was carried on.

It will be observed, that this day may be considered as the first in which Jack really made his appearance on board, and it also was on this first day that Jack made known, at the captain's table, his very peculiar notions. If the company at the captain's table, which consisted of the second lieutenant, purser, Mr. Jolliffe, and one of the midshipmen, were astonished at such heterodox opinions being started in the presence of the captain, they were equally astonished at the cool, good-humoured ridicule with which they were received by Captain Wilson. The report of Jack's boldness, and every word and opinion that he had uttered (of course much magnified) was circulated that evening through the whole ship; it was canvassed in the gun-room by the officers, it was descanted upon by the midshipmen as they walked the deck; the captain's steward held a levee abreast of the ship's funnel, in which he narrated this new doctrine. The sergeant of marines gave his opinion in his berth that it was damnable. The boatswain talked over the matter with the other warrant officers, till the grog was all gone, and then dismissed it as too dry a subject: and it was the general opinion of the ship's company, that as soon as they arrived at Gibraltar Bay, our hero would bid adieu

to the service, either by being sentenced to death by a court-martial, or by being dismissed, and towed on shore on a grating. Others, who had more of the wisdom of the serpent, and who had been informed by Mr. Sawbridge that our hero was a lad who would inherit a large property, argued differently, and considered that Captain Wilson had very good reason for being so lenient—and among them was the second lieutenant. There were but four who were well inclined towards Jack—to wit, the captain, the first lieutenant, Mr. Jolliffe, the one-eyed master's mate, and Mephistopheles, the black, who, having heard that Jack had uttered such sentiments, loved him with all his heart and soul.

We have referred to the second lieutenant, Mr. Asper. This young man had a very high respect for birth, and particularly for money, of which he had very little. He was the son of an eminent merchant who, during the time that he was a midshipman, had allowed him a much larger sum for his expenses than was necessary or proper; and, during his career, he found that his full pocket procured him consequence, not only among his own messmates, but also with many of the officers of the ships that he sailed in. A man who is able and willing to pay a large tavern bill will always find followers—that is, to the tavern; and lieutenants did not disdain to dine, walk arm in arm, and be "hail fellow well met" with a midshipman, at whose expense they lived during the time they were on shore. Mr. Asper had just received his commission and appointment, when his father became a bankrupt, and the fountain was dried up from which he had drawn such liberal supplies. Since that, Mr. Asper had felt that his consequence was gone: he could no longer talk about the service being a bore, or that he should give it up; he could no longer obtain that deference paid to his purse, and not to himself; and he had contracted very expensive habits, without having any longer the means of gratifying them. It was therefore no wonder that he imbibed a great respect for money; and, as he could no longer find the means himself, he was glad to pick up anybody else at whose cost he could indulge in that extravagance and expense to which he had been so long accustomed, and still sighed for. Now,

Mr. Asper knew that our hero was well supplied with money, as he had obtained from the waiter the amount of the bill paid at the Fountain, and he had been waiting for Jack's appearance on deck to become his very dearest and most intimate friend. The conversation in the cabin made him feel assured that Jack would require and be grateful for support, and he had taken the opportunity of a walk with Mr. Sawbridge, to offer to take Jack in his watch. Whether it was that Mr. Sawbridge saw through the design of Mr. Asper, or whether he imagined that our hero would be better pleased with him than with the master, considering his harshness of deportment; or with himself, who could not, as first lieutenant, overlook any remission of duty, the offer was accepted, and Jack Easy was ordered, as he now entered upon his duties, to keep watch under Lieutenant Asper.

But not only was this the first day that Jack may be said to have appeared in the service, but it was the first day in which he had entered the midshipmen's berth, and was made acquainted with his messmates.

We have already mentioned Mr. Joliffe, the master's mate, but we must introduce him more particularly.

He had suffered martyrdom with the small-pox, which probably had contracted his lineaments: his face was not only deeply pitted, but scarred, with this cruel disorder. One eye had been lost, and all eyebrows had disappeared. He was tall, gaunt, and thin, seldom smiled, and when he did, the smile produced a still further distortion.

In all societies, however small they may be, provided that they do but amount to half a dozen, you will invariably meet with a bully. And it is also generally the case that you will find one of that society who is more or less the butt.

The bully of the midshipmen's berth of H.M. sloop *Harpy* was a young man about seventeen, with light, curly hair, and florid countenance, the son of the clerk in the dockyard at Plymouth, and his name was Vigors.

The butt was a pudding-face Tartar-physiognomied boy of fifteen, whose intellects, with fostering, if not great, might at least have been respectable, had he not lost all confidence in his own powers from the constant

jeers and mockeries of those who had a greater fluency of speech without perhaps so much real power of mind. Although slow, what he learned he invariably retained. This lad's name was Gossett. His father was a wealthy yeoman of Lynn, in Norfolk. There were at the time but three other midshipmen in the ship, of whom it can only be said that they were like midshipmen in general, with little appetite for learning, but good appetites for dinner, hating everything like work, fond of everything like fun, fighting *à l'outrance* one minute, and sworn friends the next. Their names were O'Connor, Mills, and Gascoigne. The other shipmates of our hero it will be better to introduce as they appear on the stage.

After Jack had dined in the cabin he followed his messmates Jolliffe and Gascoigne down into the midshipmen's berth.

"I say, Easy," observed Gascoigne, "you are a free and easy sort of a fellow, to tell the captain that you considered yourself as great a man as he was."

"I beg your pardon," replied Jack, "I did not argue individually, but generally, upon the principles of the rights of man."

"Well," replied Gascoigne, "it's the first time I ever heard a middy do such a bold thing; take care your rights of man don't get you in the wrong box—there's no arguing on board of a man-of-war. The captain took it amazingly easy, but you'd better not broach that subject too often."

Hereupon Jack entered into a long argument, to which Jolliffe and Gascoigne listened without interruption, and Mesty with admiration: at the end of it, Gascoigne laughed heartily and Jolliffe sighed.

"From whence did you learn all this?" inquired Jolliffe.

"From my father, who is a great philosopher, and has constantly upheld these opinions."

"And did your father wish you to go to sea?"

"No, he was opposed to it," replied Jack, "but of course he could not combat my rights and free-will."

"Mr. Easy, as a friend," replied Jolliffe, "I request that you would as much as possible keep your opinions to yourself: I shall have an opportunity of talking to

you on the subject, and will then explain to you my reasons."

As soon as Mr. Jolliffe had ceased, down came Mr. Vigors and O'Connor, who had heard the news of Jack's heresy.

"You do not know Mr. Vigors and Mr. O'Connor," said Jolliffe to Easy.

Jack, who was the essence of politeness, rose and bowed, at which the others took their seats, without returning the salutation. Vigors had, from what he had heard and now seen of Easy, thought he had somebody else to play upon, and without ceremony he commenced.

"So, my chap, you are come on board to raise a mutiny here with your equality—you came off scot free at the captain's table; but it won't do, I can tell you, even in the midshipmen's berth: some must knock under, and you are one of them."

"If, sir," replied Easy, "you mean by knock under, that I must submit, I can assure you that you are mistaken. Upon the same principle that I would never play the tyrant to those weaker than myself, so will I resent oppression if attempted."

"He's a regular sea lawyer already: however, my boy, we'll soon put your mettle to the proof."

"Am I then to infer that I am not on an equality with my messmates?" replied Jack, looking at Jolliffe. The latter was about to answer him, but Vigors interrupted.

"Yes, you are on an equality as far as this—that you have an equal right to the berth, if you are not knocked out of it for insolence to your masters; that you have an equal share to pay for the things purchased for the mess, and an equal right to have your share, provided you can get it; you have an equal right to talk, provided you are not told to hold your tongue. The fact is, you have an equal right with every one else to do as you can, get what you can, and say what you can, always provided that you can do it; for here the weakest goes to the wall, and that is midshipmen's berth equality. Now, do you understand all that; or will you wait for a practical illustration?"

"I am then to infer that the equality here is as much destroyed as it even will be among savages, where the

strong oppress the weak, and the only law is club law—in fact, much the same as it is at a public or large school on shore ? "

"I suspect you are right for once. You were at a public school : how did they treat you there ? "

"As you propose treating people here—'the weakest went to the wall.' "

"Well, then, a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse, that's all, my hearty," said Vigors.

But the hands being turned up, "Shorten sail" put an end to the altercation for the present.

As our hero had not yet received orders to go to his duty, he remained below with Mesty.

"By de powers, Massa Easy, but I lub you with my whole soul," said Mesty. "You really tark fine, Massa Easy; dat Mr. Vigor—nebber care for him, wouldn't you lik him—and sure you would," continued the black, feeling the muscle of Jack's arm. "By the soul of my fader, I'd bet my week's allowance on you anyhow. Nebber be 'fraid, Massa Easy."

"I am not afraid," replied Jack; "I've thrashed bigger fellows than he;" and Jack's assertion was true. Mr. Bonnycastle never interfered in a fair fight, and took no notice of black eyes, provided the lessons were well said. Jack had fought and fought again, until he was a very good bruiser, and although not so tall as Vigors, he was much better built for fighting. A knowing Westminster boy would have bet his half-crown upon Jack, had he seen him and his anticipated adversary.

The constant battles which Jack was obliged to fight at school had been brought forward by Jack against his father's arguments in favour of equality, but they had been overruled by Mr. Easy's pointing out that the combats of *boys* had nothing to do with the rights of man.

As soon as the watch was called, Vigors, O'Connor, Gossett, and Gascoigne, came down from the berth. Vigors, who was strongest in the berth, except Jolliffe, had successively had his superiority acknowledged, and, when on deck, he had talked of Easy's impertinence, and his intention of bringing him to his senses. The others, therefore, came down to see the fun.

"Well, Mr. Easy," observed Vigors, as he came into the berth, "you take after your name, at all events; I suppose you intend to eat the king's provision, and do nothing."

Jack's mettle was already up.

"You will oblige me, sir, by minding your own business," replied Jack.

"You impudent blackguard, if you say another word I'll give you a good thrashing, and knock some of your equality out of you."

"Indeed," replied Jack, who almost fancied himself back at Mr. Bonnycastle's; "we'll try that."

Whereupon Jack very coolly divested himself of his upper garments, neckerchief, and shirt, much to the surprise of Mr. Vigors, who little contemplated such a proof of decision and confidence, and still more to the delight of the other midshipmen, who would have forfeited a week's allowance to see Vigors well thrashed. Vigors, however, knew that he had gone too far to retreat: he therefore prepared for action; and, when ready, the whole party went out into the steerage to settle the business.

Vigors had gained his assumed authority more by bullying than fighting; others had submitted to him without a sufficient trial; Jack, on the contrary, had won his way up in school by hard and scientific combat: the result, therefore, may easily be imagined. In less than a quarter of an hour Vigors, beaten dead, with his eyes closed, and three teeth out, gave in; while Jack, after a basin of water, looked as fresh as ever, with the exception of a few trifling scratches.

The news of this victory was soon through the ship; and before Jack had resumed his clothes, it had been told confidentially by Sawbridge to the captain.

"So soon!" said Captain Wilson, laughing; "I expected that a midshipman's berth would do wonders; but I did not expect this, yet awhile. This victory is the first severe blow to Mr. Easy's equality, and will be more valuable than twenty defeats. Let him now go to his duty: he will soon find his level."

CHAPTER IX

The success of any young man in a profession very much depends upon the occurrences at the commencement of his career, as from those is his character judged, and he is treated accordingly. Jack had chosen to enter the service at a much later period than most lads; he was tall and manly for his age, and his countenance, if not strictly handsome, wore that expression of honesty and boldness which is sure to please. His spirit in not submitting to, and meeting Vigors when he had hardly recovered from his severe prostration of sea-sickness, had gained him with the many respect, and with all, except his antagonist and Mr. Smallsole, goodwill. Instead of being laughed at by his messmates, he was played with; for Jolliffe smiled at his absurdities, and attempted to reason him out of them, and the others liked Jack for himself and his generosity, and, moreover, because they looked up to him as a protector against Vigors, who had persecuted them all; for Jack had declared, that as might was right in a midshipman's berth, he would so far restore equality, that if he could not put down those who were the strongest, at all events he would protect the weak, and, let who would come into the berth, they must be his master before they should tyrannise over those weaker than he.

In consequence of Jack's known opinions upon the rights of man, he became a great favourite with the seamen, and, as all favourites are honoured by them with a sobriquet, our hero obtained that of *Equality Jack.*

CHAPTER X

On Sunday, the hands were turned up to divisions, and the weather not being favourable, instead of the service, the articles of war were read with all due respect shown to the same, the captain, officers, and crew with their hats

off in a mizzling rain. Jack, who had been told by the captain that these articles of war were the rules and regulations of the service, by which the captain, officers, and men were equally bound, listened to them as they were read by the clerk with the greatest attention. He little thought that there were about five hundred orders from the Admiralty tacked on to them, which, like the numerous codicils of some wills, contained the most important matter, and to a certain degree make the will nugatory.

Jack listened very attentively, and, as each article was propounded, felt that he was not likely to commit himself in that point, and, although he was rather astonished to find such a positive injunction against swearing, considered quite a dead letter in the ship, he thought that, altogether, he saw his way very clear. But to make certain of it, as soons as the hands had been piped down he begged the clerk to let him have a copy of the articles.

Now the clerk had three, being the allowance of the ship, or at least all that he had in his possession, and made some demur at parting with one; but at last he proposed —"some rascal," as he said, "having stolen his tooth-brush"—that if Jack would give him one he would give him one of the copies of the articles of war. Jack replied that the one he had in use was very much worn, and that unfortunately he had but one new one, which he could not spare. Thereupon the clerk, who was a very clean personage, and could not bear that his teeth should be dirty, agreed to accept the one in use, as Jack could not part with the other. The exchange was made, and Jack read the articles of war over and over again, till he thought he was fully master of them.

"Now," says Jack, "I know what I am to do, and what I am to expect, and these articles of war I will carry in my pocket as long as I'm in the service; that is to say, if they last so long; and, provided they do not, I am able to replace them with another old tooth-brush, which appears to be the value attached to them."

The *Harpy* remained a fortnight in Gibraltar Bay, and Jack had occasionally a run on shore, and Mr. Asper invariably went with him to keep him out of mischief;

that is to say, he allowed him to throw his money away on nobody more worthless than himself.

One morning Jack went down in the berth, and found young Gossett blubbering.

"What's the matter, my dear Mr. Gossett?" inquired Jack, who was just as polite to the youngster as he was to anybody else.

"Vigors has been thrashing me with a rope's end," replied Gossett, rubbing his arm and shoulders.

"What for?" inquired Jack.

"Because he says the service is going to the dogs—(I'm sure it's no fault of mine)—and that now all subordination is destroyed, and that upstarts join the ship who, because they have a five-pound note in their pocket, are allowed to do just as they please. He said he was determined to uphold the service, and then he knocked me down—and when I got up again he told me that I could stand a little more—and then he took out his colt, and said he was determined to ride the high horse—and that there should be no Equality Jack in future."

"Well," replied Jack.

"And then he colted me for half an hour, and that's all."

"By de soul of my fader, but it all for true, Massa Easy—he larrap, um, sure enough—all for noteing, bad luck to him—I tink," continued Mesty, "he hab bad memory—and he want a little more of Equality Jack."

"And he shall have it too," replied our hero; "why, it's against the articles of war, 'all quarrelling, fighting, etc.' I say, Mr. Gossett, have you got the spirit of a louse?"

"Yes," replied Gossett.

"Well, then, will you do what I tell you next time, and trust to me for protection?"

"I don't care what I do," replied the boy, "if you will back me against the cowardly tyrant."

"Do you refer to me?" cried Vigors, who had stopped at the door of the berth.

"Say yes," said Jack.

"Yes, I do," cried Gossett.

"You do, do you?—well then, my chick, I must trouble you with a little more of this," said Vigors, drawing out his colt.

'I think that you had better not, Mr. Vigors," observed Jack.

"Mind your own business, if you please," returned Vigors, not much liking the interference. "I am not addressing my conversation to you, and I will thank you never to interfere with me. I presume, I have a right to choose my own acquaintance, and, depend upon it, it will not be that of a leveller."

"All that is at your pleasure, Mr. Vigors," replied Jack, "you have a right to choose your own acquaintance, and so have I a right to choose my own friends, and further, to support them. That lad is my friend, Mr. Vigors."

"Then," replied Vigors, who could not help bullying even at the risk of another combat which he probably intended to stand, "I shall take the liberty of giving your friend a thrashing;" and he suited the action to the word.

"Then I shall take the liberty to defend my friend," replied Jack; "and as you call me a leveller, I'll try if I may not deserve the name"—whereupon Jack placed a blow so well under the ear, that Mr. Vigors dropped on the deck, and was not in condition to come to the scratch, even if he had been inclined. "And now, youngster," said Jack, wresting the colt out of Vigors's hand, "do as I bid you—give him a good colting—if you don't I'll thrash you."

Gossett required no second threat—the pleasure of thrashing his enemy, if only for once, was quite enough—and he laid well on, Jack with his fists doubled ready to protect him if there was a show of resistance, but Vigors was half stupefied with the blow under the ear, and quite cowed; he took his thrashing in the most passive manner.

"That will do," said Jack, "and now do not be afraid, Gossett; the very first time he offers to strike you when I am not present, I will pay him off for it as soon as you tell me. I won't be called Equality Jack for nothing."

When Jolliffe, who heard of this, met our hero alone, he said to him, "Take my advice, boy, and do not in future fight the battles of others, you'll find very soon that you will have enough to do to fight your own."

Whereupon Jack argued the point for half an hour, and then they separated. But Mr. Jolliffe was right. Jack began to find himself constantly in hot water, and the captain and first lieutenant, although they did not really withdraw their protection, thought it high time that Jack should find out that, on board a man-of-war, everybody and everything must find its level.

There was on board of his Majesty's sloop *Harpy*, a man of the name of Easthupp, who did the duty of purser's steward; this was the second ship that he had served in; in the former he had been sent with a draft of men from the Tender lying off the Tower. How he had come into the service was not known in the present ship, but the fact was, that he had been one of the swell mob—and had been sent on board the Tender with a letter of recommendation from the magistrates to Captain Crouch. He was a cockney by birth, for he had been left at the workhouse of St. Mary Axe, where he had been taught to read and write, and had afterwards made his escape. He joined the juvenile thieves of the metropolis, had been sent to Bridewell, obtained his liberty, and by degrees had risen from petty thieving of goods exposed outside of the shops and market-stalls, to the higher class of gentlemen pickpockets. His appearance was somewhat genteel, with a bullying sort of an impudent air, which is mistaken for fashion by those who know no better. A remarkable neat dresser, for that was part of his profession; a very plausible manner and address; a great fluency of language, although he clipped the king's English; and, as he had suffered more than once by the law, it is not to be wondered at that he was, as he called himself, a *hout-and-hout* radical. During the latter part of his service, in his last ship, he had been employed under the purser's steward, and having offered himself in this capacity to the purser of H.M. sloop *Harpy*, with one or two forged certificates, he had been accepted.

Now, when Mr. Easthupp heard of Jack's opinions, he wished to cultivate his acquaintance, and with a bow and a flourish, introduced himself before they arrived at Gibraltar, but our hero took an immediate dislike to this fellow from his excessive and impertinent familiarity.

Jack knew a gentleman when he met one, and did not choose to be a companion to a man beneath him in every way, but who, upon the strength of Jack's liberal opinions, presumed to be his equal. Jack's equality did not go so far as that; in theory it was all very well, but in practice it was only when it suited his own purpose.

But the purser's steward was not to be checked—a man who has belonged to the swell mob is not easily repulsed; and although Jack would plainly show him that his company was not agreeable, Easthupp would constantly accost him familiarly on the forecastle and lower deck, with his arms folded, and with an air almost amounting to superiority. At last, Jack told him to go about his business, and not to presume to talk to him, whereupon Easthupp rejoined, and after an exchange of hard words, it ended by Jack kicking Mr. Easthupp, as he called himself, down the after-lower-deck hatchway. This was but a sorry specimen of Jack's equality—and Mr. Easthupp, who considered that his honour had been compromised, went up to the captain on the quarter-deck, and lodged his complaint—whereupon Captain Wilson desired that Mr. Easy might be summoned.

As soon as Jack made his appearance, Captain Wilson called to Easthupp. "Now, purser's steward, what is this you have to say?"

"If you please, Captain Vilson, I am wery sorry to be obliged to make hany complaint of hany hofficer, but this Mr. Heasy thought proper to make use of language quite hunbecoming of a gentleman, and then to kick me as I vent down the atchvay."

"Well, Mr. Easy, is this true?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jack; "I have several times told the fellow not to address himself to me, and he will. I did tell him he was a radical blackguard, and I did kick him down the hatchway."

"You told him he was a radical blackguard, Mr. Easy?"

"Yes, sir; he comes bothering me about his republic, and asserting that we have no want of a king and aristocracy."

Captain Wilson looked significantly at Mr. Sawbridge.

"I certainly did hoffer my political opinions, Captain

Vilson; but you must be avare that ve hall ave an hequal stake in the country—and it's a Hinglishman's birthright."

"I'm not aware what your stake in the country may be, Mr. Easthupp," observed Captain Wilson, "but I think that, if you used such expressions, Mr. Easy was fully warranted in telling you his opinion."

"I ham villing, Captain Vilson, to make hany hallowance for the eat of political discussion—but that is not hall that I ave to complain hof. Mr. Heasy thought proper to say that I was a swindler and a liar."

"Did you make use of those expressions, Mr. Easy?"

"Yes, sir, he did," continued the steward, "and, moreover, told me not to cheat the men, and not to cheat my master the purser. Now, Captain Vilson, it is true that I am not in a wery hostensible sitevation, but I flatter myself that I ave been vell edecated, and vos once moving in a wery different society—misfortains vill appin to us hall, and I feel my character has been severely injured by such impertations;" whereupon Mr. Easthupp took out his handkerchief, flourished, and blew his nose. "I told Mr. Heasy that I considered myself quite as much of a gentleman as himself, and at hall hewents did not keep company with a black feller (Mr. Heasy will understand the insinevation), vereupon Mr. Heasy, as I before said, your vorship, I mean you, Captain Vilson, thought proper to kiek me down the atchvay."

"Very well, steward, I have heard your complaint, and now you may go."

Mr. Easthupp took his hat off with an air, made his bow, and went down the main ladder.

"Mr. Easy," said Captain Wilson, "you must be aware that, by the regulations of the service by which we are all equally bound, it is not permitted that any officer shall take the law into his own hands. Now, although I do not consider it necessary to make any remark as to your calling the man a radical blackguard, for I consider his impertinent intrusion of his opinions deserved it, still you have no right to attack any man's character without grounds—and as that man is in an office of trust, you were not at all warranted in asserting

that he was a cheat. Will you explain to me why you made use of such language?"

Now our hero had no proofs against the man; he had nothing to offer in extenuation, until he recollected, all at once, the reason assigned by the captain for the language used by Mr. Sawbridge. Jack had the wit to perceive that it would hit home, so he replied, very quietly and respectfully:

"If you please, Captain Wilson, that was all zeal."

"Zeal, Mr. Easy? I think it but a bad excuse. But pray, then, why did you kick the man down the hatchway?—you must have known that that was contrary to the rules of the service."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack demurely, "but that was all zeal too."

"Then allow me to say," replied Captain Wilson, biting his lips, "that I think that your zeal has in this instance been very much misplaced, and I trust you will not show so much again."

"And yet, sir," replied Jack, aware that he was giving the captain a hard hit, and therefore looked proportionally humble, "we should do nothing in the service without it—and I trust one day, as you told me, to become a very zealous officer."

"I trust so too, Mr. Easy," replied the captain. "There, you may go now, and let me hear no more of kicking people down the hatchway. That sort of zeal is misplaced."

"More than my foot was, at all events," muttered Jack, as he walked off.

Captain Wilson, as soon as our hero disappeared, laughed heartily, and told Mr. Sawbridge he had ascribed his language to our hero as all zeal. "He has very cleverly given me it all back again; and really, Sawbridge, as it proves how weak was my defence of you, you may gain from this lesson."

Sawbridge thought so too—but both agreed that Jack's rights of man were in considerable danger.

The day before the ship sailed, the Captain and Mr. Asper dined with the governor, and as there was little more to do, Mr. Sawbridge, who had not quitted the ship since she had been in port, and had some few purchases

to make, left her in the afternoon in the charge of Mr. Smallsole, the master. Now, as we have observed, he was Jack's inveterate enemy—indeed Jack had already made three, Mr. Smallsole, Mr. Biggs the boatswain, and Easthupp, the purser's steward. Mr. Smallsole was glad to be left in command, as he hoped to have an opportunity of punishing our hero, who certainly laid himself not a little open to it.

Like all those who are seldom in command, the master was proportionately tyrannical and abusive—he swore at the men, made them do the duty twice and thrice over on the pretence that it was not smartly done, and found fault with every officer remaining on board.

"Mr. Biggs, you seem to be all asleep forward; I suppose you think that you are to do nothing, now the first lieutenant is out of the ship? How long will it be, sir, before you are ready to sway away?"

"By de holy poker, I tink he sway away finely, Massa Easy," observed Mesty, who was in converse with our hero on the forecastle.

Mr. Smallsole's violence made Mr. Biggs violent, which made the boatswain's mate violent—and the captain of the forecastle violent also; all which is practically exemplified by philosophy in the laws of motion, communicated from one body to another: and as Mr. Smallsole swore, so did the boatswain swear—also the boatswain's mate, the captain of the forecastle, and all the men; showing the force of example.

Mr. Smallsole came forward—"Mr. Biggs, what are you about? can't you move here?"

"As much as we can, sir," replied the boatswain, "lumbered as the forecastle is with idlers;" and here Mr. Biggs looked at our hero and Mesty, who were standing against the bulwark.

"What are you doing here, sir?" cried Mr. Smallsole to our hero.

"Nothing at all, sir," replied Jack.

"Then I'll give you something to do, sir. Go up to the mast-head, and wait there till I call you down. Come, sir, I'll show you the way," continued the master, walking aft. Jack followed till they were on the quarter-deck.

"Now, sir, up to the main-top gallant mast-head; perch yourself upon the cross trees—up with you."

"What am I to go up there for, sir?" inquired Jack.

"For punishment, sir," replied the master.

"What have I done, sir?"

"No reply, sir—up with you."

"If you please, sir," replied Jack, "I should wish to argue this point a little."

"Argue the point," roared Mr. Smallsole. "By Jove, I'll teach you to argue the point—away with you, sir."

"If you please, sir," continued Jack, "the captain told me that the articles of war were the rules and regulations by which every one in the service was to be guided. Now, sir," said Jack, "I have read them over till I know them by heart, and there is not one word of mast-heading in the whole of them." Here Jack took the articles out of his pocket, and unfolded them.

"Will you go to the mast-head, sir, or will you not?" said Mr. Smallsole.

"Will you show me the mast-head in the articles of war, sir," replied Jack; "here they are."

"I tell you, sir, to go to the mast-head: if not, I'll hoist you up in a bread-bag."

"There's nothing about bread-bags in the articles of war," replied Jack; "but I'll tell you what there is, sir," and Jack commenced reading:

"All flag officers, and all persons in or belonging to his Majesty's ships or vessels of war, being guilty of profane oaths, execrations, drunkenness, uncleanness, or other scandalous actions, in derogation of God's honour, and corruption of good manners, shall incur such punishment as——"

"Will you go to the mast-head, sir, or will you not?"

"If you please," replied Jack, "I'd rather not."

"Then, sir, consider yourself under an arrest—I'll try you by a court-martial. Go down below, sir."

"With the greatest of pleasure, sir," replied Jack, "that's all right, and according to the articles of war, which are to guide us all." Jack folded up his articles of war, put them into his pocket, and went down into the berth.

Soon after Jack had gone down, Jolliffe, who had

heard the whole of the altercation, followed him. "My lad," said Jolliffe, "I'm sorry for all this; you should have gone to the mast-head."

"I should like to argue that point a little," replied Jack.

"Yes, so would everybody; but if that were permitted, the service would be at a standstill—that would not do; —you must obey an order first, and then complain afterwards, if the order is unjust."

"It is not so in the articles of war."

"But it is so in the service."

"That admits of a little argument," replied Jack.

"The service will admit of none, my dear boy: recollect that, even on shore, we have two laws, that which is written, and the *lex non scripta*, which is custom; of course we have it in the service, for the articles of war cannot provide for everything."

"They provide a court-martial for everything though," replied Jack.

"Yes, with death or dismissal from the service—neither of which would be very agreeable. You have got yourself into a scrape, and although the captain is evidently your friend, he cannot overlook it: fortunately, it is with the master, which is of less consequence than with the other officers; but still, you will have to submit, for the captain cannot overlook it. I'm afraid that the master will make out a very strong case, and that your arguments will never be heard."

"That will be contrary to all the rules of justice."

"But according to all the rules of service."

"I do believe that I am a great fool," observed Jack, after a pause. "What do you imagine made me come to sea, Jolliffe?"

"Because you did not know when you were well off," replied the mate dryly.

"That's true enough; but my reason was, because I thought I should find that equality here that I could not find on shore."

Jolliffe stared.

"You will be, most certainly," he said, "sent to the mast-head to-morrow."

"We'll argue that point," replied Jack; "at all events I will go and turn in to-night."

CHAPTER XI

WHATEVER may have been Jack's thoughts, at all events they did not spoil his rest. He possessed in himself all the materials of a true philosopher, but there was a great deal of weeding still required. Jolliffe's arguments, sensible as they were, had very little effect upon him, for, strange to say, it is much more easy to shake a man's opinions when he is wrong than when he is right; proving that we are all of a very perverse nature. "Well," thought Jack, "if I am to go to the mast-head, I am, that's all; but it does not prove that my arguments are not good, only that they will not be listened to;" and then Jack shut his eyes, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

The master had reported to the first lieutenant, and the first lieutenant to the captain, when he came on board the next morning, the conduct of Mr. Easy, who was sent for in the cabin, to hear if he had anything to offer in extenuation of his offence. Jack made an oration, which lasted more than half-an-hour, in which all the arguments he had brought forward to Jolliffe were entered fully into. Mr. Jolliffe was then examined, and also Mr. Smallsole was interrogated: after which the captain and the first lieutenant were left alone.

"Sawbridge," said Captain Wilson, "Mr. Smallsole has behaved tyrannically and unjustly; he punished the lad for no crime; so that what between the master and me, I am now on the horns of a dilemma. If I punish the boy, I feel that I am punishing him more for my own fault and the fault of others, than his own. If I do not punish him, I allow a flagrant and open violation of discipline to pass uncensured, which will be injurious to the service."

"He must be punished, sir," replied Sawbridge.

"Send for him," said the captain.

Jack made his appearance, with a very polite bow.

"Mr. Easy, as you suppose that the articles of war contained all the rules and regulations of the service, I take it for granted that you have erred through ignorance. I feel so convinced of your zeal, which you showed

the other day in the case of Easthupp, that I am sure you will see the propriety of my proving to the men, by punishing you, that discipline must be enforced, and I shall therefore send for you on the quarter-deck, and order you to go to the mast-head in presence of the ship's company, as it was in the presence of the ship's company that you refused."

"With the greatest pleasure, Captain Wilson," replied Jack.

"And in future, Mr. Easy, although I shall ever set my face against it, recollect that if any officer punishes you, and you imagine that you are unfairly treated, you will submit to the punishment, and then apply to me for redress."

"Certainly, sir," replied Jack, "now that I am aware of your wishes."

"You will oblige me, Mr. Easy, by going on the quarter-deck, and wait there till I come up."

Jack made his best bow, and exit.

Captain Wilson sent for the master, and reprimanded him for his oppression, as it was evident that there was no ground for punishment, and he forbade him ever to mast-head another midshipman, but to report his conduct to the first lieutenant or himself. He then proceeded to the quarter-deck, and, calling for Mr. Easy, gave him what appeared to be a very severe reprimand, which Jack looked upon very quietly, because it was all *zeal* on the captain's part to give it, and all *zeal* on his own to take it. Our hero was then ordered up to the mast-head.

Jack took off his hat, and took three or four steps in obedience to the order—and then returned and made his best bow—inquired of Captain Wilson whether he wished him to go to the fore or to the main-mast head.

"To the main, Mr. Easy," replied the captain, biting his lips.

Jack ascended three spokes of the Jacob's ladder, when he again stopped, and took off his hat.

"I beg your pardon, Captain Wilson—you have not informed me whether it is your wish that I should go to the topmast, or the top-gallant cross-trees."

"To the top-gallant cross-trees, Mr. Easy," replied the captain.

Jack ascended, taking it very easy: he stopped at the main-top for breath; at the main-topmast head, to look about him; and, at last, gained the spot agreed upon, where he seated himself, and, taking out the articles of war, commenced them again, to ascertain whether he could not have strengthened his arguments. He had not, however, read through the seventh article before the hands were turned up—"up anchor!" and Mr. Sawbridge called, "All hands down from aloft!" Jack took the hint, folded up his documents, and came down as leisurely as he went up. Jack was a much better philosopher than his father.

The *Harpy* was soon under way, and made all sail, steering for Cape de Gatte, where Captain Wilson hoped to pick up a Spanish vessel or two, on his way to Toulon to receive the orders of the admiral.

A succession of light breezes and calms rendered the passage very tedious; but the boats were constantly out, chasing the vessels along shore, and Jack usually asked to be employed on this service: indeed, although so short a time afloat, he was, from his age and strength, one of the most effective midshipmen, and to be trusted, provided a whim did not come into his head; but hitherto Jack had always been under orders, and had always acquitted himself very well.

When the *Harpy* was off Tarragona, it so happened that there were several cases of dysentery in the ship, and Mr. Asper and Mr. Jolliffe were two of those who were suffering. This reduced the number of officers; and, at the same time, they had received information from the men of a fishing-boat, who, to obtain their own release, had given the intelligence, that a small convoy was coming down from Rosas as soon as the wind was fair, under the protection of two gun-boats.

Captain Wilson kept well off-shore until the wind changed, and then, allowing for the time that the vessels would take to run down the distance between Tarragona and Rosas, steered in the night, to intercept them; but it again fell calm, and the boats were therefore hoisted out, with directions to proceed along the shore, as it was supposed that the vessels could not now be far distant. Mr. Sawbridge had the command of the expedition in

the pinnace; the first cutter was in charge of the gunner, Mr. Minns; and, as the other officers were sick, Mr. Sawbridge, who liked Jack more and more every day, at his particular request gave him the command of the second cutter. As soon as he heard of it, Mesty declared to our hero that he would go with him; but without permission that was not possible. Jack obtained leave for Mesty to go in lieu of a marine; there were many men sick of the dysentery, and Mr. Sawbridge was not sorry to take an idler out of the ship instead of a working man, especially as Mesty was known to be a good hand.

It was ten o'clock at night when the boats quitted the ship; and, as it was possible that they might not return till late the next day, one day's biscuit and rum were put on board each, that the crews might not suffer from exhaustion. The boats pulled in-shore, and then coasted for three hours, without seeing anything: the night was fine overhead, but there was no moon. It still continued calm, and the men began to feel fatigued, when, just as they were within a mile of a low point, they perceived the convoy over the land, coming down with their sails squared, before a light breeze.

Mr. Sawbridge immediately ordered the boats to lie upon their oars, awaiting their coming, and arranging for the attack.

The white lateen sails of the gun-boat in advance were now plainly distinguishable from the rest, which were all huddled together in her wake. Down she came like a beautiful swan in the water, her sails just filled with the wind, and running about three knots an hour. Mr. Sawbridge kept her three masts in one, that they might not be perceived, and winded the boats with their heads the same way, so that they might dash on board of her with a few strokes of the oars. So favourable was the course of the gun-boat, that she stood right between the launch on one bow and the two cutters on the other; and they were not perceived until they were actually alongside; the resistance was trifling, but some muskets and pistols had been fired, and the alarm was given. Mr. Sawbridge took possession, with the crew of the launch, and brought the vessel to the wind, as he perceived that at the alarm all the convoy had done the same,

directing the cutters to board the largest vessels, and secure as many as they could, while he would do the same with the launch, as he brought them to: but the other gun-boat, which had not yet been seen, and had been forgotten, now made her appearance, and came down in a gallant manner to the support of her comrade.

Mr. Sawbridge threw half his men into the launch, as she carried a heavy carronade, and sent her to assist the cutters, which had made right for the gun-boat. A smart firing of round and grape was opened upon the boats, which continued to advance upon her; but the officer commanding the gun-boat, finding that he had no support from his consort, and concluding that she had been captured, hauled his wind again, and stood out in the offing. Our hero pulled after her, although he could not see the other boats; but the breeze had freshened, and all pursuit was useless: he therefore directed his course to the convoy, and, after a hard pull, contrived to get on board of a one-masted xebeque of about fifty tons. Mesty, who had eyes as sharp as a needle, had observed that when the alarm was given, several of the convoy had not rounded the point, and he therefore proposed, as this vessel was very light, that they should make short tracks with her, to weather the point, as if they were escaping, and by that means be able, particularly if it fell calm again, to capture some others. Jack thought this advice good. The convoy who had rounded the point had all stood out to seaward with the gun-boat, and had now a fresh breeze. To chase them was therefore useless; and the only chance was to do as Mesty had proposed. He therefore stood out into the breeze, and after half-an-hour, tacked in-shore, and fetched well to windward of the low point; but finding no vessels he stood out again. Thus had he made three or four tacks, and had gained, perhaps, six or seven miles, when he perceived signals of recall made to leeward, enforced with guns.

"Mr. Sawbridge wants us to come back, Mesty."

"Mr. Sawbridge mind him own business," replied Mesty, "we nebber take all dis trubble to ply to windward for noting."

"But, Mesty, we must obey orders."

"Yes, sar, when he have him thumb upon you; but

now, must do what tink most proper. By de powers, he catch me 'fore I go back."

"But we shall lose the ship."

"Find her again, by-and-by, Massa Easy."

"But they will think that we are lost."

"So much the better, nebber look after us, Massa Easy; I guess we have a fine cruise anyhow. Morrow we take large vessel—make sail, take more, den we go to Toulon."

"But I don't know my way to Toulon; I know it lies up this way, and that's all."

"Dat enough, what you want more? Massa Easy, 'pose you not find fleet, fleet soon find you."

Easy was very much of a mind with Mesty; "for," argued Jack, "if I go back now, I only bring a small vessel half full of beans, and I shall be ashamed to show my face. Now it is true, that they may suppose that we have been sunk by the fire of the gun-boat. Well, what then? they have a gun-boat to show for their night's work, and it will appear that there was harder fighting than there has been, and Mr. Sawbridge may benefit by it." (Jack was a very knowing fellow to have learned so much about the service already.) "Well, and when they discover that we are not lost, how glad they will be to find us, especially if we bring some prizes—which I will do, or I'll not go back again. It's not often that one gets a command before being two months at sea, and, hang me, now I've got it, if I won't keep it; and Mr. Smallsole may mast-head whom he pleases. I'm sorry for poor Gossett though; if Vigors supposes me dead how he will murder the poor little fellow—however, it's all for the good of the service, and I'll revenge him when I come back. Hang me if I won't take a cruise."

A short time after this decision on the part of our hero, the day broke: Jack first looked to leeward, and perceived the gun-boat and convoy standing in for the shore about ten miles distant, followed by the *Harpy*, under all sail. He could also perceive the captured gun-boat lying to in-shore to prevent their escape.

"*Harpy* had um all!" cried Mesty; "I ab notion dat she soon settle um hash."

They were so busy looking at the *Harpy* and the

convoy, that, for some time, they quite forgot to look to windward. At last Mesty turned his eyes that way.

"Dam um, I see right last night; look, Massa Easy —one chip, one brig tree lateen—dem for us. By de power, but we make *bon* prize to-night."

The vessels found out by Mesty were not above three miles to windward; they were under all sail, beating up for the protection of a battery not far distant.

"Now, Massa, suppose dey see our boat, dey tink something; keep boat alongside, and shift her when we go 'bout every time: better not sail so fast now—keep further off till they drop anchor for de night; and den, when it dark, we take 'em."

All Mesty's advice was good, with the exception perhaps of advising our hero how to disobey orders and take a cruise. To prevent the vessel from approaching too near the others, and at the same time to let her have the appearance of doing her best, a sail was towed overboard under the bows, and after that they watched the motions of the *Harpy*.

The distance was too great to distinguish very clearly, but Mesty shinned up the mast of the vessel, and reported progress.

"Dare one gun—two gun—go it, *Harpy*. Won't she ab um, sure enough. Now gun-boat fire—dat our gun-boat—no, dat not ours. Now our gun-boat fire—dat pretty—fire away. Ah, now de *Harpy* cum up. All 'mung 'em. Bung, bung, bung—rattle de grape. I ab notion de Spaniard is very pretty considerable trouble just now, anyhow. All hove-to—not more firing; *Harpy* take um all—dare gun-boat hove-to, she strike um colours. By all powers, but suppose dey tink we no share prize-money—they find it not little mistake. Now, my lads, it all over, and," continued Mesty, sliding down the mast, "I tink you better not show yourself too much; only two men stay on deck, and dem two take off um jackets."

Mesty's report was correct; the *Harpy* had captured the other gun-boat, and the whole convoy. The only drawback to their good fortune was the disappearance of Mr. Easy and the cutter: it was supposed that a shot from the gun-boat must have sunk her, and that the whole

crew were drowned. Captain Wilson and Mr. Sawbridge seriously regretted the loss of our hero, as they thought that he would have turned out a shining character as soon as he had sown his wild oats; so did Mr. Asper, because our hero's purse went with him; so did Jolliffe, because he had taken an affection for him; so did little Gossett, because he anticipated no mercy from Vigors. On the other hand, there were some who were glad that he was gone; and as for the ship's company in general, they lamented the loss of the poor cutter's crew for twenty-four hours, which, in a man-of-war, is a very long while, and then they thought no more about them. We must leave the *Harpy* to make the best of her way to Toulon and now follow our hero.

The cutter's crew knew very well that Jack was acting contrary to orders, but anything was to them a change from the monotony of a man-of-war; and they, as well as Mesty, highly approved of a holiday.

It was, however, necessary that they should soon proceed to business, for they had but their allowance of bread and grog for one day, and in the vessel they found nothing except a few heads of garlic, for the Spaniards coasting down-shore had purchased their provisions as they required them. There were only three prisoners on board, and they had been put down in the hold among the beans; a bag of which had been roused on deck, and a part put into the kettle to make soup. Jack did not much admire the fare of the first day—it was bean-soup for breakfast, bean-soup for dinner, and if you felt hungry during the intervals it was still bean-soup, and nothing else.

One of the men could speak a little Lingua Franca, and the prisoners were interrogated as to the vessels to windward. The ship was stated to be valuable, and also one of the brigs. The ship carried guns, and that was all they knew about them. As the sun went down the vessels dropped their anchors off the battery. The breeze continued light, and the vessel which contained Jack and his fortunes was about four miles to leeward. As for the *Harpy*, they had long lost sight of her, and it was now time to proceed to some arrangement. As soon as it was dark Jack turned his hands up and made a very long speech. He pointed out to the men that his zeal

had induced him not to return to the ship until he had brought something with him worth having—that they had had nothing but beans to eat during the whole day, which was anything but agreeable, and that, therefore, it was absolutely necessary that they should better their condition; and there was a large ship not four miles off, and that he intended to take her; and as soon as he had taken her he intended to take some more; that he trusted to their zeal to support him on this occasion, and that he expected to do a great deal during the cruise. He pointed out to them that they must consider themselves as on board of a man-of-war, and be guided by the articles of war, which were written for them all—and that in case they forgot them, he had a copy in his pocket, which he would read to them to-morrow morning, as soon as they were comfortably settled on board of the ship. He then appointed Mesty as first lieutenant; the marine as sergeant; the coxswain as boatswain; two men as midshipmen to keep watch: two others as boatswain's mates, leaving two more for the ship's company, who were divided into the larboard and starboard watch. The cutter's crew were perfectly content with Jack's speech, and their brevet rank, and after that they commenced a more important topic, which was, how they were to take the ship. After some discussion, Mesty's advice was approved of; which was, that they should anchor not far ahead of the ship, and wait till about two o'clock in the morning, when they would drop silently down upon her in the cutter, and take possession.

About nine o'clock the vessel was anchored as they proposed, and Jack was a little astonished to find that the ship was much larger than he had any idea of; for, although polacca-rigged, she was nearly the same tonnage as the *Harpy*. The Spanish prisoners were first tied hand and foot, and laid upon the beans, that they might give no alarm, the sails were furled, and all was kept quiet.

On board of the ship, on the contrary, there was noise and revelry; and about half-past ten a boat was seen to leave her and pull for the shore; after which the noise gradually ceased, the lights one by one disappeared, and then all was silent.

"What do you think, Mesty?" said Jack; "do you think we shall take her?"

"It is take her, you mane; sure enough we'll take her, stop a bit—wait till um all fast asleep."

About twelve o'clock there came on a mizzling heavy rain, which was very favourable for our hero's operations. But as it promised soon to clear up, by Mesty's advice they did not delay any longer. They crept softly into the boat, and with two oars to steer her dropped under the bows of the vessel, climbed up the forechains, and found the deck empty. "Take care not fire pistol," said Mesty to the men as they came up, putting his finger to their lips to impress them with the necessity of silence, for Mesty had been an African warrior, and knew the advantage of surprise. All the men being on deck, and the boat made fast, Jack and Mesty led the way aft; not a soul was to be seen: indeed, it was too dark to see anybody unless they were walking the deck. The companion-hatch was secured, and the gratings laid on the after-hatch ways, and then they went aft to the binnacle again, where there was a light burning. Mesty ordered two of the men to go forward to secure the hatches, and then to remain there on guard—and then the rest of the men and our hero consulted at the wheel.

"By the power we ab the ship!" said Mesty, "but must manage plenty yet. I tink der some lazy raseal sleep 'tween the guns. A lilly while it no rain, and den we see better. Now keep all quiet."

"There must be a great many men in this ship," replied our hero; "she is very large, and has twelve or fourteen guns—how shall we manage to secure them?"

"All right," replied Mesty, "manage all dat by-and-by. Don't care how soon daylight come."

"It has left off raining already," observed Easy; "there is a candle in the binnacle—suppose we light it and look round the decks."

"Yes," replied Mesty, "one man sentry over cabin-hatch, and another over after-hatch. Now den we light candle, and all the rest go round the deck. Mind you leave all your pistols on capstern."

Jack lighted the candle, and they proceeded round the decks: they had not walked far, when, between two of

the guns, they discovered a heap covered with gregos. "There de *watch*," whispered Mesty; "all fast—not ready for dem yet."

Mesty blew out the candle, and they all retreated to the binnacle, where Mesty took out a coil of the ropes about the mizzen-mast, and cutting it into lengths, gave them to the other men to unlay. In a few minutes they had prepared a great many seizings to tie the men with.

"Now den we light candle again, and make sure of them lazy hounds," said Mesty; "very much oblige to dem all de same; they let us take de ship—mind now, wake one at a time, and shut him mouth."

"But suppose they get their mouths free and cry out?" replied Jack.

"Den, Mr. Easy," replied Mesty, changing his countenance to an expression almost demoniacal—"there no help for it"—and Mesty showed his knife which he held in his right hand.

"Oh, no! do not let us murder them."

"No, massa—suppose can help it; but suppose they get upper hand—what become of us? Spaniards had knives, and use dem too, by de power!"

The observation of Mesty was correct, and the expression of his countenance when he showed his knife proved what a relentless enemy he could be, if his blood was once roused—but Mesty had figured in the Ashantee wars in former days, and after that the reader need not be surprised. They proceeded cautiously to where the Spaniards lay. The arrangements of Mesty were very good. There were two men to gag them while the others were to tie their limbs. Mesty and Easy were to kneel by them with the candle, with raised knives to awe them into silence, or to strike home, if their own safety required it.

The gregos were removed off the first man, who opened his eyes at the sight of the candle, but the coxswain's hand was on his mouth—he was secured in silence. The other two men were awaked, and threw off their coverings, but they were also secured without there being occasion to resort to bloodshed.

"What shall we do now, Mesty?"

"Now, sar," said Mesty, "open the after-hatch and watch—suppose more men come up, we make them fass;

suppose no more come up, we wait till daylight—and see what take place."

Mesty then went forward to see if the men were watchful on the forecastle; and having again gone round the whole of the deck to see if there were any more men on it, he blew out the candle, and took his station with the others at the after-hatchway.

It was just at break of day that the Spaniards who had to keep the morning watch having woke up, as people generally do at that hour at which they expect to be called, dressed themselves and came on deck, imagining, and very truly, that those of the middle watch had fallen asleep, but little imagining that the deck was in possession of Englishmen. Mesty and the others retreated, to allow them all to come up before they could perceive them, and fortunately this was accomplished. Four men came on the deck, looked round them, and tried to make out in the dark where their shipmates might be. The grating was slapped on again by Jack, and before they could well gain their eyesight, they were seized and secured, not, however, without a scuffle and some noise.

By the time that these men were secured and laid between the guns it was daylight, and they now perceived what a fine vessel they had fairly taken possession of—but there was much to be done yet. There was, of course, a number of men in the ship, and, moreover, they were not a mile from a battery of ten guns. Mesty, who was foremost in everything, left four men abaft and went forward on the forecastle, examined the cable, which was *coir* rope, and therefore easily divided, and then directed the two men forward to coil a hawser upon the fore-grating, the weight of which would make all safe in that quarter, and afterwards to join them on the quarter-deck.

"Now, Mr. Easy, the great ting will be to get hold of captain; we must get him on deck. Open cabin-hatch now, and keep the after-hatch fast. Two men stay there, the others all come aft."

"Yes," replied Jack, "it will be a great point to secure the captain—but how are we to get him up?"

"You no know how to get captain up? By de holy, I know very well."

And Mesty took up the coils of rope about the mizzen-

mast, and threw them upon deck, one after another, making all the noise possible. In a short time there was a violent pull of a bell at the cabin-door, and in a minute afterwards a man came up the cabin-hatchway, who was immediately secured.

"Dis de captain's servant," said Mesty, "he come say no make such noise. Stop a little—captain get in passion, and come up himself."

And Mesty renewed the noise with the ropes over the cabin. Mesty was right; in a few minutes the captain himself came up, boiling with indignation. At the sound of the cabin door opening, the seamen and our hero concealed themselves behind the companion-hatch, which was very high, so as to give the captain time to get fairly on deck. The men already secured had been covered over with the gregos. The captain was a most powerful man, and it was with difficulty that he was pinioned, and then not without his giving the alarm, had there been any one to assist him, but as yet no one had turned out of his hammock.

"Now we all right," said Mesty, "and soon ab de ship; but I must make him 'fraid."

The captain was seated down on the deck against one of the guns, and Mesty, putting on the look of a demon, extended above him his long nervous arm, with the sharp knife clutched, as if ready every instant to strike it into his heart. The Spanish captain felt his situation anything but pleasant. He was then interrogated as to the number of men in the ship, officers, etc., to all which questions he answered truly: he cast his eyes at the firm and relentless countenance of Mesty, who appeared but to wait the signal.

"I tink all pretty safe now," said Mesty. "Mr. Easy, we now go down below and beat all men into the hold."

Our hero approved of this suggestion. Taking their pistols from the capstern, they rushed down with their cutlasses, and leaving two men to guard the cabin door, they were soon among the crew, who were all naked in their hammocks: the resistance, although the numbers were more than double of the English, was of course trifling. In a few minutes, the Spaniards were all thrown down into the hold of the vessel, and the hatches placed

over them. Every part of the ship was now in their possession except the cabin, and to that they all repaired. Our hero tried the door, and found it fast; they beat it open, and were received with loud screams from one side of the cabin, and the discharge of two pistols from the other, fortunately without injury: those who had fired the pistols were an elderly man and a lad about the age of our hero. They were thrown down and secured; the cabin was searched, and nobody else found in it but three women; one old and shrivelled, the other two, although with their countenances distorted with terror, were lovely as Houris. So thought Jack, as he took off his hat, and made them a very low bow with his usual politeness, as they crouched, half dressed, in a corner. He told them in English that they had nothing to fear, and begged that they would attend to their toilets. The ladies made no reply, because, in the first place, they did not know what Jack said, and in the next, they could not speak English.

Mesty interrupted Jack in his attentions, by pointing out that they must all go upon deck—so Jack again took off his hat and bowed, and then followed his men, who led away the two prisoners taken in the cabin. It was now five o'clock in the morning, and there was movement on board of the other vessels, which lay not far from the ship.

"Now then," said Jack, "what shall we do with the prisoners?—could we not send the boat and bring our own vessel alongside, and put them all in, tied as they are? We should then get rid of them."

"Massa Easy, you be one very fine officer one of dese days. Dat good idea, anyhow;—but suppose we send our own boat, what they *tink* on board of de oder vessel? Lower down lilly boat from stern, put in four men, and drop vessel 'longside—dat it."

This was done; the cutter was on the seaward side of the ship, and, as the ship was the outermost vessel, was concealed from the view of the Spaniards on board of the other vessels, and in the battery on shore. As soon as the lateen vessel was alongside, the men who had already been secured on deck, amounting to seven, were lowered into her, and laid upon the beans in the hold; all, except the captain, the two cabin prisoners, and the captain's servant. They then went down below, took off

one part of the hatches, and ordered the Spaniards up from the hold: as they came on deck they were made fast and treated in the same manner. Mesty and the men went down to examine if there were any left concealed, and finding that they were all out, returned on deck. The men who had been beaten down in the hold were twenty-two in number, making the whole complement of thirty. As soon as they had all been put into the xebeque, she was again hauled off and anchored outside, and Jack found himself in possession of a fine ship of fourteen guns, with three prisoners male and three prisoners female.

When the men returned in the boat from the vessel in which the prisoners had been confined (the hatches having been secured over them, by way of further precaution), by the advice of Mesty they put on the jackets and caps of the Spanish seamen, of which there was a plentiful supply below.

"Now what's to be done, Mesty?" inquired Jack.

"Now, sar, we send some of the men aloft to get sails all ready, and while they do that I cast loose this fellow," pointing to the captain's servant, "and make him get some breakfast, for he know where to find it."

"Capital idea of yours, Mesty, for I'm tired of bean-soup already, and I will go down and pay my respects to the ladies."

Mesty looked over the counter.

"Yes, and be quick too, Massa Easy; the women toss their handkerchief in the air to people in the battery—quick, Massa Easy."

Mesty was right—the Spanish girls were waving their handkerchiefs for assistance; it was all that they could do, poor things. Jack hastened into the cabin, laid hold of the two young ladies, very politely pulled them out of the quarter gallery, and begged that they would not give themselves so much trouble. The young ladies looked very much confused, and as they could no longer wave their handkerchiefs, they put them up to their eyes and began to weep, while the elderly lady went on her knees, and held her hands up for mercy. Jack raised her up, and very politely handed her to one of the cabin lockers.

In the meantime, Mesty, with his gleaming knife and expressive look, had done wonders: and a breakfast of

chocolate, salt meat, hams and sausages, white biscuit and red wine, had been spread on the quarter-deck. The men had come from aloft, and Jack was summoned on deck. Jack offered his hand to the two young ladies, and beckoned the old one to follow: the old lady did not think it advisable to refuse his courtesy, so they accompanied him.

As soon as the females came on deck, and found the two cabin prisoners bound, they ran to them and embraced them with tears. Jack's heart melted, and as there was now no fear, he asked Mesty for his knife, and cut loose the two Spaniards, pointing to the breakfast, and requesting that they would join them. The Spaniards made a bow, and the ladies thanked Jack with a sweet smile; and the captain of the vessel, who still lay pinioned against the gun, looked, as much as to say, Why don't you ask me? but the fact was, they had had such trouble to secure him, that Jack did not much like the idea of letting him loose again. Jack and the seamen commenced their breakfast, and as the ladies and prisoners did not appear inclined to eat, they ate their share and their own too; during which the elderly man inquired of Jack if he could speak French.

Jack, with his mouth full of sausage, replied that he could; and then commenced a conversation, from which Jack learned as follows—

The elderly gentleman was a passenger with the young man, who was his son, and the ladies, who were his wife and his two daughters, and they were proceeding to Tarragona. Whereupon Jack made a bow and thanked him; and then the gentleman, whose name was Don Cordova de Rimarosa, wished to know what Jack intended to do with them, hoping, as a gentleman, he would put them on shore with their effects, as they were non-combatants. Jack explained all this to Mesty and the men, and then finished his sausage.

The next question was, as to the propriety of allowing them to take their effects; and it was agreed, at last, that they might take them. Jack desired the steward to feed his master the captain, and then told the Spanish Don the result of the consultation; further informing him, that as soon as it was dark, he intended to put them all on

board the small vessel, when they could cast loose the men and do as they pleased. The Don and the ladies returned thanks, and went down to pack up their baggage; Mesty ordering two men to help them, but with a caution, that they were not to encumber themselves with any of the money, if there should happen to be any on board.

The crew were busy during the day making preparations for sailing. The coxswain had examined the provender in the ship, and found that there was enough for at least three months, of water, wine, and provisions, independent of luxuries for the cabin. All thoughts of taking any more of the vessels were abandoned, for their crew was but weak to manage the one which they had possession of. A fine breeze sprang up, and they dropped their fore-topsails, just as a boat was shoving off from the shore; but seeing the fore-topsails loosed, it put back again. This was fortunate, or all would have been discovered. The other vessels also loosed their sails, and the crews were heard weighing the anchors.

But the *Nostra Senora del Carmen*, which was Jack's prize, did not move. At last the sun went down, the baggage was placed in the cutter, the ladies and passengers went into the boat, thanking Jack for his kindness, who put his hand to his heart and bowed to the deck; and the captain was lowered down after them. Four men well armed pulled them alongside of the xebeque, put them and their trunks on deck, and returned to the ship. The cutter was then hoisted up, and as the anchor was too heavy to weigh, they cut the cable, and made sail. The other vessels followed their example. Mesty and the seamen cast longing eyes upon them, but it was of no use; so they sailed in company for about an hour, and then Jack hauled his wind for a cruise.

CHAPTER XII

As soon as the ship had been hauled to the wind, Jack's ship's company seemed to think that there was nothing to do except to make merry, so they brought up some

earthen jars full of wine, and emptied them so fast that they were soon fast asleep on the deck, with the exception of the man at the helm, who, instead of thirty-two, could clearly make out sixty-four points in the compass, and of course was able to steer to a much greater nicety. Fortunately, the weather was fine, for when the man at the helm had steered till he could see no more, and requested to be released, he found that his shipmates were so overpowered with fatigue, that it was impossible to wake them. He kicked them one by one most unmercifully in the ribs, but it was of no use: under these circumstances, he did as they did, that is, lay down with them, and in ten minutes it would have taken as much kicking to awake him as he gave his shipmates.

In the meantime the ship had it all her own way, and not knowing where she was to go she went round and round the compass during the best part of the night. Mesty had arranged the watches, Jack had made a speech, and the men had promised everything, but the wine had got into their heads, and memory had taken that opportunity to take a stroll. Mesty had been down with Jack, examining the cabin, and in the captain's state-room they had found fourteen thousand dollars in bags: of this they determined not to tell the men, but locked up the money and everything else of value, and took out the key. They then sat down at the cabin table, and after some conversation, it was no matter of surprise, after having been up all the night before, that Jack laid his head on the table and fell fast asleep. Mesty kept his eyes open for some time, but at last his head sank down upon his chest, and he also slumbered. Thus, about one o'clock in the morning, there was not a very good watch kept on board of the *Nostra Senora del Carmen.*

About four o'clock in the morning, Mesty tumbled forward, and he hit his head against the table, which roused him up.

"I tink I almost fall asleep," cried he, and he went to the cabin window, which had been left open, and found that there was a strong breeze blowing in. "De wind ab come more aft," said Mesty, "why they not tell me?" So saying, he went on deck, where he found no one at the helm; every one drunk, and the ship with her yards

braced up running before the wind, just by way of a change. Mesty growled, but there was no time to lose; the topsails only were set—these he lowered down, and then put the helm a-lee, and lashed it, while he went down to call our hero to his assistance. Jack roused up, and went on deck.

"This nebber do, Massa Easy; drunken dogs—I freshen um up anyhow." So Mesty drew some buckets of water, with which he soused the ship's company, who then appeared to be recovering their senses.

"By heavens!" says Jack, "but this is contrary to the 'articles of war'; I shall read them to them to-morrow morning."

"I tell what better ting, Massa Easy; we go lock up all de wine, and sarve out so much, and no more. I go do it at once, 'fore they wake up."

Mesty went down, leaving Jack on deck to his meditations.

Mesty soon returned with the keys of the provision-room tied to his bandana.

"Now," says he, "they not get drunk again in a hurry."

A few more buckets of water soon brought the men to their senses: they again stood on their legs, and gradually recovered themselves. Daylight broke, and they found that the vessel had made an attempt for the Spanish coast, being within a mile of the beach, and facing a large battery *à fleur d'eau;* fortunately they had time to square the yards, and steer the ship along shore under the top-sails, before they were perceived.

The men, who perceived what danger they had been in, listened very penitently to Jack's remonstrances; and our hero, to impress them more strongly on their minds, took out the articles of war, and read that on drunkenness from beginning to end; but the men had heard it read so often at the gangway, that it did not make a due impression. As Mesty said, his plan was better, and so it proved; for as soon as Jack had done, the men went down to get another jug of wine, and found, to their disappointment, that it was all under lock and key.

In the meantime, Jack called Mesty aft, and asked him

if he knew the way to Toulon. Mesty declared that he knew nothing about it.

"Then, Mesty, it appears to me that we have a better chance of finding our way back to Gibraltar; for you know the land was on our left side all the way coming up the Mediterranean; and if we keep it, as it is now, on our right, we shall get back again along the coast."

After this night Jack and Mesty kept watch and watch, and everything went on very well until they were nearly abreast of Carthagena, when a gale came on from the northward, and drove them out of sight of land. Sail after sail was reduced with difficulty from their having so few hands, and the gale blew for three days with great fury. The men were tired out and discontented. It was Jack's misfortune that he had but one good man with him: even the coxswain of the boat, although a fine-looking man, was worth nothing. Mesty was Jack's sheet-anchor. The fourth day the gale moderated, but they had no idea where they were: they knew that they had been blown off, but how far they could not tell; and Jack now began to discover that a cruise at sea without a knowledge of navigation was a more nervous thing than he had contemplated. However, there was no help for it: at night they wore the ship, and stood on the other tack, and at daylight they perceived that they were close to some small islands, and much closer to some large rocks, against which the sea beat high, although the wind had subsided. Again was the helm put up, and they narrowly escaped. As soon as the sails were trimmed, the men came aft, and proposed that if they could find anchorage, they should run into it, for they were quite tired out. This was true; and Jack consulted with Mesty, who thought it advisable to agree to the proposal. That the islands were not inhabited was very evident. The only point to ascertain was if there were good anchorage. The coxswain offered to go in the boat and examine; and, with four men, he set off, and in about an hour returned, stating that there was plenty of water, and that it was as smooth as a mill-pond, being land-locked on every side. As they could not weigh the bower-anchor, they bent the kedge, and, running in without accident, came to in a small bay, between the islands, in seven fathoms

water. The sails were furled, and everything put in order by the seamen, who then took the boat and pulled on shore. "They might as well have asked leave," thought Jack. In an hour they returned, and, after a short discussion, came aft to our hero in a body.

The coxswain was spokesman. He said that they had had hard work, and required now to have some rest,—that there were provisions on board for three months, so that there could not be any hurry,—and that they had found they could pitch a tent very well on shore, and live there for a short time,—and that as there was no harm in getting drunk on shore, they expected that they might be allowed to take provisions and plenty of wine with them; and that the men had desired him to ask leave, because they were determined to go, whether or no. Jack was about to answer with the handspike; but perceiving that the men had all put on their cutlasses, and had their pistols at their belts, he thought proper to consult Mesty, who, perceiving that resistance was useless, advised Jack to submit, observing, that the sooner all the wine was gone the better, as there would be nothing done while it lasted. Jack, therefore, very graciously told them, that they should have their own way, and he would stay there as long as they pleased. Mesty gave them the keys of the provision-hatch, and told them, with a grin, to help themselves. The men then informed Jack that he and Mesty should stay on board, and take care of the ship for them, and that they would take the Spaniard on shore to cook their victuals; but to this Jack observed, that if he had not two hands, he could not obey their orders, in case they wished him to come on shore for them. The men thought there was good argument in that observation, and therefore allowed Jack to retain the Spaniard, that he might be more prompt to their call from the beach: they then wished him good day and begged that he would amuse himself with the "articles of war."

As soon as they had thrown a spare sail into the boat, with some spars to make a tent, and some bedding, they went down below, hoisted up two pipes of wine out of the three, a bag or two of biscuit, arms and ammunition, and as much of the salt provisions as they thought they might require. The boat being full, they shoved off, with three

cheers of derision. Jack was sensible to the compliment: he stood at the gangway, took off his hat, and made them a polite bow.

As soon as they were gone, Mesty grinned with his sharp-filed teeth, and looking at our hero, said:

"I tink I make um pay for all dis."

A narrow piece of salt pork had been left at the gangway: Jack, without knowing why, tossed it overboard; being almost all fat it sank very gradually: Jack watched it as it disappeared, so did Mesty, both full of thought, when they perceived a dark object rising under it: it was a ground shark, who took it into his maw, sank down and disappeared.

"What was that?" said Jack.

"That ground shark, Massa Easy—worst shark of all; you neber see him till you feel him;" and Mesty's eyes sparkled with pleasure. "By de powers, they soon stop de mutiny; now I hab 'em."

Jack shuddered and walked away.

During the day, the men on shore were seen to work hard, and make all the preparations before they abandoned themselves to the sensual gratification of intemperance. The tent was pitched, the fire was lighted, and all the articles taken on shore rolled up and stowed away in their places; they were seen to sit down and dine, for they were within hail of the ship, and then one of the casks of wine was spiled. In the meantime the Spaniard, who was a quiet lad, had prepared the dinner for Easy and his now only companion. The evening closed, and all was noise and revelry on shore; and as they danced, and sung, and tossed off the cans of wine by the light of the fire, as they hallooed and screamed, and became more and more intoxicated, Mesty turned to Jack with his bitter smile, and only said:

"Stop a little."

At last the noise grew fainter, the fire died away, and gradually all was silent. Jack was still hanging over the gangway when Mesty came up to him. The new moon had just risen, and Jack's eyes were fixed upon it.

"Now, Massa Easy, please you come aft and lower down little boat; take your pistols and then we go on shore and bring off the cutter; they all asleep now."

"But why should we leave them without a boat, Mesty?" for Jack thought of the sharks, and the probability of the men attempting to swim off.

"I tell you, sar, this night they get drunk, to-morrow they get drunk again, but drunken men never keep quiet—suppose one man say to others, 'Let's go aboard and kill officer, and then we do as we please,' they all say yes, and they all come and do it. No sar—must have boat—if not for your sake, I must hab it, save my own life anyhow, for they hate me and kill me first;—by de powers, stop a little."

Jack felt the truth of Mesty's observation; he went aft with him, lowered down the small boat, and they hauled it alongside. Jack went down with Mesty into the cabin and fetched his pistols—"And the Spaniard, Mesty, can we leave him on board alone?"

"Yes, sar, he no got arms, and he see dat we have—but suppose he find arms he never dare do anything—I know de man."

Our hero and Mesty went down into the boat and shoved off, pulling gently on shore; the men were in a state of intoxication, so as not to be able to move, much less hear. They cast off the cutter, towed her on board, and made her fast with the other boat astern.

"Now, sar, we may go to bed; to-morrow morning you will see."

"They have everything they require on shore," replied Easy; "all they could want with the cutter would be to molest us."

"Stop a little," replied Mesty.

Mesty was up at daylight and Jack soon followed him: they watched the party on shore, who had not yet left the tent. At last, just as Jack had finished his breakfast, one or two made their appearance: the men looked about them as if they were searching for something, and then walked down to the beach, to where the boat had been made fast. Jack looked at Mesty, who grinned, and answered with the words so often repeated:

"Stop a little."

The men then walked along the rocks until they were abreast of the ship.

"Ship ahoy!"

"Halloo," replied Mesty.

"Bring the boat ashore directly, with a beaker of water."

"I knew dat," cried Mesty, rubbing his hands with delight. "Massy Easy, you must tell them No."

"But why should I not give them water, Mesty?"

"Because, sar, den they take boat."

"Very true," replied Easy.

"Do you hear on board?" cried the coxswain, who was the man who hailed—"send the boat immediately, or we'll cut the throats of every mother's son of you."

"I shall not send the boat," replied Jack, who now thought Mesty was right.

"You won't—won't you?—then your doom's sealed," replied the man, walking up to the tent with the other. In a short time all the seamen turned out of the tent, bringing with them four muskets, which they had taken on shore with them.

"Good heavens! they are not, surely, going to fire at us, Mesty."

"Stop a little."

The men then came down abreast of the ship, and the coxswain again hailed, and asked if they would bring the boat on shore.

"You must say No, sar," replied.

"I feel I must," replied Jack, and then he answered the coxswain, "No."

The plan of the mutineers had been foreseen by the wily negro—it was to swim off to the boats which were riding astern, and to fire at him or Jack, if they attempted to haul them up alongside and defend them. To get into the boats, especially the smaller one, from out of the water, was easy enough. Some of the men examined their priming, and held the muskets at their hips all ready with the muzzles towards the ship, while the coxswain and two men were throwing off their clothes.

"Stop, stop!" cried Jack. "The harbour is full of ground sharks—it is, upon my soul!"

"Do you think to frighten us with ground sharks?" replied the coxswain, "keep under cover, my lad; Jack, give him a shot to prove we are in earnest, and every time he or that nigger show their heads, give them another, my lads."

"Don't attempt to swim," said Jack, in an agony; "I will try some means to give you water."

"Too late now—you're doomed;" and the coxswain sprang off the rock into the sea, and was followed by two other men: at the same moment a musket was discharged, and the bullet whistled close to our hero's ear.

Mesty dragged Jack from the gangway, who was now nearly fainting from agonising feelings. He sank on the deck for a moment, and then sprang up and ran to the port to look at the men in the water. He was just in time to see the coxswain raise himself with a loud yell out of the sea, and then disappear in a vortex, which was crimsoned with his blood.

Mesty threw down his musket in his hand, of which he had several all ready loaded, in case the men should have gained the boats.

"By the powers, dat no use now!"

Jack had covered his face with his hands. But the tragedy was now complete: the other men, who were in the water, had immediately turned and made for the shore; but before they could reach it, two more of those voracious monsters, attracted by the blood of the coxswain, had flown to the spot, and there was a contention for the fragments of their bodies.

Mesty, who had seen this catastrophe, turned towards our hero, who still hid his face.

"I'm glad he no see dat, anyhow," muttered Mesty.

"See what?" exclaimed Jack.

"Shark eat 'em all."

"Oh, horrid, horrid!" groaned our hero.

"Yes, sar, very horrid," replied Mesty, "and dat bullet at your head very horrid. Suppose the sharks no take them, what then? They kill us, and the sharks have our body. I think that more horrid still."

"Mesty," replied Jack, seizing the negro convulsively by the arm, "it was not the sharks it was I—I who have murdered these men."

Mesty looked at Jack with surprise.

"How dat possible?"

"If I had not disobeyed orders," replied our hero, panting for breath, "if I had not shown them the example of disobedience, this would not have happened. How

could I expect submission from them ? It's all my fault —I see it now—and—when will the sight be blotted from my memory ? "

The dreadful death of the three mutineers appeared to have had a sensible effect upon their companions, who walked away from the beach with their heads down and with measured steps. They were now seen to be perambulating the island, probably in search of that water which they required. At noon, they returned to their tent, and soon afterwards were in a state of intoxication, hallooing and shouting as the day before. Towards the evening they came down to the beach abreast of the ship, each with a vessel in their hands, and perceiving that they had attracted the notice of our hero and Mesty, tossed the contents of the vessels up in the air to show that they had found water, and hooting and deriding, went back, dancing, leaping, and kicking up their heels, to renew their orgies, which continued till after midnight, when they were all stupefied as before.

The next day Jack had recovered from the first shock which the catastrophe had given him, and he called Mesty into the cabin to hold a consultation.

" What is your opinion, Mesty ?—tell me, and I will be governed by it."

" Den, sar, I tell you I tink it right that they first come and ask to come on board before you take them—and, sar, I tink it also right, as we are but two and they are five, dat they first eat all their provision—let 'em starve plenty, and den dey come on board tame enough."

" At all events," replied Jack, " the first overtures of some kind or another must come from them. I wish I had something to do—I do not much like this cooping up on board ship."

" Massa, why you no talk with Pedro ? "

" Because I cannot speak Spanish."

" Well, Massa Easy, why not talk all day with Pedro, and den you able to talk Spanish fine."

" Upon my word, Mesty, I never had an idea of your value. I will learn all the Spanish that I can," replied Jack, who was glad to have employment found for him and was quite disgusted with the articles of war.

As for the men on shore, they continued the same course,

if not as before; one day succeeded another, and without variety. It was, however, to be observed, that the fire was now seldomer lighted, which proved their fuel scarce, and the weather was not so warm as it had been, for it was now October. Jack learnt Spanish from Pedro for a month, during which there was no appearance of submission on the part of the mutineers. They appeared to have almost forgotten that the ship was there, for they took no notice of her whatever.

On the other hand, Jack had decided that if he waited there a year, the overtures should come from them who had mutinied; and now, having an occupation, he passed his time very quietly, and the days flew so fast that two months had actually been run off the calendar, before he had an idea of it.

CHAPTER XIII

One evening they were down in the cabin, for the evenings had now become very cold.

"What that?" cried Mesty, looking out of the cabin window—"Ah! drunken dogs—they set fire to tent."

Jack looked, and perceived that the tent on shore was in flames.

"I tink these cold nights cool their courage anyhow," observed Mesty—"Massa Easy, you see they soon ask permission to come on board."

Jack thought so too, and was most anxious to be off, for, on looking into the lockers in the state-room, he had found a chart of the Mediterranean, which he had studied very attentively—he had found out the rock of Gibraltar, and had traced the *Harpy's* course up to Cape de Gatte, and thence to Tarragona—and, after a while, had summoned Mesty to a cabinet council.

"See, Mesty," said Jack, "I begin to make it out; here is Gibraltar, and Cape de Gatte, and Tarragona—it was hereabout we were when we took the ship, and, if you recollect, we had passed Cape de Gatte two days

before we were blown off from the land, so that we had gone about twelve inches, and had only four more to go."

"Yes, Massa Easy, I see all dat."

"Well, then, we were blown off shore by the wind, and must of course have come down this way; and here you see are three little islands, called Zaffarine Islands, and with no names of towns upon them, and therefore uninhabited; and you see they lie just like the islands we are anchored among now—we must be at the Zaffarine Islands—and only six inches from Gibraltar."

"I see, Massa Easy, dat all right—but six long inches."

"Now, Mesty, you know the compass on the deck has a flourishing thing for the north point—and here is a compass with a north point also. Now the north point from the Zaffarine Islands leads out to the Spanish coast again, and Gibraltar lies five or six points of the compass to this side of it—if we steer that way we shall get to Gibraltar."

"All right, Massa Easy," replied Mesty; and Jack was right, with the exception of the variation, which he knew nothing about.

To make sure, Jack brought one of the compasses down from deck, and compared them. He then lifted off the glass, counted the points of the compass to the westward, and marked the corresponding one on the binnacle compass with his pen.

"There," said he, "that is the way to Gibraltar, and as soon as the mutiny is quelled, and the wind is fair, I'll be off."

A few more days passed, and, as was expected, the mutineers could hold out no longer. The loss of their tent, which had been fired by their carelessness, had been followed by four days and nights of continual rain. Everything they had had been soaked through and through, and they were worn out, shivering with cold, and starving. Hanging they thought better than dying by inches from starvation; and, yielding to the imperious demands of hunger, they came down to the beach, abreast of the ship, and dropped down on their knees.

"Ship ahoy!" cried one of the men.

"What do you want?" replied Jack.

"Have pity on us, sir—mercy!" exclaimed the other men, "we will return to our duty."

"What will you promise if I take you on board?"

"To do our duty cheerfully till we join the ship, and then be hung as an example to all mutineers," replied the men.

"Dat very fair," replied Mesty; "take dem at their word, Massa Easy."

"Very well," replied Jack, "I accept your conditions; and we will come for you."

Jack and Mesty hauled up the boat, stuck their pistols in their belts, and pulled to the shore. The men, as they stepped in, touched their hats respectfully to our hero, but said nothing. On their arrival on board Jack read that part of the articles of war relative to mutiny, by which the men were reminded of the very satisfactory fact, "that they were to suffer death"; and then made a speech which, to men who were starving, appeared to be interminable. However, there is an end to everything in this world, and so there was to Jack's harangue; after which Mesty gave them some biscuit, which they devoured in thankfulness, until they could get something better.

The next morning the wind was fair, they weighed their kedge with some difficulty, and ran out of the harbour: the men appeared very contrite, worked well, but in silence, for they had no very pleasant anticipations; but hope always remains with us; and each of the men, although he had no doubt but that the others would be hung, hoped that he would escape with a sound flogging. The wind, however, did not allow them to steer their course long; before night it was contrary, and they fell off three points to the northward. "However," as Jack observed, "at all events we shall make the Spanish coast, and then we must run down it to Gibraltar: I don't care—I understand navigation much better than I did." The next morning they found themselves, with a very light breeze, under a high cape, and, as the sun rose, they observed a large vessel inshore, about two miles to the westward of them, and another outside, about four miles off. Mesty took the glass and examined the one outside, which, on a sudden, had let fall all her canvas. and was

now running for the shore, steering for the cape under which Jack's vessel lay. Mesty put down the glass.

"Massa Easy—I tink dat de *Harpy*."

One of the seamen took the glass and examined her, while the others who stood by showed great agitation.

"Yes, it is the *Harpy*," said the seaman. "Oh! Mr. Easy, will you forgive us?" continued the man, and he and the others fell on their knees. "Do not tell all, Mr. Easy."

Jack's heart melted; so he told the men, that although he must state what had occurred, he would not tell all, and would contrive to get them off as well as he could. He was about to make a long speech, but a gun from the *Harpy*, which had now come up within range, made him defer it till a more convenient opportunity. At the same time the vessel in shore hoisted Spanish colours, and fired a gun.

"By de powers, but we got in the middle of it," cried Mesty; "*Harpy* tink us Spaniard. Now, my lads, get all gun ready, bring up powder and shot. Massa, now us fire at Spaniard—*Harpy* not fire at us—no ab English colours on board—dat all we must do."

The men set to with a will; the guns were all loaded, and were soon cast loose and primed, during which operations it fell calm, and the sails of all three vessels flapped against their masts. The *Harpy* was then about two miles from Jack's vessel, and the Spaniard about a mile from him, with all her boats ahead of her, towing towards him; Mesty examined the Spanish vessel.

"Dat man'-o-war, Massa Easy—what we do for colour? must hoist something."

Mesty ran down below; he recollected that there was a very gay petticoat, which had been left by the old lady who was in the vessel when they captured her. It was of green silk, with yellow and blue flowers, but very faded. He soon appeared with this under his arm, made it fast to the peak halyards and hoisted it up.

"She's hoisted her colours, sir," said Sawbridge, on board of the *Harpy*; "but they do not show out clear, and it's impossible to distinguish them; but there's a gun."

"It's not at us, sir," said Gascoigne, the midshipman;

"it's at the Spanish vessel—I saw the shot fall ahead of her."

"It must be a privateer," said Captain Wilson; "at all events, it is very fortunate, for the corvette would otherwise have towed into Carthagena. Another gun, round and grape, and well pointed too; she carries heavy metal, that craft; she must be a Maltese privateer."

"That's as much as to say that she's a pirate," replied Sawbridge; "I can make nothing of her colours—they appear to me to be green—she must be a Turk. Another gun—and well aimed; it has hit the boats."

"Yes, they are all in confusion: we will have her now, if we can only get a trifle of wind. That is a breeze coming up in the offing. Trim the sails, Mr. Sawbridge."

The yards were squared, and the *Harpy* soon had steerage way. In the meantime Jack and his few men had kept up a steady, well-directed, although slow, fire with their larboard guns upon the Spanish corvette; and two of her boats had been disabled. The *Harpy* brought the breeze up with her, and was soon within range; she steered to cut off the corvette, firing only her bow-chasers.

"We ab her now," cried Mesty, "fire away—men take good aim. Breeze come now; one man go to helm. By de power, what dat?"

The exclamation of Mesty was occasioned by a shot hulling the ship on the starboard side. Jack and he ran over, and perceived that three Spanish gun-boats had just made their appearance round the point, and had attacked them. The fact was, that on the other side of the cape was the port and town of Carthagena, and these gun-boats had been sent out to the assistance of the corvette. The ship had now caught the breeze, fortunately for Jack, or he would probably have been taken into Carthagena; and the corvette, finding herself cut off by both the *Harpy* and Jack's vessel, as soon as the breeze came up to her, put her head the other way, and tried to escape by running westward along the coast close inshore. Another shot, and then another, pierced the hull of the ship, and wounded two of Jack's men; but as the corvette had turned, and the *Harpy* followed her, of course Jack did the same, and in ten minutes he was clear of the gun-boats, which did not venture to make sail and stand after him.

The wind now freshened fast, and blew out the green petticoat, but the *Harpy* was exchanging broadsides with the corvette, and too busy to look after Jack's ensign. The Spaniard defended himself well, and had the assistance of the batteries as he passed, but there was no anchorage until he had run many miles farther. About noon the wind died away, and at one o'clock it again fell nearly calm; but the *Harpy* had neared her distance, and was now within three cables' length of her antagonist, engaging her and a battery of four guns. Jack came up again, for he had the last of the breeze, and was about half a mile from the corvette when it fell calm. By the advice of Mesty, he did not fire any more, or otherwise the *Harpy* would not obtain so much credit, and it was evident that the fire of the Spaniard slackened fast. At three o'clock the Spanish colours were hauled down, and the *Harpy*, sending a boat on board and taking possession, directed her whole fire upon the battery, which was soon silenced.

The calm continued, and the *Harpy* was busy enough with the prize, shifting the prisoners and refitting both vessels, which had very much suffered in the sails and rigging. There was an occasional wonder on board the *Harpy* what that strange vessel might be which had turned the corvette and enabled them to capture her, but when people are all very busy, there is not much time for surmise.

Jack's crew, with himself, consisted but of eight, one of whom was a Spaniard, and two were wounded. It therefore left him but four, and he had also something to do, which was to assist his wounded men, and secure his guns. Moreover, Mesty did not think it prudent to leave the vessel a mile from the *Harpy* with only two on board; besides, as Jack said, he had had no dinner, and was not quite sure that he should find anything to eat when he went into the midshipmen's berth; he would therefore have some dinner cooked, and eat it before he went on board; in the meantime, they would try and close with her. Jack took things always very easy, and he said he should report himself at sunset. There were other reasons which made Jack in no very great hurry to go on board; he wanted to have time to consider a little what he should say to excuse himself, and also how he

should plead for the men. His natural correctness of feeling decided him, in the first place, to tell the whole truth, and in the next, his kind feelings determined him to tell only part of it. Jack need not have given himself this trouble, for, as far as regarded himself, he had fourteen thousand good excuses in the bags which lay in the state-room; and as for the men, after an action with the enemy, if they behave well, even mutiny is forgiven. At last Jack, who was tired with excitement and the hard work of the day, thought and thought till he fell fast asleep, and instead of waking at sunset did not wake till two hours afterwards; and Mesty did not call him, because he was in no hurry himself to go on board and *boil de kettle for de young gentlemen.*

When Jack woke up he was astonished to find that he had slept so long: he went on deck; it was dark and still calm, but he could easily perceive that the *Harpy* and corvette were still hove-to, repairing damages. He ordered the men to lower down the small boat, and leaving Mesty in charge, with two oars he pulled to the *Harpy.* What with wounded men, with prisoners, and boats going and coming between the vessels, every one on board the *Harpy* were well employed; and in the dark Jack's little boat came alongside without notice. This should not have been the case, but it was, and there was some excuse for it. Jack ascended the side, and pushed his way through the prisoners, who were being mustered to be victualled. He was wrapped up in one of the gregos, and many of the prisoners wore the same.

Jack was amused at not being recognised: he slipped down the main ladder, and had to stoop under the hammocks of the wounded men, and was about to go aft to the captain's cabin to report himself, when he heard young Gossett crying out, and the sound of the rope. "Hang me, if that brute Vigors ain't thrashing young Gossett," thought Jack. "I dare say the poor fellow has had plenty of it since I have been away; I'll save him this time at least." Jack, wrapped up in his grego, went to the window of the berth, looked in, and found it was as he expected. He cried out in an angry voice, "*Mr. Vigors, I'll thank you to leave Gossett alone.*" At the sound of the voice Vigors turned round with his colt in his

hand, saw Jack's face at the window, and, impressed with the idea that the reappearance was supernatural, uttered a yell and fell down in a fit—little Gossett, also trembling in every limb, stared with his mouth open. Jack was satisfied, and immediately disappeared. He then went aft to the cabin, pushed by the servant, who was giving some orders from the captain to the officer on deck, and entering the cabin, where the captain was seated with two Spanish officers, took off his hat and said :

" Come on board, Captain Wilson."

Captain Wilson did not fall down in a fit, but he jumped up and upset the glass before him.

" Merciful God ! Mr. Easy, where did you come from ?"

" From that ship astern, sir," replied Jack.

" That ship astern ! what is she ?—where have you been so long ? "

" It's a long story, sir," replied Jack.

Captain Wilson extended his hand and shook Jack's heartily.

" At all events, I'm delighted to see you, boy : now sit down and tell me your story in a few words; we will have it in detail by-and-by."

" If you please, sir," said Jack, " we captured that ship with the cutter the night after we went away—I'm not a first-rate navigator, and I was blown to the Zaffarine Islands, where I remained two months for want of hands : as soon as I procured them I made sail again—I have lost three men by sharks, and I have two wounded in to-day's fight—the ship mounts twelve guns, is half laden with lead and cotton prints, has fourteen thousand dollars in the cabin, and three shot-holes right through her—and the sooner you send some people on board of her the better."

This was not very intelligible, but that there were fourteen thousand dollars, and that she required hands sent on board, was very satisfactorily explained. Captain Wilson rang the bell, sent for Mr. Asper, who started back at the sight of our hero—desired him to order Mr. Jolliffe to go on board with one of the cutters, send the wounded men on board, and take charge of the vessel, and then told Jack to accompany Mr. Jolliffe, and to give him every information; telling him that he would hear his story to-morrow, when they were not so very busy.

CHAPTER XIV

As Captain Wilson truly said, he was too busy even to hear Jack's story that night, for they were anxious to have both vessels ready to make sail as soon as a breeze should spring up, for the Spaniards had vessels of war at Carthagena, which was not ten miles off, and had known the result of the action: it was therefore necessary to change their position as soon as possible. Mr. Sawbridge was on board the prize, which was a corvette mounting two guns more than the *Harpy*, and called the *Cacafuogo*.

She had escaped from Cadiz, run through the straits in the night, and was three miles from Carthagena when she was captured, which she certainly never would have been but for Jack's fortunately blundering against the cape with his armed vessel, so that Captain Wilson and Mr. Sawbridge (both of whom were promoted, the first to the rank of post-captain, the second to that of commander), may be said to be indebted to Jack for their good fortune. The *Harpy* had lost nineteen men, killed and wounded, and the Spanish corvette forty-seven. Altogether, it was a very creditable affair.

At two o'clock in the morning, the vessels were ready, everything had been done that could be done in so short a time, and they stood under easy sail during the night for Gibraltar, the *Nostra Señora del Carmen*, under the charge of Jolliffe, keeping company. Jolliffe had the advantage over his shipmates, of first hearing Jack's adventures, with which he was much astonished as well as amused—even Captain Wilson was not more happy to see Jack than was the worthy master's mate. About nine o'clock the *Harpy* hove-to, and sent a boat on board for our hero and the men who had been so long with him in the prize, and then hoisted out the pinnace to fetch on board the dollars, which were of more importance. Jack, as he bade adieu to Jolliffe, took out of his pocket and presented him with the *articles of war*, which, as they had been so useful to him, he thought Jolliffe could not do without, and then went down the side: the men were already in the boat, casting imploring looks upon Jack, to raise feelings of compassion, and Mesty took his seat by our

hero in a very sulky humour, probably because he did not like the idea of having again "to boil de kettle for de young gentlemen."

Jack's narration, as may be imagined, occupied a large part of the forenoon; and, although Jack did not attempt to deny that he had seen the recall signal of Mr. Sawbridge, yet, as his account went on, the captain became so interested that at the end of it he quite forgot to point out to Jack the impropriety of not obeying orders. He gave Jack great credit for his conduct, and was also much pleased with that of Mesty. Jack succeeded in obtaining the pardon of the men, in consideration of their subsequent good behaviour; but notwithstanding this promise on the part of Captain Wilson, they were ordered to be put in irons for the present. However, Jack told Mesty, and Mesty told the men, that they would be released with a reprimand when they arrived at Gibraltar, so all that the men cared for was a fair wind.

Captain Wilson informed Jack that after his joining the admiral he had been sent to Malta with the prizes, and that, supposing the cutter to have been sunk, he had written to his father, acquainting him with his son's death, at which our hero was much grieved, for he knew what sorrow it would occasion, particularly to his poor mother. "But," thought Jack, "if she is unhappy for three months, she will be overjoyed for three more when she hears that I am alive, so it will be all square at the end of the six; and so soon as I arrive at Gibraltar I will write, and, as the wind is fair, that will be to-morrow or next day."

After a long conversation Jack was graciously dismissed, Captain Wilson being satisfied from what he had heard that Jack would turn out a very good officer, and had already forgotten all about equality and the rights of man; but there Captain Wilson was mistaken.

Jack went on deck as soon as the captain had dismissed him, and found the captain and officers of the Spanish corvette standing aft, looking very seriously at the *Nostra Señora del Carmen*. When they saw our hero, who Captain Wilson had told them was the young officer who had barred their entrance into Carthagena, they turned their eyes upon him not quite so graciously as they might have done.

Jack, with his usual politeness, took off his hat to the Spanish captain, and, glad to have an opportunity of sporting his Spanish, expressed the usual wish that he might live a thousand years. The Spanish captain was equally complimentary. Captain Wilson, who understood a little Spanish, then interrupted by observing:

"By-the-bye, Mr. Easy, what colours did you hoist up? we could not make them out. I see Mr. Jolliffe still keeps them up at the peak."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, rather puzzled what to call them, but at last he replied that it was the banner of equality and the rights of man.

Captain Wilson frowned, and Jack, perceiving that he was displeased, then told him the whole story, whereupon Captain Wilson laughed, and Jack then also explained, in Spanish, to the officers of the corvette.

Jack was in high favour with the captain and all the ship's company, with the exception of his four enemies—the master, Vigors, the boatswain, and the purser's steward. As for Mr. Vigors, he had come to his senses again, and had put his colt in his chest until Jack should take another cruise. Little Gossett, at any insulting remark made by Vigors, pointed to the window of the berth and grinned; and the very recollection made Vigors turn pale, and awed him into silence.

In two days they arrived at Gibraltar—Mr. Sawbridge rejoined the ship—so did Mr. Jolliffe—they remained there a fortnight, during which Jack was permitted to be continually on shore—Mr. Asper accompanied him, and Jack drew a heavy bill to prove to his father that he was still alive. Mr. Sawbridge made our hero relate to him all his adventures, and was so pleased with the conduct of Mesty, that he appointed him to a situation which was particularly suited to him—that of ship's corporal. Mr. Sawbridge knew that it was an office of trust, and provided that he could find a man fit for it, he was very indifferent about his colour. Mesty walked and strutted about at least three inches taller than he was before. He was always clean, did his duty conscientiously, and seldom used his cane.

"I think, Mr. Easy," said the first lieutenant, "that as you are so particularly fond of taking a cruise"—for

Jack had told the whole truth—"it might be as well that you improve your navigation."

"I do think myself, sir," replied Jack, with great modesty, "that I am not yet quite perfect."

"Well, then, Mr. Jolliffe will teach you; he is the most competent in this ship: the sooner you ask him the better, and if you learn it as fast as you have Spanish, it will not give you much trouble."

Jack thought the advice good: the next day he was very busy with his friend Jolliffe, and made the important discovery that two parallel lines continued to infinity would never meet.

It must not be supposed that Captain Wilson and Mr. Sawbridge received their promotion instanter. Promotion is always attended with delay, as there is a certain routine in the service which must not be departed from. Captain Wilson had orders to return to Malta after his cruise. He therefore carried his own despatches away from England—from Malta the despatches had to be forwarded to Toulon to the admiral, and then the admiral had to send to England to the Admiralty, whose reply had to come out again. All this, with the delays arising from vessels not sailing immediately, occupied an interval of between five and six months—during which time there was no alteration in the officers and crew of his Majesty's sloop *Harpy*.

There had, however, been one alteration; the gunner, Mr. Minus, who had charge of the first cutter in the night action in which our hero was separated from his ship, carelessly loading his musket, had found himself minus his right hand, which, upon the musket going off as he rammed down, had gone off too. He was invalided and sent home during Jack's absence, and another had been appointed, whose name was Tallboys. Mr. Tallboys was a stout dumpy man, with red face, and still redder hands; he had red hair and red whiskers, and he had read a good deal—for Mr. Tallboys considered that the gunner was the most important personage in the ship. He never came on deck without the gunner's vade-mecum in his pocket, with his hand always upon it to refer to it in a moment.

At Malta Jack got into another scrape. Although Mr.

Smallsole could not injure him, he was still Jack's enemy; the more so as Jack had become very popular: Vigors also submitted, planning revenge; but the parties in this instance were the boatswain and purser's steward. Jack still continued his forecastle conversation with Mesty; and the boatswain and purser's steward, probably from their respective ill-will towards our hero, had become great allies. Mr. Easthupp now put on his best jacket to walk the dog-watches with Mr. Biggs, and they took every opportunity to talk at our hero.

"It's my peculiar hopinion," said Mr. Easthupp, one evening, pulling at the frill of his shirt, "that a gentleman should behave as a gentleman, and that if a gentleman professes hopinions of hequality and such liberal sentiments, that he is bound as a gentleman to hact up to them."

"Very true, Mr. Easthupp; he is bound to act up to them; and not because a person, who was a gentleman as well as himself, happens not to be on the quarter-deck, to insult him because he only has perfessed opinions like his own."

Hereupon Mr. Biggs struck his rattan against the funnel, and looked at our hero.

"Yes," continued the purser's steward, "I should like to see the fellow who would have done so on shore: however, the time will come when I can hagain pull on my plain coat, and then the insult shall be vashed out in blood, Mr. Biggs."

All this was too plain for our hero not to understand, so Jack walked up to the boatswain, and taking his hat off, with the utmost politeness, said to him:

"If I mistake not, Mr. Biggs, your conversation refers to me."

"Very likely it does," replied the boatswain. "Listeners hear no good of themselves."

"It appears that gentlemen can't converse without being vatched," continued Mr. Easthupp, pulling up his shirt-collar.

"It is not the first time that you have thought proper to make very offensive remarks, Mr. Biggs; and as you appear to consider yourself ill-treated, I can only say," continued our hero, with a very polite bow, "that I shall be most happy to give you satisfaction."

"This is the gentleman whom you have insulted, Mr. Easy," replied the boatswain, pointing to the purser's steward.

"Yes, Mr. Heasy, quite as good a gentleman as yourself, although I av ad misfortune—I ham of as hold a family as hany in the country," replied Mr. Easthupp, now backed by the boatswain; "many the year did I valk Bond Street, and I ave as good blood in my veins as you, Mr. Heasy, halthough I have been misfortunate—I've ad hadmirals in my family."

"You have grossly insulted this gentleman," said Mr. Biggs, in continuation; "and notwithstanding all your talk of equality, you are afraid to give him satisfaction—you shelter yourself under your quarter-deck."

"Mr. Biggs," replied our hero, who was now very wroth, "I shall go on shore directly we arrive at Malta. Let you, and this fellow, put on plain clothes, and I will meet you both—and then I'll show you whether I am afraid to give satisfaction."

"One at a time," said the boatswain.

"No, sir, not one at a time, but both at the same time—I will fight both or none."

Mr. Biggs having declared that he would fight, of course had to look out for a second, and he fixed upon Mr. Tallboys, the gunner, and requested him to be his friend. Mr. Tallboys consented; but he was very much puzzled how to arrange that *three* were to fight at the same time, for he had no idea of there being two duels; so he went to his cabin and commenced reading. Jack, on the other hand, dared not say a word to Jolliffe on the subject: indeed, there was no one in the ship to whom he could confide but Gascoigne: he therefore went to him, and although Gascoigne thought it was excessively *infra dig.* of Jack to meet even the boatswain, as the challenge had been given there was no retracting: he therefore consented, like all midshipmen, anticipating fun, and quite thoughtless of the consequences.

The second day after they had been anchored in Valletta harbour, the boatswain and gunner, Jack and Gascoigne, obtained permission to go on shore. Mr. Easthupp, the purser's steward, dressed in his best blue coat with brass buttons and velvet collar, the very one in which he had

been taken up when he had been vowing and protesting that he was a gentleman, at the very time that his hand was abstracting a pocket book, went up on the quarter-deck, and requested the same indulgence, but Mr. Sawbridge refused, as he required him to return staves and hoops at the cooperage. Mesty also, much to his mortification, was not to be spared.

This was awkward, but it was got over by proposing that the meeting should take place behind the cooperage at a certain hour, on which Mr. Easthupp might slip out and borrow a portion of the time appropriated to his duty, to heal the breach in his wounded honour. So the parties all went on shore, and put up at one of the small inns to make the necessary arrangements.

Mr. Tallboys then addressed Mr. Gascoigne, taking him apart while the boatswain amused himself with a glass of grog, and our hero sat outside teasing a monkey.

"Mr. Gascoigne," said the gunner, "I have been very much puzzled how this duel should be fought, but I have at last found it out. You see that there are *three* parties to fight; had there been two or four there would have been no difficulty, as the right line or square might guide us in that instance; but we must arrange it upon the *triangle* in this."

Gascoigne stared; he could not imagine what was coming.

"Are you aware, Mr. Gascoigne, of the properties of an equilateral triangle?"

"Yes," replied the midshipman, "that it has three equal sides—but what has that to do with the duel?"

"Everything, Mr. Gascoigne," replied the gunner; "it has resolved the great difficulty: indeed, the duel between three can only be fought upon that principle. You observe," said the gunner, taking a piece of chalk out of his pocket, and making a triangle on the table, "in this figure we have three points, each equidistant from each other; and we have three combatants—so that placing one at each point, it is all fair play for the three: Mr. Easy, for instance, stands here, the boatswain here, and the purser's steward at the third corner. Now, if the distance is fairly measured, it will be all right."

"But then," replied Gascoigne, delighted at the idea, "how are they to fire?"

"It certainly is not of much consequence," replied the gunner, "but still, as sailors, it appears to me that they should fire with the sun; that is, Mr. Easy fires at Mr. Biggs, Mr. Biggs fires at Mr. Easthupp, and Mr. Easthupp fires at Mr. Easy, so that you perceive that each party has his shot at one, and at the same time receives the fire of another."

Gascoigne was in ecstasies at the novelty of the proceeding, the more so as he perceived that Easy obtained every advantage by the arrangement.

"Upon my word, Mr. Tallboys, I give you great credit; you have a profound mathematical head, and I am delighted with your arrangement. Of course, in these affairs, the principals are bound to comply with the arrangements of the seconds, and I shall insist upon Mr. Easy consenting to your excellent and scientific proposal."

Gascoigne went out, and pulling Jack away from the monkey told him what the gunner had proposed, at which Jack laughed heartily.

The gunner also explained it to the boatswain, who did not very well comprehend, but replied:

"I dare say it's all right—shot for shot."

The parties then repaired to the spot with two pairs of ship's pistols, which Mr. Tallboys had smuggled on shore; and, as soon as they were on the ground, the gunner called Mr. Easthupp out of the cooperage. In the meantime, Gascoigne had been measuring an equilateral triangle of twelve paces—and marked it out. Mr. Tallboys, on his return with the purser's steward, went over the ground, and finding that it was "equal angles subtended by equal sides," declared that it was all right. Easy took his station, the boatswain was put into his, and Mr. Easthupp, who was quite in a mystery, was led by the gunner to the third position.

"But, Mr. Tallboys," said the purser's steward, "I don't understand this. Mr. Easy will first fight Mr. Biggs, will he not?"

"No," replied the gunner, "this is a duel of three. You will fire at Mr. Easy, Mr. Easy will fire at Mr. Biggs, and Mr. Biggs will fire at you. It is all arranged, Mr. Easthupp."

"But," said Mr. Easthupp, "I do not understand it.

Why is Mr. Biggs to fire at me? I have no quarrel with Mr. Biggs."

"Because Mr. Easy fires at Mr. Biggs, and Mr. Biggs must have his shot as well."

"If you have ever been in the company of gentlemen, Mr. Easthupp," observed Gascoigne, "you must know something about duelling."

"Yes, yes, I've kept the best company, Mr. Gascoigne, and I can give a gentleman satisfaction; but——"

"Then, sir, if that is the case, you must know that your honour is in the hands of your second, and that no gentleman appeals."

"Yes, yes, I know that, Mr. Gascoigne; but still I've no quarrel with Mr. Biggs, and therefore, Mr. Biggs, of course you will not aim at me."

"Why, you don't think that I'm going to be fired at for nothing," replied the boatswain; "no, no, I'll have my shot anyhow."

"But at your friend, Mr. Biggs?"

"All the same, I shall fire at somebody; shot for shot, and hit the luckiest."

"Vel, gentlemen, I purtest against these proceedings," replied Mr. Easthupp; "I came here to have satisfaction from Mr. Easy, and not to be fired at by Mr. Biggs."

"Don't you have satisfaction when you fire at Mr. Easy?" replied the gunner; "what more would you have?"

"I purtest against Mr. Biggs firing at me."

"So you would have a shot without receiving one," cried Gascoigne: "the fact is, that this fellow's a confounded coward, and ought to be kicked into the coop-crage again."

At this affront Mr. Easthupp rallied, and accepted the pistol offered by the gunner.

"You ear those words, Mr. Biggs; pretty language to use to a gentleman. You shall ear from me, sir, as soon as the ship is paid off. I purtest no longer, Mr. Tallboys; death before dishonour. I'm a gentleman, I ham!"

At all events, the swell was not a very courageous gentleman, for he trembled most exceedingly as he pointed his pistol.

The gunner gave the word, as if he were exercising the great guns on board ship.

"Cock your locks!"—"Take good aim at the object!"—"Fire!"

Mr. Easthupp gave a loud yell, and then dropped down. Jack's shot had also taken effect, having passed through both the boatswain's cheeks, without further mischief than extracting two of his best upper double teeth, and forcing through the hole of the farther cheek the boatswain's own quid of tobacco. As for Mr. Easthupp's ball, as he was very unsettled, and shut his eyes before he fired, it had gone goodness knows where.

The purser's steward lay on the ground and screamed—the boatswain spit his double teeth and two or three mouthfuls of blood out, and then threw down his pistols in a rage.

"A pretty business," sputtered he; "he's put my pipe out. How am I to pipe to dinner when I'm ordered, all my wind 'scaping through the cheeks?"

In the meantime, the others had gone to the assistance of the purser's steward, who continued his vociferations.

"Hold your confounded bawling," cried the gunner, "or you'll have the guard down here: you're not hurt."

"Han't hi?" roared the steward. "Oh, let me die. let me die; don't move me!"

"Nonsense," cried the gunner, "you must get up and walk down to the boat; if you don't we'll leave you—hold your tongue, confound you. You won't? then I'll give you something to halloo for."

Whereupon Mr. Tallboys commenced cuffing the poor wretch right and left, who received so many swinging boxes of the ear, that he was soon reduced to merely pitiful plaints of "Oh, dear!—such inhumanity—I purtest—oh, dear! must I get up? I can't, indeed."

"I do not think he can move, Mr. Tallboys," said Gascoigne; "I should think the best plan would be to call up two of the men from the cooperage, and let them take him at once to the hospital."

The gunner went down to the cooperage to call the men. Mr. Biggs, who had bound up his face as if he had a toothache, for the bleeding had been very slight, came up to the purser's steward.

"What are you making such a howling about? Look at me, with two shot-holes through my figure-head: I wish I could change with you, by heavens, for I could use my whistle then—now if I attempt to pipe, there will be such a wasteful expenditure of his Majesty's stores of wind, that I never shall get out a note. A wicked shot of yours, Mr. Easy."

"I really am very sorry," replied Jack, with a polite bow, "and I beg to offer my best apology."

During this conversation, the purser's steward felt very faint, and thought he was going to die.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what a fool I was; I never was a gentleman—only a swell: I shall die; I never will pick a pocket again—never—never—God forgive me!"

"Why, confound the fellow," cried Gascoigne, "so you were a pickpocket, were you?"

"I never will again," replied the fellow, in a faint voice: "Hi'll hamend and lead a good life—a drop of water—oh! *lagged* at last!"

Then the poor wretch fainted away: and Mr. Tallboys coming up with the men, he was taken on their shoulders and walked off to the hospital, attended by the gunner and also the boatswain, who thought he might as well have a little medical advice before he went on board.

"Well, Easy," said Gascoigne, collecting the pistols and trying them up in his handkerchief, "I'll be shot, but we're in a pretty scrape; there's no hushing this up. I'll be hanged if I care, it's the best piece of fun I ever met with." And at the remembrance of it Gascoigne laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. Jack's mirth was not quite so excessive, as he was afraid that the purser's steward was severely hurt, and expressed his fears.

"At all events, you did not hit him," replied Gascoigne; "all you have to answer for is the boatswain's mug—I think you've stopped his jaw for the future."

"I'm afraid that our leave will be stopped for the future," replied Jack.

"That we may take our oaths of," replied Gascoigne.

"Then look you, Ned," said Easy; "I've lots of dollars; we may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, as the saying is; I vote that we do not go on board."

"Sawbridge will send and fetch us," replied Ned; "but he must find us first."

"That won't take long, for the soldiers will soon have our description and rout us out—we shall be pinned in a couple of days."

"Confound it, and they say that the ship is to be hove down, and that we shall be here six weeks at least, cooped up on board in a broiling sun, and nothing to do but to watch the pilot fish playing round the rudder, and munch bad apricots. I won't go on board; look ye, Jack," said Gascoigne, "have you plenty of money?"

"I have twenty doubloons, besides dollars," replied Jack.

"Well, then we will pretend to be so much alarmed at the result of this duel, that we dare not show ourselves, lest we should be hung. I will write a note, and send it to Jolliffe, to say that we have hid ourselves until the affair is blown over, and beg him to intercede with the captain and first lieutenant. I will tell him all the particulars, and refer to the gunner for the truth of it; and then I know that, although we should be punished, they will only laugh; but I will pretend that Easthupp is killed, and we are frightened out of our lives. That will be it; and then let's get on board one of the speronares which come with fruit from Sicily, sail in the night for Palermo, and then we'll have a cruise for a fortnight, and when the money is all gone we'll come back."

"That's a capital idea, Ned, and the sooner we do it the better. I will write to the captain, begging him to get me off from being hung, and telling him where we have fled to, and that letter shall be given after we have sailed."

They were two very nice lads—our hero and Gascoigne.

CHAPTER XV

Gascoigne and our hero were neither of them in uniform, and they hastened to Nix Mangare stairs, where they soon picked up the padrone of a speronare. They

went with him into a wine-shop, and with the assistance of a little English from a Maltese boy, they made a bargain, by which it was agreed that, for the consideration of two doubloons, he would sail that evening and land them at Gergenti or some other town in Sicily, providing them with something to eat and gregos to sleep upon.

Our two midshipmen then went back to the tavern from which they had set off to fight the duel, and ordering a good dinner to be served in a back room, they amused themselves with killing flies, as they talked over the events of the day, and waited for their dinner.

Jack and Gascoigne ate a very good dinner, sent for the monkey to amuse them till it was dark, and there waited till the padrone came to them.

"What shall we do with the pistols, Easy?"

"Take them with us, and load them before we go—we may want them: who knows but there may be a mutiny on board of the speronare?—I wish we had Mesty with us."

They loaded the pistols, took a pair each and put them in their waists, concealed under their clothes—divided the ammunition between them, and soon afterwards the padrone came to tell them all was ready.

Whereupon Messrs. Gascoigne and Easy paid their bill and rose to depart, but the padrone informed them that he should like to see the colour of their money before they went on board. Jack, very indignant at the insinuation that he had not sufficent cash, pulled out a handful of doubloons, and tossing two to the padrone, asked him if he was satisfied.

The padrone untied his sash, put in the money, and with many thanks and protestations of service, begged our young gentlemen to accompany him: they did so, and in a few minutes were clear of Nix Mangare stairs, and, passing close to his Majesty's ship *Harpy*, were soon out of the harbour of Valletta.

The night was clear, and the stars shone out brilliantly as the light craft skimmed over the water, and a fragment of a descending and waning moon threw its soft beams upon the snow-white sail. The vessel, which had no deck, was full of baskets, which had contained grapes and various fruits brought from the ancient granary of

Rome. The crew consisted of the padrone, two men and a boy; the three latter, with their gregos, or night great-coats with hoods, sitting forward before the sail, with their eyes fixed on the land as they flew past point after point.

The padrone remained aft at the helm, offering every politeness to our two young gentlemen, who only wished to be left alone. At last they requested the padrone to give them gregos to lie down upon, as they wished to go to sleep. He called the boy to take the helm, procured them all they required, and then went forward. And our two midshipmen lay down, looking at the stars above them, for some minutes, without exchanging a word.

At last Gascoigne said :

"Jack, what do you say—shall we keep watch to-night?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, I have been thinking the same thing—I don't much like the looks of the padrone—he squints."

"That's no proof of anything, Jack, except that his eyes are not straight; but if you do not like the look of him, I can tell you that he very much liked the look of your doubloons—I saw him start, and his eyes twinkled, and I thought at the time it was a pity you had not paid him in dollars."

"It was very foolish in me; but at all events he has not seen all."

"He saw quite enough, Ned."

"Very true, but you should have let him see the pistols, and not have let him see the doubloons."

"Well, if he wishes to take what he has seen, he shall receive what he has not seen—why, there are only four of them!"

"Oh, I have no fear of them, only it may be as well to sleep with one eye open."

"When shall we make the land?"

"To-morrow evening with this wind, and it appears to be steady. Suppose we keep watch and watch, and have our pistols out ready, with the greatcoats just turned over them, to keep them out of sight?"

"Agreed—it's about twelve o'clock now—who shall keep the middle watch?"

"I will, Jack, if you like."

"Well, then, mind you kick me hard, for I sleep very sound. Good-night, and keep a sharp lookout."

Jack was fast asleep in less than ten minutes; and Gascoigne, with his pistols lying by him all ready for each hand, sat up in the bottom of the boat.

There certainly is a peculiar providence in favour of midshipmen compared with the rest of mankind; they have more lives than a cat—always in the greatest danger, but always escaping from it.

The padrone of the vessel had been captivated with the doubloons which Jack had so foolishly exposed to his view, and he had, moreover, resolved to obtain them. At the very time that our two lads were conversing aft, the padrone was talking the matter over with his two men forward, and it was agreed that they should murder, rifle, and then throw them overboard.

About two o'clock in the morning, the padrone came aft to see if they were asleep, but found Gascoigne watching. He returned aft again and again, but found the young man still sitting up. Tired of waiting, anxious to possess the money, and not supposing that the lads were armed, he went once more forward and spoke to the men. Gascoigne had watched his motions; he thought it singular that, with three men in the vessel, the helm should be confided to the boy—and at last he saw them draw their knives. He pushed our hero, who woke immediately. Gascoigne put his hand over Jack's mouth, that he might not speak, and then he whispered his suspicions. Jack seized his pistols—they both cocked them without noise, and then waited in silence, Jack still lying down while Gascoigne continued to sit up in the bottom of the boat. At last Gascoigne saw the three men coming aft—he dropped one of his pistols for a second to give Jack a squeeze of the hand, which was returned, and as Gascoigne watched them making their way through the piles of empty baskets he leaned back as if he was slumbering. The padrone, followed by the two men, was at last aft—they paused a moment before they stepped over the strengthening plank, which ran from side to side of the boat between them and the midshipmen, and as neither of them stirred they imagined that both were asleep—advanced and raised their knives, when Gascoigne

and Jack, almost at the same moment, each discharged their pistols into the breast of the padrone and one of the men, who was with him in advance, who both fell with the send aft of the boat, so as to encumber the midshipmen with the weight of their bodies. The third man started back. Jack, who could not rise, from the padrone lying across his legs, took a steady aim with his second pistol, and the third man fell. The boy at the helm, who, it appeared, either was aware of what was to be done, or seeing the men advance with their knives, had acted upon what he saw, also drew his knife and struck at Gascoigne from behind. The knife fortunately, after slightly wounding Gascoigne on the shoulder, had shut on the boy's hand—Gascoigne sprang up with his other pistol, the boy started back at the sight of it, lost his balance, and fell overboard.

Our two midshipmen took a few seconds to breathe.

"I say, Jack," said Gascoigne at last, "did you ever——"

"No, I never——" replied Jack.

"I should think that not impossible."

"What shall we do with them?"

"We will argue that point, Ned—we must either keep their bodies or we must throw them overboard. Either tell the whole story or say nothing about it."

"Suppose we throw their bodies overboard, toss the baskets after them, wash the boat clean, and make for the first port. We may chance to hit upon the very spot from which they sailed, and then there will be a pack of wives and children, and a populace with knives, asking us what has become of the men of the boat."

"I don't much like the idea of that," said Jack.

"And if we don't have such bad luck, still we shall be interrogated as to who we are, and how we were adrift by ourselves."

"I have it," said Jack—"we are two young gentlemen in our own boat who went out to Gozo with pistols to shoot sea-mews, were caught in a gale, and blown down to Sicily—that will excite interest."

"That's the best idea yet, as it will account for our having nothing in the boat. Well then, at all events, we will get rid of the bodies; but suppose they are not

dead. Go and examine the men, you had better keep your pistol ready cocked, for they may be shamming."

"No sham here, anyhow," replied Jack, pulling at the body of the padrone, "and as for this fellow you shot, you might put your fist into his chest. Now for the third," continued Jack, stepping over the strengthening piece—"he's all among the baskets. I say, are you dead?" and Jack enforced his question with a kick in the ribs. The man groaned.

Jack went forward and lowered down the sail. "I've half a mind to take my doubloons back," said Jack, as they launched over the body of the padrone, "but he may have them—I wonder whether they'll ever turn up again?"

"Not in our time, Jack," replied Gascoigne.

The other body, and all the basket lumber, etc., were then tossed over, and the boat was cleared of all but the man who was not yet dead.

"Now let's examine the fellow, and see if he has any chance of recovery," said Gascoigne.

The man lay on his side; Gascoigne turned him over, and found that he was dead.

"Over with him, quick," said Jack, "before he comes to life again."

The body disappeared under the wave—they again hoisted the sail, Gascoigne took the helm, and our hero proceeded to draw water and wash away the stains of blood; he then cleared the boat of vine-leaves and rubbish, with which it was strewed, swept it clean fore and aft, and resumed his seat by his comrade.

"There," said Jack, "now we've swept the decks, we may pipe to dinner. I wonder whether there is anything to eat in the locker?"

Jack opened it, and found some bread, garlic, sausages, a bottle of aquadente, and a jar of wine.

"So the padrone did keep his promise, after all."

Having finished their meal, Jack went forward and observed the land ahead; they steered the same course for three or four hours.

"The breeze freshens, Jack," said Gascoigne; "and it begins to look very dirty to windward. I think we shall have a gale."

"Pleasant—I know what it is to be short-handed in a gale; however, there's one comfort, we shall not be blown *off shore* this time."

"No, but we may be wrecked on a lee shore. She cannot carry her whole sail, Easy; we must lower it down, and take in a reef; the sooner the better, for it will be dark in an hour. Go forward and lower it down, and then I'll help you."

Jack did so, but the sail went into the water, and he could not drag it in.

"Avast heaving," said Gascoigne, "till I throw her up and take the wind out of it."

This was done; they reefed the sail, but could not hoist it up: if Gascoigne left the helm to help Jack, the sail filled; if he went to the helm and took the wind out of the sail, Jack was not strong enough to hoist it. The wind increased rapidly, and the sea got up; the sun went down, and with the sail half hoisted, they could not keep to the wind, but were obliged to run right for the land. The speronare flew, rising on the crest of the waves with half her keel clear of the water: the moon was already up, and gave them light enough to perceive that they were not five miles from the coast, which was lined with foam.

"At all events, they can't accuse us of running away with the boat," observed Jack; "for she's running away with us."

"Yes," replied Gascoigne, dragging at the tiller with all his strength; "she has taken the bit between her teeth."

"I wouldn't care if I had a bit between mine," replied Jack; "for I feel hungry again. What do you say, Ned?"

Jack handed him a huge piece of bread and sausage.

"Thank ye, I cannot eat."

"I can," replied Jack, with his mouth full.

Jack ate while Gascoigne steered; and the rapidity with which the speronare rushed to the beach was almost frightful. She darted like an arrow from wave to wave, and appeared as if mocking their attempts as they curled their summits almost over her narrow stern. They were within a mile of the beach, when Jack, who had finished his supper, and was looking at the foam boiling on the coast, exclaimed:

"That's very fine—very beautiful, upon my soul!"

"He cares for nothing," thought Gascoigne; "he appears to have no idea of danger. Now, my dear fellow," said he, "in a few minutes we shall be on the rocks. I must continue at the helm, for the higher she is forced up the better chance for us; but we may not meet again, so if we do not, good-bye, and God bless you."

"Gascoigne," said Jack, "you are hurt and I am not; your shoulder is stiff, and you can hardly move your left arm. Now I can steer for the rocks as well as you. Do you go to the bow, and there you will have a better chance. By-the-bye," continued he, picking up his pistols, and sticking them into his waist, "I won't leave them, they've served us too good a turn already. Gascoigne, give me the helm."

"No, no, Easy."

"I say yes," replied Jack, in a loud, authoritative tone, "and what's more, I will be obeyed, Gascoigne, I have nerve, if I haven't knowledge, and at all events I can steer for the beach. I tell you, give me the helm. Well, then, if you won't—I must take it."

Easy wrested the tiller from Gascoigne's hand, and gave him a shove forward.

"Now do you look out ahead, and tell me how to steer."

Whatever may have been Gascoigne's feelings at this behaviour of our hero's, it immediately occurred to him that he could not do better than to run the speronare to the safest point, and that therefore he was probably more advantageously employed than if he were at the helm. He went forward and looked at the rocks, covered at one moment with the tumultuous waters, and then pouring down cascades from their sides as the waves recoiled. He perceived a chasm right ahead, and he thought if the boat was steered for that, she must be thrown up so as to enable them to get clear of her, for at every other part escape appeared impossible.

"Starboard a little—that'll do. Steady—port it is—port. Steer small, for your life, Easy. Steady now—mind the yard don't hit your head—hold on."

The speronare was at this moment thrown into a large cleft in a rock, the sides of which were nearly perpendi-

cular; nothing else could have saved them, as, had they struck the rock outside, the boat would have been dashed to pieces, and its fragments have disappeared in the under-tow. As it was, the cleft was not four feet more than the width of the boat, and as the waves hurled her up into it, the yard of the speronare was thrown fore and aft with great violence, and had not Jack been warned, he would have been struck overboard without a chance of being saved; but he crouched down and it passed over him. As the water receded, the boat struck, and was nearly dry between the rocks, but another wave followed, dashing the boat farther up, but, at the same time, filling it with water. The bow of the boat was now several feet higher than the stern, where Jack held on; and the weight of the water in her, with the force of the returning waves, separated her right across abaft the mast. Jack perceived that the after-part of the boat was going out again with the wave; he caught hold of the yard which had swung fore and aft, and as he clung to it, the part of the boat on which he had stood disappeared from under him, and was swept away by the returning current.

Jack required the utmost of his strength to maintain his position until another wave floated him, and dashed him higher up: but he knew his life depended on holding on to the yard, which he did, although under water, and advanced several feet. When the wave receded, he found footing on the rock, and still clinging, he walked till he had gained the fore-part of the boat, which was wedged firmly into a narrow part of the cleft. The next wave was not very large, and he had gained so much that it did not throw him off his legs. He reached the rock, and as he climbed up the side of the chasm to gain the ledge above, he perceived Gascoigne standing above him, and holding out his hand to his assistance.

"Well," says Jack, shaking himself to get rid of the water, "here we are, ashore at last—I had no idea of anything like this. I wonder whether the ammunition's dry. I put it all in my hat."

Jack took off his hat, and found the cartridges had not suffered.

"Now then, Gascoigne, what shall we do?"

"I hardly know," replied Gascoigne.

"Suppose, then, we sit down and argue the point."

"No, I thank you, there will be too much cold water thrown upon our arguments—I'm half dead; let us walk on."

"With all my heart," said Jack, "it's steep, but I can argue up hill or down hill, wet or dry—I'm used to it—for, as I told you before, Ned, my father is a philosopher, and so am I."

"*You are*," replied Gascoigne, as he walked on.

CHAPTER XVI

Our hero and his comrade climbed the precipice, and, after some minutes' severe toil, arrived at the summit, They proceeded over a flat of a hundred yards, and then descended—the change in the atmosphere was immediate. As they continued their march inland, they came to a high-road, which appeared to run along the shore, and they turned into it; for, as Jack said very truly, a road must lead to something. After a quarter of an hour's walk, they again heard the rolling of the surf. and perceived the white walls of houses.

"Here we are at last," said Jack. "How the dogs bark! I think we shall do very well this time, Gascoigne: we do not look as if we were worth robbing, at all events, and we have the pistols to defend ourselves with if we are attacked, Depend upon it I will show no more gold. And now let us make our arrangements. Take you one pistol, and take half the gold—I have it all in my right-hand pocket—my dollars in my left. You shall take half of them too. We have silver enough to go on with till we are in a safe place."

Jack then divided the money in the dark, and also gave Gascoigne a pistol.

"Now then, shall we knock for admittance?—Let's first walk through the village, and see if there's anything like an inn. Those yelping curs will soon be at our

heels; they come nearer and nearer every time. There's a cart, and it's full of straw—suppose we go to bed till to-morrow morning—we shall be warm, at all events."

Our two midshipmen climbed up into the cart, nestled themselves into the straw, or rather Indian corn-leaves, and were soon fast asleep. As they had not slept for two nights, it is not to be wondered at that they slept soundly—so soundly, indeed, that about two hours after they had got into their comfortable bed, the peasant, who had brought to the village some casks of wine to be shipped and taken down the coast in a felucca, yoked his bullocks, and not being aware of his freight, drove off without, in any way, disturbing their repose.

The jolting of the roads rather increased than disturbed the sleep of our adventurers; and, although there were some rude shocks, it only had the effect of making them fancy in their dreams that they were again in the boat, and that she was still dashing against the rocks. In about two hours, the cart arrived at its destination—the peasant unyoked his bullocks and led them away. The stopping of the motion of the cart disturbed the rest of our two midshipmen; they turned round in the straw, yawned, spread out their arms, and then awoke. Gascoigne, who felt considerable pain in his shoulder, was the first to recall his scattered senses.

"Easy," cried he, as he sat up and shook off the corn-leaves.

"Port it is," said Jack, half dreaming.

"Come, Easy, you are not on board now. Rouse and bitt."

Jack then sat up and looked at Gascoigne. The forage in the cart was so high round them that they could not see above it; they rubbed their eyes, yawned, and looked at each other.

"We had better not remain here any longer," said Gascoigne, "and it occurs to me, that if we tore our clothes more, it would be advisable—we shall, in the first place, look more wretched; and, in the next place, can replace them with the dress of the country, and so travel without exciting suspicion. You know that I can speak Italian pretty well."

"I have no objection to tear my clothes if you wish,"

replied Jack; "at the same time give me your pistol; I will draw the charges and load them again. They must be wet."

Having reloaded the pistols and rent their garments, the two midshipmen stood up in the cart and looked about them.

"Halloo!—why, how's this, Gascoigne? last night we were close to the beach, and among houses, and now—where are we? The cart has certainly taken a cruise."

As it afterwards was known to them, the speronare had sailed from the very seaport in which they had arrived that night, and where they had got into the cart. The wreck of the speronare had been found, and had been recognised, and it was considered by the inhabitants that the padrone and his crew had perished in the gale.

On a minute survey, they found that they were in an open space which, apparently, had been used for thrashing and winnowing maize, and that the cart was standing under a clump of trees in the shade.

"There ought to be a house hereabouts," said Gascoigne; "I should think that behind the trees we shall find one. Come, Jack, you are as hungry as I am, I'll answer for it; we must look out for a breakfast somewhere."

They went through the copse of wood, which was very thick, and soon discovered the wall of a large house on the other side.

"All right," said Jack; "but still let us reconnoitre. It's not a farm-house; it must belong to a person of some consequence—all the better—they will see that we are gentlemen, notwithstanding our tattered dress. I wish I was sitting down at the mess-table—but what's that? a woman screaming?—Yes, by heavens!—come along, Ned." And away he dashed towards the house, followed by Gascoigne. As they advanced the screams redoubled; they entered the porch, burst into the room from whence they proceeded, and found an elderly gentleman defending himself against two young men, who were held back by an elderly and a young lady. Our hero and his comrade had both drawn their pistols, and just as they burst open the door, the old gentleman who defended himself against such odds had fallen down. The two others burst from the women, and were about to pierce him with their swords, when Jack seized one by the collar of his coat

and held him fast, pointing the muzzle of the pistol to his ear: Gascoigne did the same to the other. It was a very dramatic tableau. The two women flew to the elderly gentleman and raised him up; the two assailants being held just as dogs hold pigs by the ear, trembling with fright, with the points of their rapiers dropped, looked at the midshipmen and the muzzles of their pistols with equal dismay; at the same time, the astonishment of the elderly gentleman and the women, at such an unexpected deliverance, was equally great. There was a silence for a few seconds.

"Ned," at last said Jack, "tell these chaps to drop their swords, or we fire."

Gascoigne gave the order in Italian, and it was complied with. The midshipmen then possessed themselves of the rapiers, and gave the young men their liberty.

The elderly gentleman at last broke the silence.

"It would appear, signors, that there was an especial interference of Providence, to prevent you from committing a foul and unjust murder. Who these are that have so opportunely come to my rescue, I know not, but thanking them as I do now, I think that you will yourselves, when you are calm, also thank them for having prevented you from committing an act which would have loaded you with remorse and embittered your future existence. Gentlemen, you are free to depart: you, Don Silvio, have indeed disappointed me; your gratitude should have rendered you incapable of such conduct: as for you, Don Scipio, you have been misled; but you both have, in one point, disgraced yourselves. Ten days back my sons were both here—why did you not come then? If you sought revenge on me, you could not have inflicted it deeper than through my children, and at least you would not have acted the part of assassins in attacking an old man. Take your swords, gentlemen, and use them better henceforth. Against future attacks I shall be well prepared."

Gascoigne, who perfectly understood what was said, presented the sword to the young gentleman from whom he had taken it—our hero did the same. The two young men returned them to their sheaths, and quitted the room without saying a word.

Whoever you are, I owe to you and thank you for my life," said the elderly gentleman, scanning the outward appearance of our two midshipmen.

"We are," said Gascoigne, "officers in the English navy, and gentlemen; we were wrecked in our boat last night, and have wandered here in the dark, seeking for assistance, and food, and some conveyance to Palermo, where we shall find friends, and the means of appearing like gentlemen."

"Was your ship wrecked, gentlemen?" inquired the Sicilian, "and many lives lost?"

"No, our ship is at Malta; we were in a boat on a party of pleasure, were caught by a gale, and driven on the coast. To satisfy you of the truth, observe that our pistols have the king's mark, and that we are not paupers, we show you gold."

Gascoigne pulled out his doubloons—and Jack did the same, coolly observing:

"I thought we were only to show silver, Ned!"

"It needed not that," replied the gentleman; "your conduct in this affair, your manners and address, fully convince me that you are what you represent—but were you common peasants, I am equally indebted to you for my life, and you may command me. Tell me in what way I can be of service."

"In giving us something to eat, for we have had nothing for many, many hours. After that we may, perhaps, trespass a little more upon your kind offices."

"You must, of course, be surprised at what has passed, and curious to know the occasion," said the gentlemen, "you have a right to be informed of it, and shall be, as soon as you are more comfortable; in the meantime, allow me to introduce myself as Don Rebiera de Silva."

"I wish," said Jack, who, from his knowledge of Spanish, could understand the whole of the last part of the Don's speech, "that he would introduce us to his breakfast."

"So do I," said Gascoigne; "but we must wait a little—he ordered the ladies to prepare something instantly."

"Your friend does not speak Italian," said Don Rebiera.

"No, Don Rebiera, he speaks French and Spanish."

"If he speaks Spanish my daughter can converse with him; she has but shortly arrived from Spain. We are closely united with a noble house in that country."

Don Rebiera then led the way to another room, and in a short time there was a repast brought in, to which our midshipmen did great justice.

"I will now," said the Don, "relate to you, sir, for the information of yourself and friend, the causes which produced this scene of violence, which you so opportunely defeated. But first, as it must be very tedious to your friend, I will send for Donna Clara and my daughter Agnes to talk to him; my wife understands a little Spanish, and my daughter, as I said before, has but just left the country, where, from circumstances, she remained some years."

As soon as Donna Clara and Donna Agnes made their appearance and were introduced, Jack who had not before paid attention to them, said to himself, "I have seen a face like that girl's before." If so, he had never seen many like it, for it was the quintessence of brunette beauty, and her figure was equally perfect; although, not having yet completed her fifteenth year, it required still a little more development.

Donna Clara was extremely gracious, and as, perhaps, she was aware that her voice would drown that of her husband, she proposed to our hero to walk in the garden, and in a few minutes they took their seats in a pavilion at the end of it. The old lady did not talk much Spanish, but when at a loss for a word she put in an Italian one, and Jack understood her perfectly well. She told him her sister had married a Spanish nobleman many years since, and that before the war broke out between the Spanish and the English, they had gone over with all their children to see her; that when they wished to return, her daughter Agnes, then a child, was suffering under a lingering complaint, and it was thought advisable, as she was very weak, to leave her under the charge of her aunt, who had a little girl of nearly the same age; that they were educated together at a convent near Tarragona, and that she had only returned two months ago; that she had a very narrow escape, as the ship in which her uncle,

and aunt, and cousins, as well as herself, were on board, returning from Genoa, had been captured in the night by the English; but the officer, who was very polite, had allowed them to go away next day, and very handsomely permitted them to take all their effects.

"Oh, oh," thought Jack; "I thought I had seen her face before; this then was one of the girls in the corner of the cabin—now, I'll have some fun."

During the conversation with the mother, Donna Agnes had remained some paces behind, picking now and then a flower, and not attending to what passed.

When our hero and her mother sat down in the pavilion she joined them, when Jack addressed her with his usual politeness.

"I am almost ashamed to be sitting by you, Donna Agnes, in this ragged dress—but the rocks of your coast have no respect for persons."

"We are under great obligations, signor, and do not regard such trifles."

"You are all kindness, signora," replied Jack; "I little thought this morning of my good fortune—I can tell the fortunes of others, but not my own."

"You can tell fortunes!" replied the old lady.

"Yes, madam, I am famous for it—shall I tell your daughter hers?"

Donna Agnes looked at our hero, and smiled.

"I perceive that the young lady does not believe me; I must prove my art, by telling her of what has already happened to her. The signora will then give me credit."

"Certainly, if you do that," replied Agnes.

"Oblige me, by showing me the palm of your hand."

Agnes extended her little hand, and Jack felt so very polite, that he was nearly kissing it. However, he restrained himself, and examining the lines:

"That you were educated in Spain—that you arrived here but two months ago—that you were captured and released by the English, your mother has already told me; but to prove to you that I knew all that, I must now be more particular. You were in a ship mounting fourteen guns—was it not so?"

Donna Agnes nodded her head.

"I never told the signor that," cried Donna Clara.

"She was taken by surprise in the night, and there was no fighting. The next morning the English burst open the cabin door; your uncle and your cousin fired their pistols. The English officer was a young man, not very good-looking."

"There you are wrong, signor; he was very handsome."

"There is no accounting for taste, signora; you were frightened out of your wits, and with your cousin you crouched down in the corner of the cabin."

Of a sudden Agnes looked at our hero, and after a minute appeared to recognise him.

"Oh, mother, 'tis he—I recollect now, 'tis he!"

"Who, my child?" replied Donna Clara, who had been struck dumb with Jack's astonishing power of fortune-telling.

"The officer who captured us, and was so kind."

Jack burst out into a laughter, not to be controlled for some minutes, and then acknowledged that she had discovered him.

Agnes sprang up and took to her heels, that she might go to her father and tell him who he had as his guest.

This announcement of Agnes, who ran in breathless to communicate it, immediately brought all the parties together, and Jack received their thanks.

"I little thought," said the Don, "that I should have been so doubly indebted to you, sir. Command my services as you please, both of you. My sons are at Palermo, and I trust you will allow them the pleasure of your friendship when you are tired of remaining with us."

Jack made his politest bow, and then with a shrug of his shoulders, looked down upon his habiliments, which, to please Gascoigne, he had torn into ribands, as much as to say, We are not provided for a lengthened stay.

"My brothers' clothes will fit them, I think," said Agnes to her father; "they have left plenty in their wardrobes."

"If the signors will condescend to wear them till they can replace their own."

Midshipmen are very condescending—they followed Don Rebiera, and condescended to put on clean shirts

belonging to Don Philip and Don Martin; also to put on their trousers—to select their best waistcoats and coats —in short, they condescended to have a regular fit-out —and it so happened that the fit-out was not far from a regular *fit.*

CHAPTER XVII

Our limits will not permit us to relate all that passed during our hero's stay of a fortnight at Don Rebiera's. He and Gascoigne were treated as if they were his own sons, and the kindness of the female part of the family was equally remarkable. Agnes, naturally perhaps, showed a preference or partiality for Jack: to which Gascoigne willingly submitted, as he felt that our hero had a prior and stronger claim, and during the time that they remained a feeling of attachment was created between Agnes and the philosopher, which, if not love, was at least something very near akin to it; but the fact was, that they were both much too young to think of marriage; and, although they walked and talked, and laughed, and played together, they were always at home in time for their dinner. Still, the young lady thought she preferred our hero even to her brothers, and Jack thought that the young lady was the prettiest and kindest girl that he had ever met with. At the end of the fortnight our two midshipmen took their leave, furnished with letters of recommendation to many of the first nobility in Palermo, and mounted on two fine mules with bell bridles. The old Donna kissed them both—the Don showered down his blessings of good wishes, and Donna Agnes's lips trembled as she bade them adieu; and, as soon as they were gone, she went up to her chamber and wept. Jack also was very grave, and his eyes moistened at the thoughts of leaving Agnes. Neither of them were aware, until the hour of parting, how much they had wound themselves together.

It was not until late in the evening that our adventurers arrived at Palermo. As soon as they were lodged at the

hotel, Gascoigne sat down and wrote a letter in their joint names to Don Rebiera, returning him many thanks for his great kindness, informing him of their safe arrival, and trusting that they should soon meet again.

Our young gentlemen sent for a tailor and each ordered a new suit of clothes; they delivered their letters of recommendation, and went to the banker to whom they were addressed by Don Rebiera.

"I shall draw for ten pounds, Jack," said Gascoigne, "on the strength of the shipwreck; I shall tell the truth, all except that we forgot to ask for leave, which I shall leave out; and I am sure the story will be worth ten pounds. What shall you draw for, Jack?"

"I shall draw for two hundred pounds," replied Jack; "I mean to have a good cruise while I can."

"But will your governor stand that, Easy?"

"To be sure he will."

"Then you're right—he is a philosopher—I wish he'd teach mine, for he hates the sight of a bill."

"Then don't you draw, Ned—I have plenty for both. If every man had his equal share and rights in the world, you would be as able to draw as much as I; and, as you cannot, upon the principles of equality, you shall have half."

"I really shall become a convert to your philosophy, Jack; it does not appear to be so nonsensical as I thought it. At all events it has saved my old governor ten pounds, which he can ill afford, as a colonel on half-pay."

On their return to the inn, they found Don Philip and Don Martin, to whom Don Rebiera had written, who welcomed them with open arms. They were two very fine young men of eighteen and nineteen, who were finishing their education in the army. Jack asked them to dinner, and they and our hero soon became inseparable. They took him to all the theatres, the conversaziones of all the nobility, and, as Jack lost his money with good humour, and was a very handsome fellow, he was everywhere well received and was made much of: many ladies made love to him, but Jack was only very polite, because he thought more and more of Agnes every day. Three weeks passed away like lightning, and neither Jack nor Gascoigne thought of going back. At last, one fine day,

H.M. frigate *Aurora* anchored in the bay, and Jack and Gascoigne, who were at a party at the Duke of Pentaro's, met with the captain of the *Aurora*, who was also invited. The duchess introduced them to Captain Tartar, who, imagining them, from their being in plain clothes, to be young Englishmen of fortune on their travels, was very gracious and condescending. Jack was so pleased with his urbanity that he requested the pleasure of his company to dinner the next day: Captain Tartar accepted the invitation, and they parted, shaking hands with many expressions of pleasure in having made his acquaintance. Jack's party was rather large, and the dinner sumptuous. The Sicilian gentlemen did not drink much wine, but Captain Tartar liked his bottle, and although the rest of the company quitted the table to go to a ball given that evening by the Marquesa Novara, Jack was too polite not to sit it out with the captain.

The captain was amazingly entertaining. Jack told him how happy he should be to see him at Forest Hill, which property the captain discovered to contain six thousand acres of land, and also that Jack was an only son; and Captain Tartar was quite respectful when he found that he was in such very excellent company The captain of the frigate inquired of Jack what brought him out here, and Jack, whose prudence was departing, told him that he came in his Majesty's ship *Harpy*.

"Oh! Wilson gave you a passage; he's an old friend of mine."

"So he is of ours," replied Jack; "he's a good sort of a fellow, Wilson."

"But where have you been since you came out?" inquired Captain Tartar.

"In the *Harpy*," replied Jack, "to be sure, I belong to her."

"You belong to her! in what capacity may I ask?" inquired Captain Tartar, in a much less respectful and confidential tone.

"Midshipman," replied Jack; "so is Mr. Gascoigne."

"Umph! you are on leave then."

"No, indeed," replied Jack; "I'll tell you how it is, my dear fellow."

"Excuse me for one moment," replied Captain Tartar,

rising up; "I must give some directions to my servant which I forgot."

Captain Tartar hailed his coxswain out of the window, gave orders just outside of the door, and then returned to the table. In the meantime, Gascoigne, who expected a breeze, had been cautioning Jack, in a low tone, at intervals, when Captain Tartar's back was turned. When the captain resumed his seat at the table, Jack gave him the true narrative of all that had passed, to which his guest paid the greatest attention. Jack wound up his confidence by saying that in a week or so he should go back to Don Rebiera and propose for Donna Agnes.

"Ah!" exclaimed Captain Tartar, drawing his breath with astonishment and compressing his lips.

"Tartar, the wine stands with you," said Jack, "allow me to help you."

Captain Tartar threw himself back in his chair, and let all the air out of his chest with a sort of whistle, as if he could hardly contain himself.

"Have you had wine enough?" said Jack, very politely; "if so, we will go to the Marquesa's."

The coxswain came to the door, touched his hat to the captain, and looked significantly.

"And so, sir," cried Captain Tartar, in a voice of thunder, rising from his chair, "you're a runaway midshipman, who, if you belonged to my ship, instead of marrying Donna Agnes, I would marry you to the gunner's daughter. Two midshipmen sporting plain clothes in the best society in Palermo, and having the impudence to ask a post-captain to dine with them! To ask me, and address me as *Tartar*, and *my dear fellow!* you infernal young scamps!" continued Captain Tartar, now boiling with rage, and striking his fist on the table so as to set all the glasses waltzing.

"Allow me to observe, sir," said Jack, who was completely sobered by the address, "that we do not belong to your ship, and that we are in plain clothes."

"In plain clothes—midshipmen in mufti—yes, you are so: a couple of young swindlers, without a sixpence in your pocket, passing yourselves off as young men of fortune, and walking off through the window without paying your bill."

"Do you mean to call me a swindler, sir?" replied Jack.

"Yes, sir, you——"

"Then you lie," exclaimed our hero, in a rage. "I am a gentleman, sir—I am sorry I cannot pay you the same compliment."

The astonishment and rage of Captain Tartar took away his breath. He tried to speak, but could not—he gasped and gasped, and then sat or almost fell down in his chair—at last he recovered himself.

"Matthews—Matthews!"

"Sir," replied the coxswain, who had remained at the door.

"The sergeant of marines."

"Here he is, sir."

The sergeant entered, and raised the back of his hand to his hat.

"Bring your marines in—take charge of these two. Directly you are on board, put them both legs in irons."

The marines with their bayonets walked in and took possession of our hero and Gascoigne.

"Perhaps, sir," replied Jack, who was now cool again, "you will permit us to pay our bill before we go on board. We are no swindlers, and it is rather a heavy one—or, as you have taken possession of our persons, you will, perhaps, do us the favour to discharge it yourself;" and Jack threw on the table a heavy purse of dollars. "I have only to observe, Captain Tartar, that I wish to be very liberal to the waiters."

"Sergeant, let them pay their bill," said Captain Tartar, in a more subdued tone—taking his hat and sword, and walking out of the room.

"By heavens, Easy, what have you done?—you will be tried by a court-martial, and turned out of the service."

"I hope so," replied Jack; "I was a fool to come into it. But he called me a swindler, and I would give the same answer to-morrow."

"If you are ready, gentlemen," said the sergeant, who had been long enough with Captain Tartar to be aware that to be punished by him was no proof of fault having been committed.

"I will go and pack up our things, Easy, while you

pay the bill," said Gascoigne. "Marine, you had better come with me."

In less than half an hour, our hero and his comrade, instead of finding themselves at the Marquesa's ball, found themselves very comfortably in irons under the half-deck of H.M. frigate *Aurora*.

We shall leave them, and return to Captain Tartar, who had proceeded to the ball, to which he had been invited. On his entering he was accosted by Don Martin and Don Philip, who inquired what had become of our hero and his friend. Captain Tartar, who was in no very good humour, replied briskly, "that they were on board his ship in irons."

"In irons! for what?" exclaimed Don Philip.

"Because, sir, they are a couple of young scamps who have introduced themselves into the best company, passing themselves off as people of consequence, when they are only a couple of midshipmen who have run away from their ship."

Now the Rebieras knew very well that Jack and his friend were midshipmen; but this did not appear to them any reason why they should not be considered as gentlemen, and treated accordingly.

"Do you mean to say, signor," said Don Philip, "that you have accepted their hospitality, laughed, talked, walked arm in arm with them, pledged them in wine, as we have seen you this evening, and after they have confided in you that you have put them in irons?"

"Yes, sir, I do," replied Captain Tartar.

"Then, by Heaven, you have my defiance, and you are no gentleman!" replied Don Philip, the elder.

"And I repeat my brother's words, sir," cried Don Martin.

The two brothers felt so much attachment for our hero, who had twice rendered such signal service to their family, that their anger was without bounds.

When Captain Tartar rose the next morning he was informed that a gentleman wished to speak with him; he sent up his card as Don Ignatio Verez, colonel commanding the fourth regiment of infantry. On being admitted, he informed Captain Tartar that Don Philip de Rebiera wished to have the pleasure of crossing swords with him,

and requested to know when it would be convenient for Captain Tartar to meet him.

It was not in Captain Tartar's nature to refuse a challenge; his courage was unquestionable, but he felt indignant that a midshipman should be the cause of his getting into such a scrape. He accepted the challenge, but having no knowledge of the small-sword, refused to fight unless with pistols. To this the colonel raised no objections, and Captain Tartar despatched his coxswain with a note to his second lieutenant, for he was not on good terms with his first. The meeting took place —at the first fire the ball of Don Philip passed through Captain Tartar's brain, and he instantly fell dead. The second lieutenant hastened on board to report the fatal result of the meeting, and shortly after, Don Philip and his brother, with many of their friends, went off in the Governor's barge to condole with our hero.

The first lieutenant, now captain *pro tempore*, received them graciously, and listened to their remonstrances relative to our hero and Gascoigne.

"I have never been informed by the captain of the grounds of complaint against the young gentlemen," replied he, "and have therefore no charge to prefer against them. I shall therefore order them to be liberated. But, as I learn that they are officers belonging to one of his Majesty's ships lying at Malta, I feel it my duty, as I sail immediately, to take them there and send them on board of their own ship."

Jack and Gascoigne were then taken out of irons and permitted to see Don Philip, who informed them that he had revenged the insult, but Jack and Gascoigne did not wish to go on shore again after what had passed. After an hour's conversation, and assurances of continued friendship, Don Philip, his brother, and their friends, took leave of our two midshipmen, and rowed on shore.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE day after the funeral, H.M. ship *Aurora* sailed for Malta, and on her arrival the acting captain sent our two midshipmen on board the *Harpy* without any remark, except "victualled the day discharged," as they had been borne on the ship's books as supernumeraries.

Mr. James, who was acting in the *Aurora*, was anxious to join the admiral at Toulon, and intended to sail the next day. He met Captain Wilson at the Governor's table, and stated that Jack and Gascoigne had been put in irons by order of Captain Tartar; his suspicions, and the report, that the duel had in consequence taken place; but Gascoigne and Jack had both agreed that they would not communicate the events of their cruise to anybody on board the *Aurora;* and therefore nothing else was known except that they must have made powerful friends somehow or another; and there appeared in the conduct of Captain Tartar, as well as in the whole transaction, somewhat of a mystery.

"I should like to know what happened to my friend Jack," said the Governor. "Wilson, do bring him here to-morrow morning, and let us have his story."

"Well, Governor, if you wish it," replied Captain Wilson, who wrote a note to Mr. Sawbridge, requesting he would send Mr. Easy to him at the Governor's house at ten o'clock in the morning.

Jack made his appearance in his uniform—he did not much care for what was said to him, as he was resolved to leave the service. He had been put in irons, and the iron had *entered into his soul.*

Mr. Sawbridge had gone on shore about an hour before Jack had been sent on board, and he had remained on shore all the night. He did not therefore see Jack but for a few minutes, and thinking it his duty to say nothing to him at first, or to express his displeasure, he merely observed to him that the captain would speak to him as soon as he came on board. As Gascoigne and our hero did not know how far it might be safe, even at Malta, to acknowledge to what had occurred on board the speronare, which might get wind, they did not even tell their

messmates, resolving only to confide it to the captain.

When Jack was ushered into the presence of the captain, he found him sitting with the Governor, and the breakfast on the table ready for them. Jack walked in with courage, but respectfully. He was fond of Captain Wilson, and wished to show him respect. Captain Wilson addressed him, pointed out that he had committed a great error in fighting a duel, a greater error in demeaning himself by fighting a purser's steward, and still greater in running away from his ship. Jack looked respectfully to Captain Wilson, acknowledged that he had done wrong, and promised to be more careful another time, if Captain Wilson would look over it.

"Captain Wilson, allow me to plead for the young gentleman," said the Governor; "I am convinced that it has only been an error in judgment."

"Well, Mr. Easy, as you express your contrition, and the Governor interferes in your behalf, I shall take no more notice of this; but recollect, Mr. Easy, that you have occasioned me a great deal of anxiety by your mad pranks, and I trust another time you will remember that I am too anxious for your welfare not to be uncomfortable when you run such risks. You may now go on board to your duty, and tell Mr. Gascoigne to do the same; and pray let us hear of no more duels or running away."

Jack, whose heart softened at this kind treatment, did not venture to speak; he made his bow, and was about to quit the room, when the Governor said:

"Mr. Easy, you have not breakfasted."

"I have, sir," replied Jack, "before I came on shore."

"But a midshipman can always eat two breakfasts, particularly when his own comes first—so sit down and breakfast with us—it's all over now."

"Even if it was not," replied Captain Wilson, laughing, "I doubt whether it would spoil Mr. Easy's breakfast;—come, Mr. Easy, sit down."

Jack bowed, and took his chair, and proved that his lecture had not taken away his appetite. When breakfast was over, Captain Wilson observed:

"Mr. Easy, you have generally a few adventures to

speak of when you return; will you tell the Governor and me what has taken place since you left us?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Jack; "but I venture to request that it may be under the promise of secrecy, for it's rather important to me and Gascoigne."

"Yes, if secrecy is really necessary, my boy; but I'm the best judge of that," replied the Governor.

Jack then entered into a detail of his adventures, which we have already described, much to the astonishment of the Governor and his captain, and concluded his narration by stating that he wanted to leave the service; he hoped that Captain Wilson would discharge him and send him home.

"Pooh, nonsense!" said the Governor, "you shan't leave the Mediterranean while I am here. No, no; you must have more adventures, and come back and tell them to me. And recollect, my lad, that whenever you come to Malta, there is a bed at the Governor's house, and a seat at his table, always ready for you."

"You are very kind, Sir Thomas," replied Jack, "but——"

"No buts at all, sir—you shan't leave the service; besides, recollect that I can ask for leave of absence for you to go and see Donna Agnes—ay, and send you there too."

Captain Wilson also remonstrated with our hero, and he gave up the point. It was harsh treatment which made him form the resolution, it was kindness which overcame it.

"With your permission, Captain Wilson, Mr. Easy shall dine with us to-day, and bring Gascoigne with him; you shall first scold him, and I'll console him with a good dinner—and, boy, don't be afraid to tell your story everywhere. Sit down and tell it at Nix Mangare stairs, if you please—I'm Governor here."

Jack made his obeisance, and departed.

"The lad must be treated kindly, Captain Wilson," said the Governor; "he would be a loss to the service. Good heavens, what adventures! and how honestly he tells everything. I shall ask him to stay with me for the time you are here, if you will allow me: I want to make friends with him; he must not leave the service."

Captain Wilson, who felt that kindness and attention would be more effectual with our hero than any other measures, gave his consent to the Governor's proposition. So Jack ate at the Governor's table, and took lessons in Spanish and Italian until the *Harpy* had been refitted, after heaving down. Before she was ready a vessel arrived from the fleet, directing Captain Wilson to repair to Mahon, and send a transport, lying there, to procure live bullocks for the fleet. Jack did not join his ship very willingly, but he had promised the Governor to remain in the service, and he went on board the evening before she sailed. He had been living so well that he had, at first, a horror of midshipman's fare, but a good appetite seasons everything, and Jack soon complained that there was not enough. He was delighted to see Jolliffe and Mesty after so long an absence; he laughed at the boatswain's cheeks, inquired after the purser's steward's shot-holes, shook hands with Gascoigne and his other messmates, gave Vigors a thrashing, and then sat down to supper.

"Ah, Massa Easy, why you take a cruise without me?" said Mesty; "dat very shabby—by de power, but I wish I was there; you ab too much danger, Massa Easy, without Mesty, anyhow."

The *Harpy* made the African coast, the wind continued contrary, and they were baffled for many days; at last they espied a brig under the land, about sixteen miles off; her rig and appearance made Captain Wilson suspect that she was a privateer of some description or another, but it was calm, and they could not approach her. Nevertheless, Captain Wilson thought it his duty to examine her; so at ten o'clock at night the boats were hoisted out: as this was merely intended for a reconnoitre, for there was no saying what she might be, Mr. Sawbridge did not go. Mr. Asper was on the sick list, so Mr. Smallsole the master had the command of the expedition. Jack asked Mr. Sawbridge to let him have charge of one on the boats. Mr. Jolliffe and Mr. Vigors went in the pinnace with the master. The gunner had the charge of one cutter, and our hero had the command of the other. Jack, although not much more than seventeen, was very strong and tall for his age; indeed, he was a man grown,

and shaved twice a week. His only object in going was to have a yarn for the Governor when he returned to Malta. Mesty went with him, and, as the boat shoved off, Gascoigne slipped in, telling Jack that he had come to take care of him, for which considerate kindness Jack expressed his warmest thanks.

The orders to the master were very explicit; he was to reconnoitre the vessel, and if she proved heavily armed not to attack, for she was embayed, and could not escape the *Harpy* as soon as there was wind. If not armed he was to board her, but he was to do nothing till the morning: the reason for sending the boats away so soon was, that the men might not suffer from the heat of the sun during the day-time, which was excessive, and had already put many men on the sick-list. The boats were to pull to the bottom of the bay, not to go so near as to be discovered, and then drop their grapnels till daylight. The orders were given to Mr. Smallsole in presence of the other officers who were appointed to the boats, that there might be no mistake, and the boats then shoved off. After a three hours' pull, they arrived to where the brig lay becalmed, and as they saw no lights moving on board, they supposed they were not seen. They dropped their grapnels in about seven fathoms water and waited for daylight. When Jack heard Captain Wilson's orders that they were to lie at anchor till daylight he had sent down Mesty for fishing-lines, as fresh fish is always agreeable in a midshipman's berth: he and Gascoigne amused themselves this way.

They continued to fish in silence till the day broke. The mist rolled off the stagnant water, and discovered the brig, who, as soon as she perceived the boats, threw out the French tricolour and fired a gun in defiance.

Mr. Smallsole was undecided; the gun fired was not a heavy one, and so Mr. Jolliffe remarked; the men, as usual, anxious for the attack, asserted the same, and Mr. Smallsole, afraid of retreating from the enemy, and being afterwards despised by the ship's company, ordered the boats to weigh their grapnels.

"Stop a moment, my lads," said Jack to his men, "I've got a bite." The men laughed at Jack's taking it so easy, but he was their pet; and they did stop for

him to pull up his fish, intending to pull up to the other boats and recover their loss of a few seconds.

"I've hooked him now," said Jack; "you may up with the grapnel while I up with the fish." But this delay gave the other boats a start of a dozen strokes of their oars, which was a distance not easy to be regained.

"They will be aboard before us, sir," said the coxswain.

"Never mind that," replied Jack; "some one must be last."

"Give way, my lads," cried Gascoigne, perceiving the other boats still kept their distance ahead of them, which was about a cable's length.

"Gascoigne, I command the boat," said Jack, "and I do not wish my men to board without any breath in their bodies—that's a very unwise plan. A steady pull, my lads, and not too much exertion."

"By heavens, they'll take the vessel before we get alongside."

"Even if they should, I am right, am I not, Mesty?"

"Yes, Massa Easy, you are right—suppose they take vessel without you, they no want you—suppose they want you, you come." And the negro, who had thrown his jacket off, bared his arm, as if he intended mischief.

The first cutter, commanded by the gunner, now gained upon the launch, and was three boats'-lengths ahead of her when she came alongside. The brig poured in her broadside—it was well directed, and down went the boat.

"Cutter's sunk," exclaimed Gascoigne, "by heavens! Give way, my men."

The reception was evidently warm; by the time that the launch had poured in her men, the second cutter was close under the brig's quarter—two more strokes and she was alongside; when of a sudden a tremendous explosion took place on the deck of the vessel, and bodies and fragments were hurled up in the air. So tremendous was the explosion, that the men of the second cutter, as if transfixed, simultaneously stopped pulling, their eyes directed to the volumes of smoke which poured through the ports, and hid the whole of the masts and rigging of the vessel.

"Now's your time, my lads, give way and alongside," cried our hero.

The men, reminded by his voice, obeyed—but the impetus already given to the boat was sufficient. Before they could drop their oars in the water they grazed against the vessel's sides, and, following Jack, were in a few seconds on the quarter-deck of the vessel. A dreadful sight presented itself—the whole deck was black, and corpses lay strewed; their clothes on them still burning, and among the bodies lay fragments of what once were men.

The first object was to draw water and extinguish the flames, which were spreading over the vessel; as soon as that was accomplished, our hero went aft to the taffrail, and looked for the cutter which had been sunk.—"Gascoigne, jump into the boat with four men—I see the cutter floats a quarter of a mile astern: there may be some one alive yet. I think now I see a head or two."

Gascoigne hastened away, and soon returned with three of the cutter's men; the rest had sunk, probably killed or wounded by the discharge of the broadside.

"Thank God, there's three saved!" said Jack, "for we have lost too many. We must now see if any of these poor fellows are yet alive, and clear the decks of the remnants of those who have been blown to pieces. I say, Ned, where should we have been if we had boarded with the pinnace?"

"You always fall upon your feet, Easy," replied Gascoigne; "but that does not prove that you are right."

Jack turned round, and observed Mesty with his foot on a head which had been blown from the trunk.

"What are you about, Mesty?"

"Massa Easy, I look at dis, and I tink it Massa Vigors' head, and den I tink dis skull of his enemy nice present make to little Massa Gossett; and den I tink again, and I say, no, he dead and nebber thrash any more—so let him go overboard."

"Here's somebody alive," said Gascoigne to Jack, examining a body, the face of which was black as a cinder and not to be recognised, "and he is one of our men too, by his dress."

Our hero went up to examine, and to assist Gascoigne

in disengaging the body from a heap of ropes and half-burned tarpaulings with which it was entangled. Mesty followed, and looking at the lower extremities said, "Massa Easy, dat Massa Jolliffe, I know him trousers; marine tailor say he patch um for ever, and so old dat de thread no hold."

Mesty was right; it was poor Jolliffe, whose face was burned as black as a coal by the explosion. He had also lost three fingers of the left hand, but as soon as he was brought out on the deck he appeared to recover, and pointed to his mouth for water, which was instantly procured.

"Mesty," said Jack, "I leave you in charge of Mr. Jolliffe; take every care of him till I can come back."

The investigation was then continued, and four English sailors found who might be expected to recover, as well as about the same number of Frenchmen; the remainder of the bodies were then thrown overboard. The hat only of the master was picked up between the guns, and there were but eleven Frenchmen found below.

The vessel was the *Franklin*, a French privateer, of ten guns and sixty-five men, of which eight men were away in prizes. The loss on the part of the vessel was forty-six killed and wounded. On that of the *Harpy*, it was five drowned in the cutter, and eighteen blown up belonging to the pinnace, out of which total of twenty-three, they had only Mr. Jolliffe and five seamen alive.

The *Harpy* was soon hove-to close to the brig, and Jack went on board in the cutter to report what had taken place. Captain Wilson was much vexed and grieved at the loss of so many men: fresh hands were put in the cutter to man the pinnace, and he and Sawbridge both went on board to witness the horrible effects of the explosion as described by our hero.

Jolliffe and the wounded men were taken on board, and all of them recovered.

It may be as well here to state that Mr. Jolliffe not only obtained his promotion, but a pension for his wounds, and retired from the service.

The *Harpy* proceeded with her prize to Mahon. Jack, as usual, obtained a great deal of credit; whether he deserved it, or whether, as Gascoigne observed, he always

fell upon his feet, the reader may decide from our narrative; perhaps there was a little of both. The seamen of the *Harpy*, if summoned in a hurry, used very often to reply, "Stop a minute, I've got a bite"—as for Jack, he often said to himself, "I have a famous good yarn for the Governor."

CHAPTER XIX

A FEW days after the arrival of the *Harpy* at Port Mahon a cutter came in with despatches from the admiral. Captain Wilson found that he was posted into the *Aurora* frigate, in which a vacancy had been made by the result of our hero's transgressions.

Mr. Sawbridge was raised to the rank of commander, and appointed to the command of the *Harpy*. The admiral informed Captain Wilson that he must detain the *Aurora* until the arrival of another frigate, hourly expected, and then she would be sent down to Mahon for him to take the command of her. Further, he intimated that a supply of live bullocks would be very agreeable, and begged that he would send to Tetuan immediately.

Captain Wilson had lost so many officers that he knew not whom to send: indeed, now he was no longer in command of the *Harpy*, and there was but one lieutenant, and no master or master's mate. Gascoigne and Jack were the only two serviceable midshipmen.

Easy and Gascoigne were summoned, listened very respectfully to all Captain Sawbridge said, promised to conduct themselves with the utmost propriety, received a letter to the vice-consul, and were sent with their hammocks and chests in the cabin on board the *Eliza Ann*, brig, of two hundred and sixteen tons, chartered by government—the master and crew of which were all busy forward heaving up their anchors.

As soon as the chests and hammocks were on the deck, Jack made the boy bring up two chairs, and he and Gascoigne sat down. The anchor was weighed, and the

transport ran out under her fore-topsail, as they were light-handed, and had to secure the anchor. The transport passed within ten yards of the *Harpy*, and Captain Sawbridge, when he perceived the two midshipmen taking it so very easy, sitting in their chairs with their legs crossed, arms folded, and bottled porter before them, had a very great mind to order the transport to heave-to, but he could spare no officer, so he walked away.

As soon as sail was made on the transport, desiring Captain Hogg, the master, to keep a sharp lookout, and not to call them on any account whatever, Gascoigne and Jack retired to their hammocks.

The next morning they awoke late; the breeze was fresh and fair: they requested Captain Hogg not to consider the expense, as they would pay for all they ate and drank, and all he did, into the bargain, and promised him a fit-out when they got to Tetuan.

What with this promise and calling him captain, our hero and Gascoigne won the master's heart, and being a very good-tempered fellow, they did what they pleased. Jack also tossed a doubloon to the men for them to drink on their arrival, and all the men of the transport were in a transport, at Jack's coming to "reign over them." It must be acknowledged that Jack's reign was, for the most part of it, "happy and glorious." At last they arrived at Tetuan, and our Pylades and Orestes went on shore to call upon the vice-consul, whom they requested to procure for them fifty dozen of fowls, twenty sheep, and a great many other articles, which might be obtained at the place; for, as Jack said, they would live well going up to Toulon, and if there were any of the stock left, they would give them to the admiral, for Jack had taken the precaution to put his *father's philosophy* once more to the proof, before he quitted Mahon. As Jack gave such a liberal order, and the vice-consul cheated him out of at least one-third of what he paid, Mr. Hicks thought he could do no less than offer beds to our midshipmen as well as to Captain Hogg; so, as soon as dinner was over, they ordered Captain Hogg to go on board and bring their things on shore, which he did.

As the time usual for transports remaining at Tetuan before they could be completed with bullocks was three weeks, our midshipmen decided upon staying at least so long if they could find anything to do, or if they could not, doing nothing was infinitely preferable to doing duty. So they took up their quarters at the vice-consul's.

Three weeks passed away, it was time to think of departing for Toulon. Jack therefore proposed that they should get away as fast as they could. The water and the bullocks, and the sheep and fowls, were all on board.

We cannot enter into the details of the passage, which as the wind was fair, was accomplished in ten days without the loss of a bullock. On the eleventh morning they were in the midst of the Toulon fleet.

The fleet hove-to, Jack ran under the admiral's stern, lowered down his boat, and went on board, showed his credentials, and reported his bullocks. The general signal was made, there was a fair division of the spoil, and then the admiral asked our hero whether the master of the transport had any other stock on board. Jack replied that he had not; but that having been told by the Governor of Malta that they might be acceptable, he had bought a few sheep and some dozen of fowls, which were much at his service, if he would accept of them. The admiral was much obliged to the Governor, and also to Jack, for thinking of him, but would not, of course, accept of the stock without paying for them. He requested him to send all of them on board that he could spare, and then asked Jack to dine with him, for Jack had put on his best attire, and looked very much of a gentleman.

Our hero dined with the admiral, and was well received. He got his orders to sail that night for Minorca, and as soon as dinner was over he returned on board, where he found Captain Hogg very busy selling his porter—Gascoigne walking the deck in a brown study.

In two days they arrived at Mahon, and found the *Aurora* already there, in the command of Captain Wilson.

When Jack reported himself, Captain Wilson was satisfied with the manner in which he had executed his orders, and asked him, "whether he preferred staying in the *Harpy*, or following him into the *Aurora*."

Jack hesitated.

"Speak frankly, Mr. Easy; if you prefer Captain Sawbridge to me I shall not be affronted."

"No, sir," replied Easy, "I do not prefer Captain Sawbridge to you; you have both been equally kind to me, but I prefer you. But the fact is, sir, that I do not much like to part with Gascoigne, or——"

"Or who?" said the captain, smiling.

"With Mesty, sir; you may think me very foolish—but I should not be alive at this moment, if it had not been for him."

"I do not consider gratitude to be foolish, Mr. Easy," replied Captain Wilson. "Mr. Gascoigne I intend to take with me, if he chooses to come, as I have a great respect for his father, and no fault to find with him, that is, generally speaking—but as for Mesty—why, he is a good man, and as you have behaved yourself very well, perhaps I may think of it."

The next day Mesty was included among the boat's crew taken with him by Captain Wilson, according to the regulations of the service, and appointed to the same situation under the master-at-arms of the *Aurora*. Gascoigne and our hero were also discharged into the frigate.

As our hero never has shown any remarkable predilection for duty, the reader will not be surprised at his requesting from Captain Wilson a few days on shore, previous to his going on board of the *Aurora*. Captain Wilson allowed the same licence to Gascoigne, as they had both been cooped up for some time on board of a transport. Our hero took up his quarters at the only respectable hotel in the town, and whenever he could meet an officer of the *Aurora*, he very politely begged the pleasure of his company to dinner. Jack's reputation had gone before him, and the midshipmen drank his wine and swore he was a trump. Not that Jack was to be deceived, but upon the principles of equality he argued that it was the duty of those who could afford dinners to give them to those who could not. This was a sad error on Jack's part; but he had not yet learned the value of money; he was such a fool as to think that the only real use of it was to make other people happy. It must, however, be offered

in his extenuation that he was a midshipman and a philosopher, and not yet eighteen.

The first lieutenant of the *Aurora*, Mr. Pottyfar, was a very good officer in many respects, but, as a midshipman, he had contracted the habit of putting his hands in his pockets, and could never keep them out, even when the ship was in a gale of wind; and hands are of some use in a heavy lurch. He had more than once received serious injury from falling on these occasions, but habit was too powerful; and, although he had once broken his leg by falling down the hatchway, and had moreover a large scar on his forehead, received from being thrown to leeward against one of the guns, he still continued the practice; indeed, it was said that once, when it was necessary for him to go aloft, he had actually taken the two first rounds of the Jacob's ladder without withdrawing them, until, losing his balance, he discovered that it was not quite so easy to go aloft with his hands in his pockets. In fact, there was no getting up his hands, even when all hands were turned up.

He had another peculiarity, which was, that he had taken a peculiar fancy to a quack medicine, called Enouy's Universal Medicine for all Mankind; and Mr. Pottyfar was convinced in his own mind that the label was no libel, except from the greatness of its truth. In his opinion, it cured everything, and he spent one of his quarterly bills every year in bottles of this stuff; which he not only took himself every time he was unwell, but occasionally when quite well, to prevent his falling sick. He recommended it to everybody in the ship, and nothing pleased him so much as to give a dose of it to every one who could be persuaded to take it. The officers laughed at him, but it was generally behind his back, for he became very angry if contradicted upon this one point, upon which he certainly might be considered to be a little cracked. He was indefatigable in making proselytes to his creed, and expatiated upon the virtues of the medicine for an hour running, proving the truth of his assertion by a pamphlet, which, with his hands, he always carried in his trousers pocket.

Jack reported himself when he came on board, and Mr. Pottyfar, who was on the quarter-deck at the time,

expressed the hope that Mr. Easy would take his share of the duty, now that he had had such a spell on shore; to which Jack very graciously acceded, and then went down below, where he found Gascoigne and his new messmates, with most of whom he was already acquainted.

"Well, Easy," said Gascoigne, "have you had enough of the shore?"

"Quite," replied Jack, "I don't intend to ask for any more leave."

"Perhaps it's quite as well, for Mr. Pottyfar is not very liberal on that score, I can tell you; there is but one way of getting leave from him."

"Indeed," replied Jack; "and what is that?"

"You must pretend that you are not well, take some of his quack medicine, and then he will allow you a run on shore to work it off."

"Oh! that's it, is it? well then, as soon as we anchor in Valetta, I'll go through a regular course, but not till then."

"It ought to suit you, Jack; it's an equality medicine; cures one disorder just as well as the other."

"Or kills—which levels all the patients. You're right, Gascoigne, I must patronise that stuff—for more reasons than one. Who was that person on deck in mufti?"

"The mufti, Jack? in other words, the chaplain of the ship; but he's a prime sailor, nevertheless."

"When do we sail?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"To join the fleet off Toulon?"

"Yes; but I suppose we shall be driven on the Spanish coast going there. I never knew a man-of-war that was not."

"No; wind always blows from the south, going up the Mediterranean."

"Perhaps you'll take another prize, Jack—mind you don't go away without the articles of war."

"I won't go away without Mesty, if I can help it. Oh dear, how abominable a midshipman's berth is after a long run on shore! I positively must go on deck and look at the shore, if I can do nothing else."

"Why, ten minutes ago you had had enough of it."

"Yes, but ten minutes here has made me feel quite sick. I shall go to the first lieutenant for a dose."

"I say, Easy, we must both be physicked on the same day."

"To be sure; but stop till we get to Malta."

Jack went on deck, made acquaintance with the chaplain and some of the officers whom he had not known, then climbed up into the maintop, where he took a seat on the armolest, and, as he looked at the shore, thought over the events that had passed, until Agnes came to his memory, and he thought only of her.

The *Aurora* sailed on the second day, and with a fine breeze, stood across, making as much northing as easting; the consequence was, that one fine morning they saw the Spanish coast before they saw the Toulon fleet. Mr. Pottyfar took his hands out of his pockets, because he could not examine the coast through a telescope without so doing; but this, it is said, was the first time that he had done so on the quarter deck from the day that the ship had sailed from Port Mahon. Captain Wilson was also occupied with his telescope, so were many of the officers and midshipmen, and the men at the mast-heads used their eyes, but there was nothing but a few small fishing-boats to be seen. So they all went down to breakfast, as the ship was hove-to close in with the land.

"What will Easy bet," said one of the midshipmen, "that we don't see a prize to-day?"

"I will not bet that we do not see a vessel—but I'll bet you what you please, that we do not take one before twelve o'clock at night."

"No, no, that won't do—just let the teapot travel over this way, for it's my forenoon watch."

"It's a fine morning," observed one of the mates, of the name of Martin; "but I've a notion it won't be a fine evening."

"Why not?" inquired another.

"I've now been eight years in the Mediterranean, and know something about the weather. There's a watery sky, and the wind is very steady. If we are not under double-reefed topsails to-night, say I'm no conjurer."

"That you will be, all the same, if we are under bare poles," said another.

"You're free with your tongue, my youngster. Easy, pull his ears for me."

"Pull them easy, Jack, then," said the boy, laughing.

"All hands make sail!" now resounded at the hatchways.

"There they are, depend upon it," cried Gascoigne, catching up his hat and bolting out of the berth, followed by all the others except Martin, who had just been relieved, and thought that his presence in the waist might be dispensed with for the short time, at least, which it took him to swallow a cup of tea.

It was very true; a galliot and four lateen vessels had just made their appearance round the easternmost point, and, as soon as they observed the frigate, had hauled their wind. In a minute the *Aurora* was under a press of canvas, and the telescopes were all directed to the vessels.

"All deeply laden, sir," observed Mr. Hawkins, the chaplain; "how the topsail of the galliot is scored!"

"They have a fresh breeze just now," observed Captain Wilson to the first lieutenant.

"Yes, sir, and it's coming down fast."

"Hands by the royal halyards, there."

The *Aurora* careened with the canvas to the rapidly increasing breeze.

"Top-gallant sheet and halyards."

"Luff you may, quarter-master; luff, I tell you. A small pull of that weather maintop-gallant brace—that will do," said the master.

"Top-men aloft there;—stand by to clew up the royals—and, Captain Wilson, shall we take them in?—I'm afraid of that pole—it bends now like a coach-whip," said Mr. Pottyfar, looking up aloft, with his hands in both pockets.

"In royals—lower away."

"They are going about, sir," said the second lieutenant, Mr. Haswell.

"Look out," observed the chaplain, "it's coming."

Again the breeze increased, and the frigate was borne down.

"Hands reef topsails in stays, Mr. Pottyfar."

"Ay, ay, sir—'bout ship."

The helm was put down and the topsails lowered and reefed in stays.

"Very well, my lads, very well indeed," said Captain Wilson.

Again the topsails were hoisted and top-gallant sheets home. It was a strong breeze, although the water was smooth, and the *Aurora* dashed through at the rate of eight miles an hour, with her weather leeches lifting.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Martin to his messmates on the gangway; "but there's more yet, my boys."

"We must take the top-gallant sails off her," said Captain Wilson, looking aloft—for the frigate now careened to her bearings, and the wind was increasing and squally. "Try them a little longer;" but another squall came suddenly—the halyards were lowered, and the sails clewed up and furled.

In the meantime the frigate had rapidly gained upon the vessels, which still carried on every stitch of canvas, making short tacks in-shore. The *Aurora* was again put about with her head towards them, and they were not two points on her weather bow. The sky, which had been clear in the morning, was now overcast, the sun was obscured with opaque white clouds, and the sea was rising fast. Another ten minutes, and then they were under double-reefed topsails, and the squalls were accompanied with heavy rain. The frigate now dashed through the waves, foaming in her course and straining under the press of sail. The horizon was so thick that the vessels ahead were no longer to be seen.

"We shall have it, I expect," said Captain Wilson.

"Didn't I say so?" observed Martin to Gascoigne. "We take no prizes this day, depend upon it."

"We must have another hand to the wheel, sir, if you please," said the quarter-master, who was assisting the helmsman.

Mr. Pottyfar, with his hands concealed as usual, stood by the capstern. "I fear, sir, we cannot carry the mainsail much longer."

"No," observed the chaplain, "I was thinking so."

"Captain Wilson, if you please, we are very close in," said the master: "don't you think we had better go about?"

"Yes, Mr. Jones. Hands about ship—and—yes, by heavens, we must!—up mainsail."

The mainsail was taken off, and the frigate appeared to be immediately relieved. She no longer jerked and plunged as before.

"We're very near the land, Captain Wilson; thick as it is, I think I can make out the loom of it—shall we wear round, sir?" continued the master.

"Yes—hands wear ship—put the helm up."

It was but just in time, for, as the frigate flew round, describing a circle, as she payed off before the wind, they could perceive the breakers lashing the precipitous coast not two cables' length from them.

"I had no idea we were so near," observed the captain, compressing his lips—"can they see anything of those vessels?"

"I have not seen them this quarter of an hour, sir," replied the signalman, protecting his glass from the rain under his jacket.

"How's her head now, quarter-master?"

"South south-east, sir."

The sky now assumed a different appearance—the white clouds had been exchanged for others dark and murky, the wind roared at intervals, and the rain came down in torrents. Captain Wilson went down into the cabin to examine the barometer.

"The barometer has risen," said he on his return on deck. "Is the wind steady?"

"No, sir, she's up and off three points."

"This will end in a south-wester."

The wet and heavy sails now flapped from the shifting of the wind.

"Up with the helm, quarter-master."

"Up it is—she's off to south-by-west."

The wind lulled, the rain came down in a deluge—for a minute it was quite calm, and the frigate was on an even keel.

"Man the braces. We shall be taken aback directly, depend upon it."

The braces were hardly stretched along before this was the case. The wind flew round to the south-west with a loud roar, and it was fortunate that they were prepared

—the yards were braced round, and the master asked the captain what course they were to steer.

"We must give it up," observed Captain Wilson, holding on by the belaying pin. "Shape our course for Cape Sicie, Mr. Jones."

And the *Aurora* flew before the gale, under her foresail and topsails close reefed. The weather was now so thick that nothing could be observed twenty yards from the vessel; the thunder pealed, and the lightning darted in every direction over the dark expanse. The watch was called as soon as the sails were trimmed, and all who could went below, wet, uncomfortable, and disappointed.

"What an old Jonah you are, Martin," said Gascoigne.

"Yes, I am," replied he; "but we have the worst to come yet, in my opinion. I recollect, not two hundred miles from where we are now, we had just such a gale in the *Favourite*, and we as nearly went down, when——"

At this moment a tremendous noise was heard above, a shock was felt throughout the whole ship, which trembled fore and aft as if it were about to fall into pieces; loud shrieks were followed by plaintive cries, the lower deck was filled with smoke, and the frigate was down on her beam ends. Without exchanging a word, the whole of the occupants of the berth flew out, and were up the hatchway, not knowing what to think, but convinced that some dreadful accident had taken place.

On their gaining the deck it was at once explained; the foremast of the frigate had been struck by lightning, had been riven into several pieces, and had fallen over the larboard bow, carrying with it the main topmast and jib-boom. The jagged stump of the foremast was in flames, and burned brightly, notwithstanding the rain fell in torrents. The ship, as soon as the foremast and main topmast had gone overboard, broached-to furiously, throwing the men over the wheel and dashing them senseless against the carronades; the forecastle, the fore part of the main deck, and even the lower deck, were spread with men, either killed or seriously wounded, or insensible from the electric shock. The frigate was on her beam ends, and the sea broke furiously over her; all was dark as pitch, except the light from the blazing stump of the foremast, appearing like a torch, held up by the

wild demons of the storm, or when occasionally the gleaming lightning cast a momentary glare, threatening every moment to repeat its attack upon the vessel, while the deafening thunder burst almost on their devoted heads. All was dismay and confusion for a minute or two: at last Captain Wilson, who had himself lost his sight for a short time, called for the carpenter and axes—they climbed up, that is, two or three of them, and he pointed to the mizzen-mast; the master was also there, and he cut loose the axes for the seamen to use; in a few minutes the mizzen-mast fell over the quarter, and the helm being put hard up, the frigate payed off and slowly righted. But the horror of the scene was not yet over. The boatswain, who had been on the forecastle, had been led below, for his vision was gone for ever. The men who lay scattered about had been examined, and they were assisting them down to the care of the surgeon, when the cry of "Fire!" issued from the lower deck. The ship had taken fire at the coal-hole and carpenter's storeroom, and the smoke that now ascended was intense.

"Call the drummer," said Captain Wilson, "and let him beat to quarters—all hands to their stations—let the pumps be rigged and the buckets passed along. Mr. Martin, see that the wounded men are taken down below. Where's Mr. Haswell? Mr. Pottyfar, station the men to pass the water on by hand on the lower deck. I will go there myself. Mr. Jones, take charge of the ship."

Pottyfar, who actually had taken his hands out of his pockets, hastened down to comply with the captain's orders on the main deck, as Captain Wilson descended to the deck below.

"I say, Jack, this is very different from this morning," observed Gascoigne.

"Yes," replied Jack, "so it is; but I say, Gascoigne, what's the best thing to do?—when the chimney's on fire on shore, they put a wet blanket over it."

"Yes," replied Gascoigne; "but when the coal-hole's on fire on board, they will not find that sufficient."

"At all events, wet blankets must be a good thing, Ned, so let us pull out the hammocks; cut the lanyards and get some out—we can but offer them, you know, and if they do no good, at least it will show our zeal."

"Yes, Jack, and I think when they turn in again, those whose blankets you take will agree with you that zeal makes the service very uncomfortable. However, I think you are right."

The two midshipmen collected three or four hands, and in a very short time they had more blankets than they could carry—there was no trouble in wetting them, for the main deck was afloat—and followed by the men they had collected, Easy and Gascoigne went down with large bundles in their arms to where Captain Wilson was giving directions to the men.

"Excellent, Mr. Easy! excellent, Mr. Gascoigne;" said Captain Wilson. "Come, my lads, throw them over now, and stamp upon them well;" the men's jackets and the captain's coat had already been sacrificed to the same object.

Easy called the other midshipmen, and they went up for a further supply; but there was no occasion, the fire had been smothered: still the danger had been so great that the fore magazine had been floated. During all this, which lasted perhaps a quarter of an hour, the frigate had rolled gunwale under, and many were the accidents which occurred. At last all danger from fire had ceased, and the men were ordered to return to their quarters, when three officers and forty-seven men were found absent—seven of them were dead—most of them were already under the care of the surgeon, but some were still lying in the scuppers.

No one had been more active or more brave during this time of danger than Mr. Hawkins the chaplain. He was everywhere, and when Captain Wilson went down to put out the fire he was there, encouraging the men and exerting himself most gallantly. He and Mesty came aft when all was over, one just as black as the other.

The chaplain, shaking hands with Jack, hoped he would come down into the gun-room and take a glass of grog; nor did he forget Mesty, who received a good allowance at the gun-room door, to which Jack gladly consented, as the rum in the middy's berth had all been exhausted after the rainy morning—but Jack was interrupted in his third glass, by somebody telling him the captain wanted to speak with Mr. Hawkins and with him.

Jack went up and found the captain on the quarter-deck with the officers.

"Mr. Easy," said Captain Wilson, "I have sent for you, Mr. Hawkins, and Mr. Gascoigne, to thank you on the quarter-deck, for your exertions and presence of mind on this trying occasion." Mr. Hawkins made a bow. Gascoigne said nothing, but he thought of having extra leave when they arrived at Malta. Jack felt inclined to make a speech, and began something about when there was danger that it levelled every one to an equality even on board of a man-of-war.

"By no means, Mr. Easy," replied Captain Wilson, "it does the very contrary, for it proves which is the best man, and those who are the best raise themselves at once above the rest."

Jack was very much inclined to argue the point, but he took the compliment and held his tongue, which was the wisest thing he could have done.

CHAPTER XX

THE hammocks were not piped down that night: some were taken indiscriminately for the wounded, but the rest remained in the nettings, for all hands were busy preparing jury-masts and jury-rigging, and Mr. Pottyfar was so well employed that, for twelve hours, his hands were not in his pockets. It was indeed a dreadful night: the waves were mountains high, and chased the frigate in their fury, cresting, breaking, and roaring at her taffrail; but she flew before them with the wings of the wind; four men at the helm assisted by others at the relieving tackles below.

Before morning, the ship had been pumped out dry, and all below made as secure and safe as circumstances would permit; but the gale still continued its violence, and there was anything but comfort on board.

"I say, Martin, you ought to be thrown overboard,"

said Gascoigne; "all this comes from your croaking —you're a Mother Carey's chicken."

"I wish I had been any one's chicken," replied Martin; "but never a thing to nestle under have I had since I can well remember."

"What a bore to have no galley fire lighted," said one of the youngsters, "no tea, and not allowed any grog."

"The gale will last three days," replied Martin, "and by that time we shall not be far from the admiral; it won't blow home there."

"Well, then, we shall be ordered in directly, and I shall go on shore to-morrow," replied Easy.

"Yes, if you're ill," replied Gascoigne.

"Never fear, I shall be sick enough: we shall be there at least six weeks, and then we'll forget all this."

"Yes," replied Martin, "we may forget it, but will the poor fellows whose limbs are shrivelled forget it? and will poor Miles, the boatswain, who is blind for ever?"

"Very true, Martin, we are thinking about ourselves, not thankful for our escape, and not feeling for others," replied Gascoigne.

"Give us your hand, Ned," said Jack Easy. "And, Martin, we ought to thank you for telling us the truth— we are a selfish set of fellows."

"Still we took our share with the others," replied one of the midshipmen.

"That's more reason for us to be grateful and to pity them," replied Jack; "suppose you had lost your arm or your eyesight—we should have pitied you; so now pity others."

"Well, so I do, now I think of it."

"Think oftener, youngster," observed Martin, going on deck.

What a change from the morning of the day before! —but twenty-four hours had passed away, and the sea had been smooth, the frigate dashed through the blue water, proud in all her canvas, graceful as a swan. Since that, there had been fire, tempest, lightning, disaster, danger, and death; her masts were tossed about on the snowy waves hundreds of miles away from her—and she,

a wreck, was rolling heavily, groaning and complaining in every timber as she urged her impetuous race with the furious-running sea.

Before the day was over a jury-foremast had been got up, and sail having been put upon it, the ship was steered with greater ease and safety—the main brace had been spliced to cheer up the exhausted crew, and the hammocks were piped down.

As Gascoigne had observed, some of the men were not very much pleased to find that they were minus their blankets, but Captain Wilson ordered their losses to be supplied by the purser and expended by the master; this quite altered the case, as they obtained new blankets in most cases for old ones; but still it was impossible to light the galley fire, and the men sat on their chests and nibbled biscuit. By twelve o'clock that night the gale broke, and more sail was necessarily put on the scudding vessel, for the sea still ran fast and mountains high. At daylight the sun burst out and shone brightly on them, the sea went gradually down, the fire was lighted, and Mr. Pottyfar, whose hands were again in his pockets, at twelve o'clock gave the welcome order to pipe to dinner. As soon as the men had eaten their dinner, the frigate was once more brought to the wind, her jury-mast forward improved upon, and more sail made upon it. The next morning there was nothing of the gale left except the dire effects which it had produced, the black and riven stump of the foremast still holding up a terrific warning of the power and fury of the elements.

Three days more, and the *Aurora* joined the Toulon fleet. When she was first seen it was imagined by those on board of the other ships that she had been in action; but they soon learned that the conflict had been against more direful weapons than any yet invented by mortal hands. Captain Wilson waited upon the admiral, and of course received immediate orders to repair to port and refit. In a few hours the *Aurora* had shaped her course for Malta, and by sunset the Toulon fleet were no longer in sight.

Jack did his duty very much to the satisfaction of Mr. Pottyfar; and after a tedious passage, from baffling and light winds, the *Aurora* arrived at Malta. Our hero had

had some conversation with his friend Gascoigne, in which he canvassed his future plans; all of which, however, ended in one settled point, which was that he was to marry Agnes. As for the rest, Gascoigne was of opinion that Jack ought to follow up the service, and become a captain, but there was plenty of time to think about that; as he observed, now all they had to consider was how to get on shore; for the refitting of the ship was an excuse for detaining them on board, which they knew Mr. Pottyfar would avail himself of. Jack dined in the gun-room on the day of their arrival, and he resolved that he would ask that very evening. Captain Wilson was already on shore at the Governor's.

Now, there had been a little difference of opinion between Mr. Pottyfar and Mr. Hawkins, the chaplain, on a point of seamanship; and most of the officers sided with the chaplain, who, as we have before observed, was a first-rate seaman. It had ended in high words, for Mr. Hawkins had forgotten himself so far as to tell the first lieutenant that he had a great deal to learn, not having even got over the midshipman's trick of keeping his hands in his pockets; and Mr. Pottyfar had replied that it was very well for him as chaplain to insult others, knowing that his cassock protected him. This was a bitter reply to Mr. Hawkins, who at the very time that the insinuation made his blood boil, was also reminded that his profession forbade a retort: he rushed into his cabin. In the meantime, Mr. Pottyfar had gone on deck, wroth with Hawkins and his messmates, as well as displeased with himself. He was, indeed, in a humour to be pleased with nobody, and in a most unfortunate humour to be asked leave by a midshipman.

Nevertheless, Jack politely took off his hat, and requested leave to go on shore and see his friend the Governor. Upon which Mr. Pottyfar turned round to him, with his feet spread wide open, and thrusting his hands to the very bottom of his pockets, as if in determination, said, "Mr. Easy, you know the state of the ship; we have everything to do—new masts, new rigging, everything almost to refit—and yet you ask to go on shore! Now, sir, you may take this answer for yourself and all the other midshipmen in the ship, that not one

soul of you puts his foot on shore until we are all a-taunto."

"Allow me to observe, sir," said our hero, "that it is very true that all our services may be required when the duty commences, but this being Saturday night, and to-morrow Sunday, the frigate will not be even moved till Monday morning; and as the work cannot begin before that, I trust you will permit leave until that time."

"My opinion is different, sir," replied the first lieutenant.

"Perhaps, sir, you will allow me to argue the point," replied Jack.

"No, sir, I never allow argument; walk over to the other side of the deck, if you please."

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Jack, "if you wish it."

Jack's first idea was to go on shore without leave, but from this he was dissuaded by Gascoigne, who told him that it would displease Captain Wilson, and that old Tom, the Governor, would not receive him. Jack agreed to this, and then, after a flourish about the rights of man, tyranny, oppression, and so forth, he walked forward to the forecastle, where he found his friend Mesty, who had heard all that had passed, and who insidiously said to him in a low tone:

"Why you stay at sea, Massa Easy?"

"Why, indeed," thought Jack, boiling with indignation, "to be cooped up here at the will of another? I am a fool—Mesty is right—I'll ask for my discharge to-morrow." Jack went down below and told Gascoigne what he had determined to do.

"You'll do no such thing, Jack," replied Gascoigne: "depend upon it, you'll have plenty of leave in a day or two. Pottyfar was in a pet with the chaplain, who was too much for him. Captain Wilson will be on board by nine o'clock."

Nevertheless, Jack walked his first watch in the *magnificents*, as all middies do when they cannot go on shore, and turned in at twelve o'clock, with the resolution of sticking to his purpose, and quitting his Majesty's service.

The next morning Captain Wilson came off; the ship's company were mustered, the service read by Mr. Hawkins, and Jack, as soon as all the official duties were over, was

about to go up to the captain, when the captain said to him:

"Mr. Easy, the Governor desired me to bring you on shore to dine with him, and he has a bed at your service."

Jack touched his hat, and ran down below, to make his few preparations.

By the time that Mesty, who had taken charge of his chest, etc., had put his necessaries in the boat, Jack had almost made up his mind that his Majesty should not be deprived yet awhile of so valuable an officer. Jack returned on deck, and found that the captain was not yet ready; he went up to Mr. Pottyfar, and told him that the captain had ordered him to go on shore with him; and Mr. Pottyfar, who had quite got over his spleen, said:

"Very well, Mr. Easy—I wish you a great deal of pleasure."

"This is very different from yesterday," thought Jack; "suppose I try the medicine?"

"I am not very well, Mr. Pottyfar, and those pills of the doctor's don't agree with me—I always am ill if I am long without air and exercise."

"Very true," said the first lieutenant, "people require air and exercise. I've no opinion of the doctor's remedies; the only thing that is worth a farthing is the universal medicine."

"I should so long to try it, sir," replied Jack; "I read the book one day, and it said that if you took it daily for a fortnight or three weeks, and with plenty of air and exercise, it would do wonders."

"And it's very true," replied Mr. Pottyfar, "and if you'd like to try it you shall—I have plenty—shall I give you a dose now?"

"If you please, sir," replied Jack; "and tell me how often I am to take it, for my head aches all day."

Mr. Pottyfar took Jack down, and putting into his hand three or four bottles of the preparation, told him that he was to take thirty drops at night, when he went to bed, not to drink more than two glasses of wine, and to avoid the heat of the sun.

"But, sir," replied Jack, who had put the bottles in his pocket, "I am afraid that I cannot take it for long;

for as the ship is ready for fitting, I shall be exposed to the sun all day."

"Yes, if you are wanted, Mr. Easy; but we have plenty here without you; and when you are unwell you cannot be expected to work. Take care of your health; and I trust, indeed I am sure, that you will find this medicine wonderfully efficacious."

"I will begin to-night, sir, if you please," replied Jack, "and I am very much obliged to you. I sleep at the Governor's—shall I come on board to-morrow morning?"

"No, no; take care of yourself, and get well; I shall be glad to hear that you get better. Send me word how it acts."

"I will, sir, send you word by the boat every day," replied Jack, delighted; "I am very much obliged to you, sir. Gascoigne and I were thinking of asking you, but did not like to do so: he, poor fellow, suffers from headaches almost as bad as I do, and the doctor's pills are of no use to him."

"He shall have some too, Mr. Easy. I thought he looked pale. I'll see to it this afternoon. Recollect, moderate exercise, Mr. Easy, and avoid the sun at mid day."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, "I'll not forget;" and off went Jack, delighted. He ordered Mesty to put up his whole portmanteau instead of the small bundle he put into the boat, and telling Gascoigne what a spoke he had put into his wheel, was soon in the boat with the captain, and went on shore, where he was cordially greeted by the Governor.

CHAPTER XXI

"Well, Jack, my boy, have you any story ready for me?" inquired the Governor.

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, "I have one or two very good ones."

"Very well, we'll hear them after dinner," replied old Tom. "In the meantime find out your room and take possession."

"That must not be for very long, Governor," observed Captain Wilson. "Mr. Easy must learn his duty, and there is a good opportunity now."

"If you please, sir," replied Jack, "I'm on the sick-list."

"Sick-list," said Captain Wilson; "you were not in the report that Mr. Haswell gave me this morning."

"No, I'm on Mr. Pottyfar's list; and I'm going through a course of the universal medicine."

"What's all this, Jack—what's all this?—there's some story here—don't be afraid of the captain—you've me to back you," said the Governor.

Jack was not at all afraid of the captain, so he told him how the first lieutenant had refused him leave the evening before, and how he had now given him permission to remain, and try the universal medicine, at which the Governor laughed heartily, nor could Captain Wilson refrain from joining.

"But, Mr. Easy," replied the captain, after a pause, "if Mr. Pottyfar will allow you to stay on shore, I cannot—you have your duty to learn. You must be aware that now is your time, and you must not lose opportunities that do not occur every day. You must acknowledge the truth of what I say."

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, "I admit it all, provided I do intend to follow the profession;" and so saying, our hero bowed, and left the veranda where they had been talking.

This hint of Jack's, thrown out by him more with the intention of preventing his being sent on board than with any definite idea, was not lost upon either the captain or the Governor.

"Does he jib, then?" observed the Governor.

"On the contrary, I never knew him more attentive and so entirely getting rid of his former notions. He has behaved most nobly in the gale, and there has not been one complaint against him—I never was more astonished—he must have meant something."

"I'll tell you what he means, Wilson—that he does

not like to be sent on board, nothing more. He's not to be cooped up—you may lead him, but not drive him."

"Yes, but the service will not admit of it. I never could allow it—he must do his duty like the rest, and conform to the rules."

"Exactly, so he must; but look ye, Wilson, you must not lose him: it's all easily settled—appoint him your orderly midshipman to and from the ship; that will be employment, and he can always remain here at night. I will tell him that I have asked, as a favour, which I now do, and leave me to find out what he is thinking about."

"It may be done that way, certainly," replied Captain Wilson, musing; "and you are more likely to get his intentions from him than I am. I am afraid he has too great a command of money ever to be fond of the ship; it is the ruin of a junior officer to be so lavishly supplied."

"He's a long way from ruin yet, Wilson—he's a very fine fellow, even by your own acknowledgment. You humoured him out of gratitude to his father, when he first came into the service; humour him a little now to keep him in it. Besides, if your first lieutenant is such a fool with his universal medicine, can you wonder at a midshipman taking advantage of it?"

"No, but I ought not to allow him to do so with my eyes open."

"He has made it known to you upon honour, and you ought not to take advantage of his confidence: but still what I proposed would, I think, be the best, for then he will be at his duty in a way that will suit all parties. You, because you employ him on service—the first lieutenant, because Jack can take his medicine—and Jack, because he can dine with me every day."

"Well, I suppose it must be so," replied Captain Wilson, laughing; "but still, I trust, you will discover what is working in his mind to induce him to give me that answer, Governor."

"Never fear, Jack shall confess, and lay his soul as bare as that of a Catholic before his padre."

Jack received his appointment as orderly midshipman, and everything went on well; for, of his own accord, he stayed on board the major part of the day to learn his duty, which very much pleased the captain and Mr.

Pottyfar. In this Jack showed a great deal of good sense, and Captain Wilson did not repent of the indulgence he had shown him. Jack's health improved daily, much to Mr. Pottyfar's satisfaction, who imagined that he took the universal medicine night and morning. Gascoigne also was a patient under the first lieutenant's hands, and often on shore with our hero, who thought no more of quitting the service.

For seven weeks they had now remained in harbour, for even the masts had to be made, when, one day, the conversation at breakfast was interrupted by a mail from England which they had been expecting. Captain Wilson retired with his letters; the Governor remained equally occupied; and our hero received the first letter ever written to him by his father. It ran as follows:—

"My dear Son,—

"I have many times taken up my pen with the intention of letting you know how things went on in this country. But as I can perceive around but one dark horizon of evil, I have as often laid it down again without venturing to make you unhappy with such bad intelligence.

"The account of your death, and also of your unexpectedly being yet spared to us, were duly received, and I trust, I mourned and rejoiced on each occasion with all the moderation characteristic of a philosopher. In the first instance I consoled myself with the reflection that the world you had left was in a state of slavery and pressed down by the iron arm of despotism, and that to die was gain, not only in all the parson tells us, but also in our liberty; and, at the second intelligence, I moderated my joy for nearly about the same reasons, resolving, notwithstanding what Dr. Middleton may say, to die as I have lived, a true philosopher.

"The more I reflect the more am I convinced that there is nothing required to make this world happy but equality, and the rights of man being duly observed—in short, that everything and everybody should be reduced to one level. Do we not observe that it is the law of nature—do not brooks run into rivers—rivers into seas—mountains crumble down upon the plains?—are not

the seasons contented to equalise the parts of the earth? Why does the sun run round the ecliptic, instead of the equator, but to give an equal share of his heat to both sides of the world? Are we not all equally born in misery? does not death level us all *æquo pede*, as the poet hath? are we not all equally hungry, thirsty, and sleepy, and thus levelled by our natural wants? And such being the case, ought we not to have our equal share of good things in this world, to which we have an undoubted equal right? Can any argument be more solid or more level than this, whatever nonsense Dr. Middleton may talk?

"Your mother is in a quiet way; she has given over reading and working, and even her knitting, as useless; and she now sits all day long at the chimney corner twiddling her thumbs, and waiting, as she say, for the millennium. Poor thing! she is very foolish with her ideas upon this matter, but as usual I let her have her own way in everything, copying the philosopher of old, who was tied to his Xantippe.

"I trust, my dear son, that your principles have strengthened with your years and fortified with your growth, and that, if necessary, you will sacrifice all to obtain what in my opinion will prove to be the real millennium. Make all the converts you can, and believe me to be, your affectionate father and true guide,

"Nicodemus Easy."

Jack, who was alone, shook his head as he read this letter, and then laid it down with a pish! He did it involuntarily, and was surprised at himself when he found that he had so done. "I should like to argue the point," thought Jack, in spite of himself; and then he threw the letter on the table, and went into Gascoigne's room, displeased with his father and with himself. He asked Ned whether he had received any letters from England, and it being dinner-time, went back to dress. On his coming down into the receiving-room with Gascoigne, the Governor said to them:

"As you two both speak Italian, you must take charge of a Sicilian officer who has come here with letters of introduction to me, and who dines here to-day."

Before dinner they were introduced to the party in question, a slight-made, well-looking young man, but still there was an expression in his countenance which was not agreeable. In compliance with the wishes of the Governor, Don Mathias, for so he was called, was placed between our two midshipmen, who immediately entered into conversation with him, being themselves anxious to make inquiries about their friends at Palermo. In the course of the conversation Jack inquired of him whether he was acquainted with Don Rebiera, to which the Sicilian answered in the affirmative, and they talked about the different members of the family. Don Mathias, towards the close of the dinner, inquired of Jack by what means he had become acquainted with Don Rebiera, and Jack, in reply, narrated how he and his friend Gascoigne had saved him from being murdered by two villains; after this reply the young officer appeared to be less inclined for conversation, but before the party broke up requested to have the acquaintance of our two midshipmen. As soon as he was gone, Gascoigne observed in a reflective way, "I have seen that face before, but where I cannot exactly say; but you know, Jack, what a memory of people I have, and I have seen him before, I am sure."

"I can't recollect that ever I have," replied our hero, "but I never knew any one who could recollect in that way as you do."

The conversation was then dropped between them, and Jack was for some time listening to the Governor and Captain Wilson, for the whole party were gone away, when Gascoigne, who had been in deep thought since he had made the observation to Jack, sprang up.

"I have him at last!" cried he.

"Have who?" demanded Captain Wilson.

"That Sicilian officer—I could have sworn that I had seen him before."

"That Don Mathias?"

"No, Sir Thomas! He is not Don Mathias! He is the very Don Silvio who was murdering Don Rebiera, when we came to his assistance and saved him."

"I do believe you are right, Gascoigne."

"I'm positive of it," replied Gascoigne; "I never made a mistake in my life."

"Bring me those letters, Easy," said the Governor, "and let us see what they say of him. Here it is—Don Mathias de Alayeres. You may be mistaken, Gascoigne; it's a heavy charge you are making against this young man."

"Well, Sir Thomas, if that is not Don Silvio, I'd forfeit my commission if I had it here in my hand. Besides, I observed the change in his countenance when we told him it was Easy and I who had come to Don Rebiera's assistance; and did you observe after that, Easy, that he hardly said a word?"

"Very true," replied Jack.

"Well, well, we must see to this," observed the Governor; "if so, this letter of introduction must be a forgery."

The party then retired to bed, and the next morning, while Easy was in Gascoigne's room talking over their suspicions, letters from Palermo were brought up to him. They were in answer to those written by Jack on his arrival at Malta: a few lines from Don Rebiera, a small note from Agnes, and a voluminous detail from his friend Don Philip, who informed him of the good health of all parties and of their goodwill towards him; of Agnes being as partial as ever; of his having spoken plainly, as he had promised Jack, to his father and mother relative to the mutual attachment; of their consent being given, and then withheld, because Father Thomas, their confessor, would not listen to the union of Agnes with a heretic; but, nevertheless, telling Jack this would be got over through the medium of his brother and himself, who were determined that their sister and he should not be made unhappy about such a trifle. But the latter part of the letter contained intelligence equally important, which was, that Don Silvio had again attempted the life of their father, and would have succeeded, had not Father Thomas, who happened to be there, thrown himself between them. That Don Silvio in his rage had actually stabbed the confessor, although the wound was not dangerous. That, in consequence of this, all further lenity was denied to him, and that the authorities were in search of him to award him the punishment due to murder and sacrilege. That up to the present they

could not find him, and it was supposed that he had made his escape to Malta in one of the speronares.

Such were the contents of the letter, which were immediately communicated to the Governor and Captain Wilson, upon their meeting at breakfast.

"Very well, we must see to this," observed the Governor, who then made his inquiries as to the other intelligence contained in the letters.

Jack and Gascoigne were uneasy till the breakfast was over, when they made their escape: a few moments afterwards Captain Wilson rose to go on board, and sent for them, but they were not to be found.

"I understand it all, Wilson," said the Governor; "leave them to me; go on board and make yourself quite easy."

In the meantime our two midshipmen had taken their hats and walked away to the parapet of the battery, where they would not be interrupted.

"Now, Gascoigne," observed Jack, "you guess what I'm about—I must shoot that rascal this very morning, and that's why I came out with you."

"But, Easy, the only difference is this, that I must shoot him, and not you; he is my property, for I found him out."

"We'll argue that point," replied Jack: "he has attempted the life of my is-to-be, please God, father-in-law, and therefore I have the best claim to him."

"I beg your pardon, Jack, he is mine, for I discovered him. Now let me put a case: suppose one man walking several yards before another, picks up a purse, what claim has the other to it? I found him, and not you."

The point having been conceded to Gascoigne, Jack went to the inn where Don Silvio had mentioned that he had taken up his quarters, and sending up his card, followed the waiter upstairs. The waiter opened the door, and presented the card.

"Very well," replied Don Silvio, "you can go down and show him up."

Jack, hearing these words, did not wait, but walked in, where he found Don Silvio very busy removing a bone upon which he had been whetting a sharp double-edged stiletto. The Sicilian walked up to him, offering

his hand with apparent cordiality; but Jack with a look of defiance said, "Don Silvio, we know you; my object now is to demand, on the part of my friend, the satisfaction which you do not deserve, but which our indignation at your second attempt upon Don Rebiera induces us to offer; for if you escape from him you will have to do with me. On the whole, Don Silvio, you may think yourself fortunate, for it is better to die by the hands of a gentleman than by the gibbet."

Don Silvio turned deadly pale—his hand sought his stiletto in his bosom, but it was remaining on the table; at last he replied, "Be it so—I will meet you when and where you please, in an hour from this."

Jack mentioned the place of meeting, and then walked out of the room. He and Gascoigne then hastened to the quarters of an officer they were intimate with, and having provided themselves with the necessary fire-arms, were at the spot before the time. They waited for him till the exact time, yet no Don Silvio made his appearance.

"He's off," observed Gascoigne; "the villain has escaped us."

Half an hour over the time had passed, and still there was no sign of Gascoigne's antagonist, but one of the Governor's aides-de-camp was seen walking up to them.

"Here's Atkins," observed Jack; "that's unlucky, but he won't interfere."

"Gentlemen," said Atkins, taking off his hat with much solemnity, "the Governor particularly wishes to speak to you both."

"We can't come just now—we'll be there in half an hour."

"You must be there in three minutes, both of you. Excuse me, my orders are positive—and to see them duly executed I have a corporal and a file of men behind that wall—of course, if you will walk with me quietly there will be no occasion to send for their assistance."

"This is confounded tyranny," cried Jack. "Well may they call him King Tom."

"Yes," replied Atkins, "and he governs here *in rey absoluto*—so come along."

Jack and Gascoigne, having no choice, walked up to

the government-house, where they found Sir Thomas in the veranda, which commanded a view of the harbour and offing.

"Come here, young gentlemen," said the Governor, in a severe tone; "do you see that vessel about two miles clear of the port? Don Silvio is in it, going back to Sicily under a guard. And now remember what I say as a maxim through life. Fight with gentlemen, if you must fight, but not with villains and murderers. By *consenting* to fight with a *blackguard*, you as much disparage your cloth and compromise your own characters, as by refusing to give satisfaction to a *gentleman*. There, go away, for I'm angry with you, and don't let me see you till dinner-time."

CHAPTER XXII

But before they met the Governor at his table, a sloop-of-war arrived from the fleet with despatches from the commander-in-chief. Those to Captain Wilson required him to make all possible haste in fitting, and then to proceed and cruise off Corsica, to fall in with a Russian frigate which was on that coast; if not there, to obtain intelligence, and to follow her wherever she might be.

All was now bustle and activity on board of the *Aurora*. Captain Wilson, with our hero and Gascoigne, quitted the Governor's house and repaired on board, where they remained day and night. On the third day the *Aurora* was complete and ready for sea, and about noon sailed out of Valetta harbour.

In a week the *Aurora* had gained the coast of Corsica, and there was no need of sending look-out men to the mast-head, for one of the officers or midshipmen was there from daylight to dark. She ran up the coast to the northward without seeing the object of her pursuit, or obtaining any intelligence.

Calms and light airs detained them for a few days,

when a northerly breeze enabled them to run down the eastern side of the island. It was on the eighteenth day after they had quitted Malta that a large vessel was seen ahead about eighteen miles off. The men were then at breakfast.

"A frigate, Captain Wilson, I'm sure of it," said Mr. Hawkins the chaplain, whose anxiety induced him to go to the mast-head.

"How is she steering?"

"The same way as we are."

The *Aurora* was under all possible sail, and when the hands were piped to dinner, it was thought that they had neared the chase about two miles.

"This will be a long chase; a stern chase always is," observed Martin to Gascoigne.

"Yes, I'm afraid so—but I'm more afraid of her escaping."

"That's not unlikely either," replied the mate.

"You are one of Job's comforters, Martin," replied Gascoigne.

"Then I'm not so often disappointed," replied the mate. "There are two points to be ascertained; the first is, whether we shall come up with the vessel or lose her—the next is, if we do come up with her, whether she is the vessel we are looking for."

"You seem very indifferent about it."

"Indeed I am not: I am the oldest passed midshipman in the ship, and the taking of the frigate will, if I live, give me my promotion, and if I'm killed, I shan't want it. But I've been so often disappointed, that I now make sure of nothing until I have it."

"Well, for your sake, Martin, I will still hope that the vessel is the one we seek, that we shall not be killed, and that you will gain your promotion."

"I thank you, Easy—I wish I was one that dared hope as you do."

Poor Martin! he had long felt how bitter it was to meet disappointment upon disappointment. How true it is that hope deferred maketh the heart sick! and his anticipations of early days, the buoyant calculations of youth, had been one by one crushed, and now, having served his time nearly three times over, the reaction had

become too painful, and, as he truly said, he dared not hope: still his temper was not soured but chastened.

"She has hauled her wind, sir," hailed the second lieutenant from the topmast cross-trees.

"What think you of that, Martin?" observed Jack.

"Either that she is an English frigate, or that she is a vessel commanded by a very brave fellow, and well manned."

It was sunset before the *Aurora* had arrived within two miles of the vessel; the private signal had been thrown out, but had not been answered, either because it was too dark to make out the colours of the flags, or that these were unknown to an enemy. The stranger had hoisted the English colours, but that was no satisfactory proof of her being a friend; and just before dark she had put her head towards the *Aurora*, who had now come stem down to her. The ship's company of the *Aurora* were all at their quarters, as a few minutes would now decide whether they had to deal with a friend or a foe.

There is no situation perhaps more difficult, and demanding so much caution, as the occasional meeting with a doubtful ship. On the one hand, it being necessary to be fully prepared and not allow the enemy the advantage which may be derived from your inaction; and on the other, the necessity of prudence, that you may not assault your friends and countrymen. Captain Wilson had hoisted the private night-signal, but here again it was difficult, from his sails intervening, for the other ship to make it out. Before the two frigates were within three cables' length of each other, Captain Wilson, determined that there should be no mistake from any want of precaution on his part, hauled up his courses and brailed up his driver that the night-signal might be clearly seen.

Lights were seen abaft on the quarter-deck of the other vessel, as if they were about to answer, but she continued to keep the *Aurora* to leeward at about half a cable's length, and as the foremost guns of each vessel were abreast of each other, hailed in English—

"Ship ahoy; what ship's that?"

"His Majesty's ship *Aurora*," replied Captain Wilson, who stood on the hammocks. "What ship's that?"

By this time the other frigate had passed half her length clear of the beam of the *Aurora*, and at the same time that a pretended reply of "His Majesty's ship——" was heard, a broadside from her guns, which had been trained aft on purpose, was poured into the *Aurora* and, at so short a distance, doing considerable execution. The crew of the *Aurora*, hearing the hailing in English, and the vessel passing them apparently without firing, had imagined that she had been one of their own cruisers. The captains of the guns had dropped their lanyards in disappointment, and the silence which had been maintained as the two vessels met was just breaking up in various ways of lamentation at their bad luck, when the broadside was poured in, thundering in their ears, and the ripping and tearing of the beams and planks astonished their senses. Many were carried down below, but it was difficult to say whether indignation at the enemy's ruse, or satisfaction at discovering that they were not called to quarters in vain, most predominated. At all events it was answered by three voluntary cheers, which drowned the cries of those who were being assisted to the cockpit.

"Man the larboard-guns and about ship!" cried Captain Wilson, leaping off the hammocks. "Look out, my lads, and rake her in stays! We'll pay him off for that foul play before we've done with him. Look out, my lads, and take good aim as she pays round."

The *Aurora* was put about, and her broadside poured into the stern of the Russian frigate—for such she was. It was almost dark, but the enemy, who appeared as anxious as the *Aurora* to come to action, hauled up her courses to await her coming up. In five minutes the two vessels were alongside exchanging murderous broadsides at little more than pistol-shot—running slowly in for the land, then not more than five miles distant. The skin-clad mountaineers of Corsica were aroused by the furious cannonading, watching the incessant flashes of the guns, and listening to their reverberating roar.

After half-an-hour's fierce combat, during which the fire of both vessels was kept up with undiminished vigour, Captain Wilson went down on the main deck, and himself separately pointed each gun after it was loaded; those

amidships being direct for the main-channels of the enemy's ship, while those abaft the beam were gradually trained more and more forward, and those before the beam more and more aft, so as to throw all their shot nearly into one focus, giving directions that they were all to be fired at once, at the word of command. The enemy, not aware of the cause of the delay, imagined that the fire of the *Aurora* had slackened, and loudly cheered. At the word given the broadside was poured in, and, dark as it was, the effects from it were evident. Two of the midship ports of the antagonist were blown into one, and her main-mast was seen to totter, and then to fall over the side. The *Aurora* then set her courses, which had been hauled up, and, shooting ahead, took up a raking position while the Russian was still hampered with her wreck, and poured in grape and cannister from her upper deck carronades to impede their labours on deck, while she continued her destructive fire upon the hull of the enemy from the main-deck battery.

The moon now burst out from a low bank of clouds, and enabled them to accomplish their work with more precision. In a quarter of an hour the Russian was totally dismasted, and Captain Wilson ordered half of his remaining ship's company to repair the damages, which had been most severe, whilst the larboard men at quarters continued the fire from the main deck. The enemy continued to return the fire from four guns, two on each of her decks, which she could still make bear upon the *Aurora;* but after some time even these ceased, either from the men having deserted them, or from their being dismounted. Observing that the fire from her antagonist had ceased, the *Aurora* also discontinued, and the jolly-boat astern being still uninjured, the second lieutenant was deputed to pull alongside of the frigate to ascertain if she had struck.

The beams of the bright moon silvered the rippling water as the boat shoved off; and Captain Wilson and his officers who were still unhurt, leant over the shattered sides of the *Aurora,* waiting for a reply: suddenly the silence of the night was broken upon by a loud splash from the bows of the Russian frigate, then about three cables' length distant.

"What could that be?" cried Captain Wilson. "Her anchor's down. Mr. Jones, a lead over the side, and see what water we have."

Mr. Jones had long been carried down below, severed in two with a round shot—but a man leaped into the chains, and lowering down the lead, sounded in seven fathoms.

"Then I suspect he will give us more trouble yet," observed Captain Wilson; and so indeed it proved, for the Russian captain, in reply to the second lieutenant, had told him in English, "that he would answer that question with his broadside," and before the boat was dropped astern, he had warped round with the springs on his cable, and had recommenced his fire upon the *Aurora*.

Captain Wilson made sail upon his ship, and sailed round and round the anchored vessel, so as to give her two broadsides to her one, and from the slowness with which she worked at her springs upon her cables, it was evident that she must be now very weak-handed. Still the pertinacity and decided courage of the Russian captain convinced Captain Wilson that, in all probability, he would sink at his anchor before he would haul down his colours; and not only would he lose more of the *Aurora's* men, but also the Russian vessel, without he took a more decided step. Captain Wilson, therefore, resolved to try her by the board. Having poured in a raking fire, he stood off for a few moments, during which he called the officers and men on deck, and stated his intention. He then went about, and himself conning the *Aurora*, ran her on board the Russian, pouring in his reserved broadside as the vessels came into collision, and heading his men as they leaped on the enemy's decks.

Although, as Captain Wilson had imagined, the Russian frigate had not many men to oppose to the *Aurora's*, the deck was obstinately defended, the voice and the arm of the Russian captain were to be heard and seen everywhere, and his men, encouraged by him, were cut down by numbers where they stood.

Our hero, who had the good fortune to be still unhurt, was for a little while close to Captain Wilson when he

boarded, and was about to oppose his unequal force against that of the Russian captain, when he was pulled back by the collar by Mr. Hawkins, the chaplain, who rushed in advance with a sabre in his hand. The opponents were well matched, and it may be said that, with little interruption, a hand-to-hand conflict ensued, for the moon lighted up the scene of carnage, and they were well able to distinguish each other's faces. At last, the chaplain's sword broke; he rushed in, drove the hilt into his antagonist's face, closed with him, and they both fell down the hatchway together. After this, the deck was gained, or rather cleared, by the crew of the *Aurora*, for few could be said to have resisted, and in a minute or two the frigate was in their possession. The chaplain and the Russian captain were hoisted up, still clinging to each other, both senseless from the fall, but neither of them dead, although bleeding from several wounds.

As soon as the main-deck had been cleared, Captain Wilson ordered the hatches to be put on, and left a party on board while he hastened to attend to the condition of his own ship and ship's company.

It was daylight before anything like order had been restored to the decks of the *Aurora;* the water was still smooth, and instead of letting go her own anchor, she had hung on with a hawser to the prize, but her sails had been furled, her decks cleared, guns secured, and the buckets were dashing away the blood from her planks and the carriages of the guns, when the sun rose and shone upon them. The numerous wounded had, by this time, been put into their hammocks, although there were still one or two cases of amputation to be performed.

The carpenter had repaired all shot-holes under or too near to the water-line, and then had proceeded to sound the well of the prize; but although her upper works had been dreadfully shattered, there was no reason to suppose that she had received any serious injury below, and therefore the hatches still remained on, although a few hands were put to the pumps to try if she made any water. It was not until the *Aurora* presented a more cheerful appearance that Captain Wilson went over to the other ship, whose deck, now that the light of heaven enabled them to witness all the

horrors even to minuteness, presented a shocking spectacle of blood and carnage. Body after body was thrown over; the wounded were supplied with water and such assistance as could be rendered until the surgeons could attend them; the hatches were then taken off, and the remainder of her crew ordered on deck; about two hundred obeyed the summons, but the lower deck was as crowded with killed and wounded as was the upper. For the present the prisoners were handed over down into the forehold of the *Aurora*, which had been prepared for their reception, and the work of separation of the dead from the living then went on. After this such repairs as were immediately necessary were made, and a portion of the *Aurora's* crew, under the orders of the second lieutenant, were sent on board to take charge of her. It was not till the evening of the day after this night-conflict that the *Aurora* was in a situation to make sail. All hands were then sent on board of the *Trident*, for such was the name of the Russian frigate, to fit her out as soon as possible. Before morning all was completed, and the two frigates, although in a shattered condition, were prepared to meet any common conflict with the elements. The *Aurora* made sail with the *Trident* in tow; the hammocks were allowed to be taken down, and the watch below permitted to repose.

In this murderous conflict the *Trident* had more than two hundred men killed and wounded. The *Aurora's* loss had not been so great, but still it was severe, having lost sixty-five men and officers. Among the fallen there were Mr. Jones the master, the third lieutenant Mr. Awkwright, and two midshipmen killed. Mr. Pottyfar, the first lieutenant, severely wounded at the commencement of the action. Martin, the master's mate, and Gascoigne, the first mortally, and the second badly, wounded. Our hero had also received a slight cutlass wound, which obliged him to wear his arm, for a short time, in a sling.

Among the ship's company who were wounded was Mesty: he had been hurt with a splinter before the *Trident* was taken by the board, but had remained on deck, and had followed our hero, watching over him and protecting him as a father. He had done even more,

for he had with Jack thrown himself before Captain Wilson, at a time that he had received such a blow with the flat of a sword as to stun him and bring him down on his knee. And Jack had taken good care that Captain Wilson should not be ignorant, as he really would have been, of this timely service on the part of Mesty, who certainly, although with a great deal of *sang-froid* in his composition when in repose, was a fiend incarnate when his blood was up.

"But you must have been with Mesty," observed Captain Wilson, "when he did me the service."

"I was with him, sir," replied Jack, with great modesty, "but was of very little service."

"How is your friend Gascoigne this evening?"

"Oh, not very bad, sir—he wants a glass of grog."

"And Mr. Martin?"

Jack shook his head.

"Why, the surgeon thinks he will do well."

"Yes, sir, and so I told Martin; but he said that it was very well to give him hope—but that he thought otherwise."

"You must manage him, Mr. Easy; tell him that he is sure of his promotion."

"I have, sir, but he won't believe it. He never will believe it till he has his commission signed. I really think that an acting order would do more than the doctor can."

"Well, Mr. Easy, he shall have one to-morrow morning. Have you seen Mr. Pottyfar? He, I am afraid, is very bad."

"Very bad, sir; and, they say, is worse every day, and yet his wound is healthy, and ought to be doing well."

Such was the conversation between Jack and his captain, as they sat at breakfast on the third morning after the action.

The next day Easy took down an acting order for Martin, and put it into his hands. The mate read it over as he lay bandaged in his hammock.

"It's only an acting order, Jack," said he; "it may not be confirmed."

Jack swore, by all the articles of war, that it would

be; but Martin replied that he was sure it never would.

"No, no," said the mate, "I knew very well that I never should be made. If it is not confirmed, I may live; but if it is, I am sure to die."

Every one that went to Martin's hammock wished him joy of his promotion; but six days after the action poor Martin's remains were consigned to the deep.

The next person who followed him was Mr. Pottyfar, the first lieutenant, who had contrived, wounded as he was, to reach a packet of the universal medicine, and had taken so many bottles before he was found out, that he was one morning found dead in his bed, with more than two dozen empty phials under his pillow, and by the side of his mattress. He was not buried with his hands in his pockets, but when sewed up in his hammock, they were, at all events, laid in the right position.

CHAPTER XXIII

In three weeks the *Aurora*, with her prize in tow, arrived at Malta. The wounded were sent to the hospital, and the gallant Russian captain recovered from his wounds about the same time as Mr. Hawkins, the chaplain.

As the *Aurora*, when she was last at Malta, had nearly exhausted the dockyard for her repairs, she was even longer fitting out this time, during which Captain Wilson's despatches had been received by the admiral, and had been acknowledged by a brig sent to Malta. The admiral, in reply, after complimenting him upon his gallantry and success, desired that, as soon as he was ready, he should proceed to Palermo with communications of importance to the authorities, and having remained there for an answer, was again to return to Malta to pick up such of his men as might be fit to leave the hospital, and then join the Toulon fleet. This intelligence was soon known to our hero, who was in ecstasies at the idea of again seeing

Agnes and her brothers. Once more the *Aurora* sailed away from the high-crowned rocks of Valetta, and with a fine breeze dashed through the deep blue waves.

But towards the evening the breeze increased, and they were under double-reefed topsails. On the second day they made the coast of Sicily, not far from where Easy and Gascoigne had been driven on shore; the weather was then more moderate, and the sea had, to a great degree, subsided. They therefore stood in close to the coast, as they had not a leading wind to Palermo. As they stood in, the glasses, as usual, were directed to land; observing the villas with which the hills and valleys were studded, with their white fronts embowered in orange groves.

"What is that, Gascoigne," said Easy, "under that precipice?—it looks like a vessel."

Gascoigne turned his glass in the direction—"Yes, it is a vessel on the rocks: by her prow she looks like a galley."

"It is a galley, sir—one of the row galleys—I can make out her bank of oars," observed the signal-man.

This was reported to Captain Wilson, who also examined her.

"She is on the rocks, certainly," observed he; "and I think I see people on board. Keep her away a point, quarter-master."

The *Aurora* was now steered right for the vessel, and in the course of an hour was not more than a mile from her. Their suppositions were correct—it was one of the Sicilian government galleys bilged on the rocks, and they now perceived that there were people on board of her, making signals with their shirts and pieces of linen.

"They must be the galley-slaves; for I perceive that they do not one of them change their positions: the galley must have been abandoned by the officers and seamen, and the slaves left to perish."

"That's very hard," observed Jack to Gascoigne; "they were condemned to the galleys, but not to death."

"They will not have much mercy from the waves," replied Gascoigne; "they will all be in kingdom come

to-morrow morning, if the breeze comes more on the land. We have already come up two points this forenoon."

Although Captain Wilson did not join in this conversation, which he overheard as he stood on the forecastle gun, with his glass over the hammocks, it appears he was of the same opinion; but he demurred: he had to choose between allowing so many of his fellow-creatures to perish miserably, or to let loose upon society a set of miscreants, who would again enter a course of crime until they were recaptured, and by so doing probably displease the Sicilian authorities. After some little reflection he resolved that he would take his chance of the latter. The *Aurora* was hove-to in stays, and the two cutters ordered to be lowered down, and the boat's crew to be armed.

"Mr. Easy, do you take one cutter and the armourers; pull on board of the galley, release those people, and land them in small divisions. Mr. Gascoigne, you will take the other to assist Mr. Easy, and when he lands them in his boat, you will pull by his side ready to act, in case of any hostile attempt on the part of the scoundrels; for we must not expect gratitude: of course, land them at the nearest safe spot for debarkation."

In pursuance of these orders, our two midshipmen pulled away to the vessel. They found her fixed hard upon the rocks, which had pierced her slight timbers, and, as they had supposed, the respectable part of her crew, with the commander, had taken to the boats, leaving the galley-slaves to their fate. She pulled fifty oars, but had only thirty-six manned. These oars were forty feet long, each ran in from the thole-pin with a loom six feet long, and manned by four slaves, who were chained to their seat before it, by a running chain made fast by a padlock in amidships. A plank, of two feet wide, ran fore and aft the vessel between the two banks of oars, for the boatswain to apply the lash to those who did not sufficiently exert themselves.

"Viva los Inglesos," cried the galley-slaves, as Easy climbed up over the quarter of the vessel.

"I say, Ned, did you ever see such a precious set of villains?" observed Easy, as he surveyed the faces of the men who were chained.

"No," replied Gascoigne; "and I think if the captain had seen them as we have, that he would have left them where they were."

"I don't know—but however, our orders are positive. Armourer, knock off all the padlocks, beginning aft; when we have a cargo we will land them. How many are there?—twelve dozen; twelve dozen villains to let loose upon society. I have a great mind to go on board again and report my opinion to the captain—one hundred and forty-four villains, who all deserve hanging—for drowning is too good for them."

"Our orders are to liberate them, Jack."

"Yes; but I should like to argue this point with Captain Wilson."

"They'll send after them fast enough, Jack, and they'll all be in limbo again before long," replied Gascoigne.

"Well, I suppose we must obey orders; but it goes against my conscience to save such villainous-looking rascals. Armourer, hammer away."

The armourer, who, with the seamen, appeared very much of Jack's opinion, and had not commenced his work, now struck off the padlocks, one by one, with his sledge-hammer. As soon as they were released the slaves were ordered into the cutter, and when it was sufficiently loaded Jack shoved off, followed by Gascoigne as guard, and landed them at the point about a cable's length distant. It required six trips before they were all landed: the last cargo were on shore, and Easy was desiring the men to shove off, when one of the galleriens turned round, and cried out to Jack in a mocking tone, "Addio signor, a reveder la." Jack started, stared, and in the squalid, naked wretch who addressed him, he recognised Don Silvio!

"I will acquaint Don Rebiera of your arrival, signor," said the miscreant, springing up the rocks, and mixing with the rest, who now commenced hooting and laughing at their preservers.

"Ned," observed Easy to Gascoigne, "we have let that rascal loose."

"More's the pity," replied Gascoigne; "but we have only obeyed orders."

"It can't be helped, but I've a notion there will be some mischief out of this."

"We obeyed orders," replied Gascoigne.

"We've let the rascals loose not ten miles from Don Rebiera's."

"Obeyed orders, Jack."

"With a whole gang to back him, if he goes there."

"Orders, Jack."

"Agnes at his mercy."

"Captain's orders, Jack."

"I shall argue this point when I go on board," replied Jack.

"Too late, Jack."

"Yes," replied Easy, sinking down on the stern sheets with a look of despair.

"Give way, my lads, give way."

Jack returned on board and reported what he had done; also that Don Silvio was among those liberated; and he ventured to mention his fears of what might take place from their contiguity to the house of Don Rebiera. Captain Wilson bit his lips: he felt that his philanthropy had induced him to act without his usual prudence.

"I have done a rash thing, Mr. Easy, I am afraid. I should have taken them all on board and delivered them up to the authorities. I wish I had thought of that before. We must get to Palermo as fast as we can, and have the troops sent after these miscreants. Hands 'bout ship, fill the main-yard."

The wind had veered round, and the *Aurora* was now able to lay up clear of the island of Maritimo. The next morning she anchored in Palermo Roads—gave immediate notice to the authorities, who immediately dispatched a large body of troops in quest of the liberated malefactors. Captain Wilson, feeling for Jack's anxiety about his friends, called him over to him on deck, and gave him and Gascoigne permission to go on shore.

"Will you allow me to take Mesty with me, sir, if you please?" said Jack.

"Yes, Mr. Easy: but recollect that, even with Mesty, you are no match for one hundred and fifty men, so be prudent. I send you to relieve your anxiety, not to run into danger."

"Of course, sir," replied Jack, touching his hat, and walking away quietly till he came to the hatchway, when he darted down like a shot, and was immediately occupied with his preparations.

In half an hour our two midshipmen, with Mesty, had landed, and proceeded to the inn where they had put up before: they were armed up to the teeth. Their first inquiries were for Don Philip and his brother.

"Both on leave of absence," replied the landlord, "and staying with Don Rebiera."

"That's some comfort," thought Jack. "Now we must get horses as fast as we can.—Mesty, can you ride?"

"By all de power can I ride, Massa Easy; suppose you ride Kentucky horse, you ride anyting."

In half an hour four horses and a guide were procured, and at eight o'clock in the morning the party set off in the direction of Don Rebiera's country-seat.

They had not ridden more than six miles when they came up with one of the detachments sent out in pursuit of the liberated criminals. Our hero recognised the commanding officer as an old acquaintance, and imparting to him the release of Don Silvio, and his fears upon Don Rebiera's account, begged him to direct his attention that way.

"Corpo di Bacco—you are right, Signor Mid," replied the officer, "but Don Philip is there, and his brother too, I believe. I will be there by ten o'clock to-morrow morning; we will march almost the whole night."

"They have no arms," observed Easy.

"No, but they will soon get them: they will go to some small town in a body, plunder it, and then seek the protection of the mountains. Your captain has given us a pretty job."

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when they arrived at the seat of Don Rebiera. Jack threw himself off his jaded steed, and hastened into the house, followed by Gascoigne. They found the whole family collected in the large sitting-room, quite ignorant of any danger threatening them, and equally astonished and pleased at the arrival of their old friends. Jack flew to Agnes, who screamed when she saw him, and felt so giddy afterwards that he was obliged to support her. Having seated her

again, he was kindly greeted by the old people and the two young officers. After a few minutes dedicated to mutual inquiries, our hero stated the cause of their expeditious arrival.

"Don Silvio with one hundred and fifty galleriens, let loose on the coast yesterday afternoon!" exclaimed Don Rebiera; "you are right, I only wonder they were not here last night. But I expect Pedro from the town; he has gone down with a load of wine: he will bring us intelligence."

"At all events, we must be prepared," said Don Philip, "the troops you say will be here to-morrow morning."

"How many can we muster?" said Gascoigne.

"We will have five men here, or we shall have by the evening," replied Don Philip—"all, I think, good men—my father, my brother and myself."

"We are three—four with the guide, whom I know nothing about."

"Twelve in all—not one too many; but I think that now we are prepared, if they attack, we can hold out till the morning."

"Had we not better send the ladies away?" said Jack.

"Who is to escort them?" replied Don Philip; "we shall only weaken our force: besides, they may fall into the miscreants' hands."

"Shall we all leave the house together? they can but plunder it," observed Don Rebiera.

"Still we may be intercepted by them, and our whole force will be nothing against so many," observed Don Philip, "if we are without defence, whereas in the house we shall have an advantage."

"E vero," replied Don Rebiera, thoughtfully; "then let us prepare, for depend upon it Don Silvio will not lose such an opportunity to wreak his vengeance. He will be here to-night: I only wonder he has not been here with his companions before. However, Pedro will arrive in two hours."

"We must now see what means we have of defence," said Philip. "Come, brother—will you come, sir?"

CHAPTER XXIV

Don Rebiera and his two sons quitted the room, Gascoigne entered into conversation with the senora, while Easy took this opportunity of addressing Agnes. He had been too much occupied with the consultation to pay her much attention before. He had spoken, with his eyes fixed upon her, and had been surprised at the improvement which had taken place in less than a year.

"Tell me, Agnes, if you had your own will, would you marry me?"

"I don't know; I have never seen any one I liked so well."

"Is that all?"

"Is it not enough for a maiden to say?" replied Agnes, raising her eyes, and looking reproachfully. "Signor, let me go, here comes my father."

The gentlemen returned with all the fire-arms and destructive weapons they could collect.

"We have enough," observed Don Philip, "to arm all the people we have with us."

"And we are all well armed," replied Jack, who had left Agnes standing alone. "What now are your plans?"

"Those we must now consult about. It appears"—but at this moment the conversation was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Pedro, who had been despatched to the town with the load of wine. He rushed in, flurried and heated, with his red cap in his hand.

"How now, Pedro, back so early!"

"O signor!" exclaimed the man—"they have taken the cart and the wine, and have drawn it away up to the mountains."

"Who?" inquired Don Rebiera.

"The galley-slaves who have been let loose—and by the body of our blessed saint, they have done pretty mischief—they have broken into the houses, robbed everything—murdered many—clothed themselves with the best—collected all the arms, provisions, and wine they could lay their hands on, and have marched away into

the mountains. This took place last night. As I was coming down within a mile of the town, they met me with my loaded cart, and they turned the bullocks round and drove them away along with the rest. They are stained with blood, but not altogether of men, for they have cut up some of the oxen. I heard this from one of the herdsmen, but he too fled and could not tell me more. But, signor, I heard them mention your name."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Don Rebiera. "As for the wine, I only hope they will drink too much of it to-night. But, Pedro, they will be here, and we must defend ourselves—so call the men together; I must speak to them."

"We shall never see the bullocks again," observed Pedro mournfully.

"No; but we shall never see one another again, if we do not take care. I have information they come here to-night."

"Holy saint Francis! and they say there are a thousand of them."

"Not quite so many, to my knowledge," observed Jack.

"They told me that a great many were killed in their attack upon the town, before they mastered it."

"So much the better. Go now, Pedro, drink a cup of wine, and then call the other men."

The house was barricaded as well as circumstances would permit; the first story was also made a fortress by loading the landing-place with armoires and chests of drawers. The upper story, or attic, if it might be so called, was defended in the same way, that they might retreat from one to the other if the doors were forced.

It was eight o'clock in the evening before all was ready, and they were still occupied with the last defence, under the superintendence of Mesty, who showed himself an able engineer, when they heard the sound of an approaching multitude. They looked out of one of the windows and perceived the house surrounded by the galley-slaves, in number, apparently, about a hundred. They were all dressed in a most fantastic manner with whatever they could pick up: some had fire-arms, but the most of them were supplied with only swords or knives. With them

came also their cortege of plunder: carts of various descriptions, loaded with provisions of all sorts, and wine; women lashed down with ropes, sails from the vessels and boats to supply them with covering in the mountains, hay and straw and mattresses. Their plunder appeared to be well chosen for their exigencies. To the carts were tied a variety of cattle, intended to accompany them to their retreat. They all appeared to be under a leader, who was issuing directions—that leader was soon recognised by those in the house to be Don Silvio.

"Massa Easy, you show me dat man?" said Mesty, when he heard the conversation between Easy and the Rebieras; "only let me know him."

"Do you see him there, Mesty, walking down in front of those men? he has a musket in his hand, a jacket with silver buttons, and white trousers."

"Yes, Massa Easy, me see him well—let me look little more—dat enough."

The galley-slaves appeared to be very anxious to surround the house that no one should escape, and Don Silvio was arranging the men.

"Ned," said Jack, "let us show him that we are here. He said that he would acquaint Don Rebiera with our arrival—let us prove to him that he is too late."

"It would not be a bad plan," replied Gascoigne; "if it were possible that these fellows had any gratitude among them, some of them might relent at the idea of attacking those who saved them."

"Not a bit; but it will prove to them that there are more in the house than they think for; and we can frighten some of them by telling them that the soldiers are near at hand."

Jack immediately threw up the casement, and called out in a loud voice, "Don Silvio! galley-slave! Don Silvio!"

The party hailed turned round, and beheld Jack, Gascoigne, and Mesty, standing at the window of the upper floor.

"We have saved you the trouble of announcing us," called out Gascoigne. "We are here to receive you."

"And in three hours the troops will be here, so you must be quick, Don Silvio," continued Jack.

The window was then immediately closed. The appearance of our heroes, and their communication of the speedy arrival of the troops, was not without effect. The criminals trembled at the idea; Don Silvio was mad with rage—he pointed out to the men the necessity of immediate attack—the improbability of the troops arriving so soon, and the wealth which he expected was locked up by Don Rebiera in his mansion. This rallied them, and they advanced to the doors, which they attempted to force without success, losing several men by the occasional fire from those within the house. Finding their efforts, after half an hour's repeated attempts, to be useless, they retreated, and then bringing up a long piece of timber, which required sixty men to carry it, they ran with it against the door, and the weight and impetus of the timber drove it off its hinges, and an entrance was obtained. By this time it was dark, the lower story had been abandoned, but the barricade at the head of the stairs opposed their progress. Convenient loop-holes had been prepared by the defenders, who now opened a smart fire upon the assailants, the latter having no means of returning it effectually, had they had ammunition for their muskets, which fortunately they had not been able to procure. The combat now became fierce, and the galley-slaves were several times repulsed, with great loss during a contest of two hours; but, encouraged by Don Silvio, and refreshed by repeated draughts of wine, they continued by degrees removing the barriers opposed to them.

"We shall have to retreat!" exclaimed Don Rebiera; "very soon they will have torn down all. What do you think, Signor Easy?"

"Hold this as long as we can. How are we off for ammunition?"

"Plenty as yet—plenty to last for six hours, I think."

This decision was the occasion of the first defence being held for two hours more, an occasional relief being afforded by the retreat of the convicts to the covered carts.

At last, it was evident that the barricade was no longer tenable, for the heavy pieces of furniture they had heaped up to oppose entrance were completely hammered to fragments by poles brought up by the assailants, and used

as battering-rams. The retreat was sounded; they all hastened to the other story, where the ladies were already placed, and the galley-slaves were soon in possession of the first floor—exasperated by the defence, mad with wine and victory, but finding nothing.

Again was the attack made upon the second landing, but, as the stairs were now narrower, and their defences stronger in proportion, they for a long while gained no advantage. On the contrary, many of their men were wounded and taken down below.

The darkness of the night prevented both parties from seeing distinctly, which was rather in favour of the assailants. Many climbed over the fortress of piled-up furniture, and were killed as soon as they appeared on the other side, and, at last, the only ammunition used was against those who made this rash attempt. For four long hours did this assault and defence continue, until daylight came, and then the plan of assault was altered: they again brought up the poles, hammered the pieces of furniture into fragments, and gained ground. The defenders were worn out with fatigue, but flinched not; they knew that their lives, and the lives of those dearest to them, were at stake, and they never relaxed their exertions; still the criminals, with Silvio at their head, progressed, the distance between the parties gradually decreased, and there was but one massive chest of drawers now defending the landing-place, over which there was a constant succession of blows from long poles and cutlasses, returned with the bullets from their pistols.

"We must now fight for our lives," exclaimed Gascoigne to Easy, "for what else can we do?"

"Do?—get on the roof and fight there, then," replied Jack.

"By-the-bye, that's well thought of, Jack," said Gascoigne. "Mesty, up and see if there is any place we can retreat to in case of need."

Mesty hastened to obey, and soon returned with a report that there was a trap-door leading into the loft under the roof, and that they could draw the ladder up after them.

"Then we may laugh at them," cried Jack. "Mesty, stay here while I and Gascoigne assist the ladies up,"

explaining to the Rebieras and to their domestics why they went.

Easy and Gascoigne hastened to the signora and Agnes, conducted them up the ladder into the loft, and requested them to have no fear; they then returned to the defences on the stairs, and joined their companions. They found them hard pressed, and that there was little chance of holding out much longer; but the stairs were narrow, and the assailants could not bring their force against them. But now, as the defences were nearly destroyed, although the convicts could not reach them with their knives, they brought up a large supply of heavy stones, which they threw with great force and execution. Two of Don Rebiera's men and Don Martin were struck down, and this new weapon proved most fatal.

"We must retreat, Jack," said Gascoigne, "the stones can do no harm where we are going to. What think you, Don Philip?"

"I agree with you; let those who are wounded be first carried up, and then we will follow."

This was effected, and as soon as the wounded men were carried up the ladder, and the arms taken up to prevent their falling into the hands of their assailants, for they were now of little use to them, the ammunition being exhausted, the whole body went into the large room which contained the trap-door of the loft, and, as soon as they were up, they drew the ladder after them. They had hardly effected this, when they were followed with the yells and shoutings of the galley-slaves, who had passed the last barriers, and thought themselves sure of their prey: but they were disappointed—they found them more secure than ever.

Nothing could exceed the rage of Don Silvio at the protracted resistance of the party, and the security of their retreat. To get at them was impossible, so he determined to set fire to the room, and suffocate them, if he could do no otherwise. He gave his directions to his men, who rushed down for straw, but in so doing he carelessly passed under the trap-door, and Mesty, who had carried up with him two or three of the stones, dashed one down on the head of Don Silvio, who fell immediately. He was carried away, but his orders were put in execution;

the room was filled with straw and fodder, and lighted. The effects were soon felt. The trap-door had been shut, but the heat and smoke burst through; after a time, the planks and rafters took fire, and their situation was terrible. A small trap-window in the roof on the side of the house was knocked open, and gave them a temporary relief; but now the rafters burned and crackled, and the smoke burst on them in thick columns. They could not see, and with difficulty could breathe.

Fortunately the room below that which had been fired was but one out of four on the attics, and, as the loft they were in spread over the whole of the roof, they were able to remove far from it. The house was slated with massive slate of some hundredweight each, and it was not found possible to remove them so as to give air, although frequent attempts were made.

"Massa Easy, help me here—Massa Gascoigne, come here. Now heab wid all your might: when we get one off we get plenty."

Summoned by Mesty, Jack and Gascoigne put their shoulders to one of the lower slates; it yielded—was disengaged, and slid down with a loud rattling below. The ladies were brought to it, and their heads put outside; they soon recovered; and now that they had removed one, they found no difficulty in removing others. In a few minutes they were all with their heads in the open air, but still the house was on fire below, and they had no chance of escape. It was while they were debating upon this point, and consulting as to their chance of safety, that a breeze of wind wafted the smoke that issued from the roof away from them, and they beheld the detachment of troops making up to the house; a loud cheer was given, and attracted the notice of the soldiers. They perceived Easy and his companions; the house was surrounded and entered in an instant.

The galley-slaves, who were in the house searching for the treasure reported by Don Silvio to be concealed, were captured or killed, and in five minutes the troops had possession. But how to assist those above was the difficulty. The room below was in flames, and burning fiercely. There were no ladders that could reach so high, and there were no means of getting to them. The com-

mandant made signs from below, as if to ask what he was to do.

"I see no chance," observed Don Philip mournfully. "Easy, my dear fellow, and you, Gascoigne, I am sorry that the feuds of our family should have brought you to such a dreadful death; but what can be done?"

"I don't know," replied Jack, "unless we could get ropes."

"You quite sure, Massa Easy, that all galley-rascals below gone?" asked Mesty.

"Yes," replied Easy, "you may see that; look at some of them bound there, under charge of the soldiers."

"Den, sar, I tink it high time we go too."

"So do I, Mesty; but how?"

"How? stop a little. Come, help me, Massa Easy; dis board (for the loft was floored) is loose, come help, all of you."

They all went, and with united strength pulled up the board.

In a few minutes they had beaten an opening into one of the rooms below not on fire, pulled up another board, and Mesty, having fetched the ladder, they all descended in safety, and, to the astonishment of the commandant of the troops, walked out of the door of the house, those who had been stunned with the stones having so far recovered as to require little assistance.

The soldiers shouted as they saw them appear, supporting the females. The commanding officer, who was an intimate friend of Don Philip, flew to his arms. The prisoners were carefully examined by Mesty, and Don Silvio was not among them. He might, however, be among the dead who were left in the house, which now began to burn furiously. The galley-slaves who were captured amounted in number to forty-seven. Their dead they could not count. The major part of the plunder and the carts were still where they had been drawn up.

As soon as the culprits had been secured, the attention of the troops was directed to putting out the flames, but their attempts were ineffectual; the mansion was burned to the bare walls, and but little of the furniture saved; indeed, the major part of it had been destroyed in the attack made by Don Silvio and his adherents.

Leaving directions with Pedro and his people, that the property collected by the miscreants should be restored to the owners, Don Rebiera ordered the horses, and with the whole party put himself under the protection of the troops, who, as soon as they had been refreshed, and taken some repose, bent their way back to Palermo with the galley-slaves, bound and linked together in a long double row.

They halted when they had gone half-way, and remained for the night. The next day, at noon, Don Rebiera and his family were once more in their palazzo, and our two midshipmen and Mesty took their leave, and repaired on board to make themselves a little less like chimney-sweepers.

Captain Wilson was not out of the ship. Jack made his report, and then went down below, very much pleased at what had passed, especially as he would have another long yarn for the Governor on his return to Malta.

CHAPTER XXV

The *Aurora* continued three weeks at Palermo, during which the most active search had been made for the remainder of the galley-slaves, and some few had been captured, but still Don Silvio, and a considerable number, were at large; and it was said that they had returned to the fastnesses in the mountains. Our hero was constantly on shore at Don Rebiera's house, and, after what had passed, he was now looked upon as soon to become a member of the family. The difference of religion was overlooked by Don Rebiera and the relations—by all but the confessor, Father Thomaso, who now began to agitate and fulminate into the ears of the Donna Rebiera all the pains and penalties attending heretical connections. The effects of his remonstrances were soon visible, and Jack found that there was constraint on the part of the old lady, tears on the part of Agnes, and all father confessors heartily wished at the devil ten times a day on the

part of Don Philip and his brother. At last he wormed the truth out of Agnes, who told her tale, and wept bitterly.

"Ned, I don't much like the appearance of things," observed Jack; "I must get rid of that Father Thomaso."

"You'll find that rather difficult," observed Gascoigne; "besides, if you get rid of him you would have his place filled up with another."

"I shall go and talk to Mesty."

"How can Mesty help you?"

"I don't know, but you can't; so, for want of better advice, I'll try the Ashantee."

Our hero went to Mesty, and laid the difficult affair open to him.

"I see," said Mesty, showing his filed teeth, "you want him skull."

"No, I don't, Mesty; but I want him out of the way."

"How dat possible, Massa Easy?—ship sail day after to-morrow. Now 'pose I ab time, I soon manage all dat. Stop a little."

"Confound it! but there's no stopping," replied Jack.

"Suppose, Massa Easy, you get leave go on shore—not come off again."

"That will be deserting, Mesty."

"By holy poker, I ab it—you go on shore and break your leg."

"Break my leg!—break my leave, you mean?"

"No, Massa Easy—you break your leg—den captain leave you shore, and leave me take care of you."

"But why should I break my leg, and how am I to break my leg?"

"Only pretend break leg, Massa Easy. Go talk Massa Don Philip, he manage all dat.—Suppose man break his leg in seven pieces, it is not possible to take him board."

"Seven pieces, Mesty! that's rather too many. However, I'll think of this."

Jack then went back and consulted Gascoigne, who approved of Mesty's advice, and thought the scheme feasible.

"If we could only pretend that we were thrown out of a caricola, you break your leg, a compound fracture of

course!—I break my arm—both left on shore at sick quarters, with Mesty to take care of us."

"Capital indeed," replied Jack; "I really would not mind it if it really took place; at all events we'll overturn the caricola."

"But shall we get leave the last day?"

"Yes, it's two days since I have been on shore, for I have not liked to go to Don Rebiera's since what Agnes told me. Besides, my clothes are all on shore, and that will be an excuse for a few hours."

Our two midshipmen applied for leave the next morning to be off in the afternoon. The first lieutenant gave them permission. They hastened to the hotel, sent for Don Philip, and made him a party to their plan. He readily promised his assistance, for he had resolved that our hero should marry his sister, and was fearful of the effect of his absence, coupled with Friar Thomaso's influence over his mother. He went to the surgeon of his regiment, who immediately entered into the scheme.

Our two midshipmen got into a caricola, rattled up and down the streets, and perceiving Captain Wilson at his window flogged the horse into a gallop: when abreast of the barracks Jack ran the wheel against a bank, and threw himself and Gascoigne out. Midshipmen are never hurt by these accidents, but fortunately for the success of the enterprise their faces were cut and bruised. Don Philip was standing by: he called the men to pick up our two scamps, carried them into the barracks, and sent for the surgeons, who undressed them, put Jack's left leg into a multitude of splints, and did the same to Gascoigne's arm. They were then put to bed, their contused faces with the blood left *in statu quo*, while Don Philip sent an orderly, as from the commandant, to Captain Wilson, to acquaint him that two of his officers had been thrown out of a caricola, and were lying dangerously hurt at the barracks.

"Good heavens, it must be Mr. Easy and Mr. Gascoigne!" said Captain Wilson, when the intelligence was communicated; "I saw them galloping down the street like two madmen just now. Coxswain, take the gig on board and tell the surgeon to come on shore immediately, and bring him up to me at the barracks."

Captain Wilson then put on his hat, buckled on his sword, and hastened to ascertain the extent of the injury. Don Philip kept out of the way, but the captain was ushered into the room by one of the officers, where he found, in two beds, our two midshipmen stretched out, the surgeon of the forces and the regimental surgeon in consultation between them, while attendants were standing by each bed with restoratives. The medical gentlemen saluted Captain Wilson, and looked very grave, talked about fractures, contusions, injuries, in the most interminable manner—hoped that Mr. Easy would recover—but had doubts. The other gentleman might do well with care; that is, as far as his arm was concerned, but there appeared to be a concussion of the brain. Captain Wilson looked at the cut and blood-smeared faces of the two young men, and waited with anxiety the arrival of his own surgeon, who came at last, puffing with the haste he had made, and received the report of the brothers of the faculty.

The leg of Mr. Easy fractured in two places—had been set—bone protruding—impossible to move him. Gascoigne, arm, compound fracture—concussion of the brain not certain. Now, that all this would have been discovered to be false if the surgeon had been able to examine, is true; but how could he not credit the surgeon of the forces and the regimental surgeon, and how could he put the young men to fresh tortures by removing splints and unsetting limbs? Politeness, if nothing else, prevented his so doing, for it would have been as much as to say that either he did not credit their report, or that he doubted their skill. He looked at our hero and his companions, who kept their eyes closed, and breathed heavily with their mouths open, put on a grave face as well as his brothers in the art, and reported to Captain Wilson.

"But when can they be moved, Mr. Daly?" inquired the latter; "I cannot wait; we must sail to-morrow, or the next day at the farthest."

The surgeon, as in duty bound, put the question to the others, who replied that there would be great risk in removing before the fever, which might be expected the next day, and which might last ten days; but that Captain Wilson had better not think of removing them,

as they should have every care and attention where they were and could rejoin the ship at Malta. Mr. Daly, the surgeon, agreed that this would be the most prudent step, and Captain Wilson then gave his consent.

That being settled, he walked up to the bed of Gascoigne, and spoke to him; but Gascoigne knew that he was to have a concussion of the brain, and he made no reply, nor gave any signs of knowing that Captain Wilson was near him. He then went to our hero, who, at the sound of Captain Wilson's voice, slowly opened his eyes without moving his head, and appeared to recognise him.

"Are you in much pain, Easy?" said the captain kindly.

Easy closed his eyes again, and murmured, "Mesty, Mesty!"

"He wants his servant, the ship's corporal, sir," said the surgeon.

"Well," replied Captain Wilson, "he had better have him: he is a faithful fellow, and will nurse him well. When you go on board, Mr. Daly, desire the first lieutenant to send Mesty on shore with Mr. Gascoigne's and Mr. Easy's chests, and his own bag and hammock. Good heavens! I would not for a thousand pounds that this accident had occurred. Poor foolish boys—they run in couples, and if one's in a scrape the other is sure to share it. Gentlemen, I return you many thanks for your kindness, and I must accept of your promised care for my unfortunate officers. I sail to-morrow at daylight. You will oblige me by informing their friends, the Rebieras, of their mischance, as I am sure they will contribute all they can to their comfort." So saying, Captain Wilson bowed and quitted the room, followed by the surgeon.

As soon as the door was closed the two midshipmen turned their heads round and looked at each other, but they were afraid to speak at first, in case of the return of the surgeon. As soon as it was announced to them that Captain Wilson and Mr. Daly were outside the barrack gates our hero commenced—"Do you know, Ned, that my conscience smites me, and if it had not been that I should have betrayed those who wish to oblige us, when poor Captain Wilson appeared so much hurt and annoyed at our accident, I was very near getting up and telling him of the imposition, to relieve his mind."

Don Philip now came in. He had seen Captain Wilson, who had requested him to look after the two invalids, and stated his intention to sail the next morning. They consulted with him, and it was agreed that no one should be acquainted with the real fact but his brother Martin, and that all Palermo should be as much deceived as Captain Wilson, for if not, it would put Father Thomaso on the *qui vive*, and make him fulminate more than ever. Our midshipmen ate an excellent dinner, and then remained in bed conversing till it was time to go to sleep; but long before that, Mesty had made his appearance with their clothes.

The next morning Captain Wilson called to ascertain how our hero and his companion were, but the room had been darkened, and he could not see their faces plainly. Easy thanked him for his kindness in allowing Mesty to attend them, and having received his orders as to their joining the ship as soon as they recovered, and having promised to be very cautious in their behaviour and keep out of all scrapes, he wished them a speedy recovery, and departed.

In little more than half an hour afterwards, Mesty, who had been peeping out of the shutters, suddenly threw them open with a loud laugh.

The *Aurora* was under way, with studding sails below and aloft, standing out of the roads.

The two midshipmen got into their beds, and Mesty sat on the chest between them, looking as grave as a judge. The question was, how to get rid of the padre Thomaso. Was he to be thrown over the molehead to the fishes—or his skull broke—was Mesty's knife to be resorted to—was he to be kidnapped or poisoned—or were fair means to be employed—persuasion, bribery?

As our hero and Gascoigne were not Italians, they thought that bribery would be the more English-like way of doing the thing; so they composed a letter, to be delivered by Mesty to the friar, in which Jack offered to Father Thomaso the moderate sum of one thousand dollars, provided he would allow the marriage to proceed. As Mesty was often on shore with Jack, and knew the friar well by sight, it was agreed that the letter should be confided to his charge; but, as it was not consistent that a

person in such a state as our hero was represented to be should sit up and write letters, the delivery was deferred for a few days, when, after waiting that time, Mesty delivered the letter to the friar, and made signs that he was to take back the answer. The friar beckoned him that he was to accompany him to his room, where he read the letter, and then again made signs to him to follow him. The friar led the way to his monastery, and as soon as Mesty was in his cell, he summoned another who could speak English to act as interpreter.

"Is your master recovering?"

"Yes," replied Mesty, "he is at present doing well."

"Have you served him long?"

"No," replied Mesty.

"Are you very fond of him? does he treat you well, give you plenty of money?"

At these questions, the artful black conceived that there was something in the wind, and he therefore very quietly replied, "I do not care much for him."

The friar fixed his keen eye upon Mesty, and perceived there was a savage look about the black, from which he argued that he was a man who would suit his purpose.

"Your master offers me a thousand dollars; would you wish to gain this money for yourself?"

Mesty grinned and showed his sharp-filed teeth.

"It would make me a rich man in my own country."

"It would," replied the friar; "now you shall have it, if you will only give your master a small powder."

"I understand," replied Mesty; "hab those things in my country."

"Well—do you consent?—if so, I will write the letter to get the money."

"Suppose they find me out?" replied Mesty.

"You will be safe, and you shall be sent away as soon as possible—say, will you consent?"

"The whole thousand dollars?"

"Every one of them."

"Den give me the powder?"

"Stay a little," replied the friar, who went out of the cell, and, in about ten minutes, returned with an answer to our hero's letter and a paper containing a grayish powder.

Give him this in his soup or anything—spread it on his meat, or mix it up with his sugar if he eats an orange."

"I see," replied Mesty.

"The dollars shall be yours."

Mesty grinned horribly, took his credentials, and then asked, "When I come again?"

"As soon as you have received the money bring it to me at Don Rebiera's—then give the powder: as soon as it is given you must let me know, for you must not remain in Palermo. I will myself conduct you to a place of safety."

Mesty then quitted the cell and was shown out of the monastery. He soon arrived at the barracks, and repeated the whole of the conference between him and the Friar Thomaso.

"It must be poison, of course," observed Gascoigne; "suppose we try it upon some animal?"

"No, Massa Gascoigne," replied Mesty, "I try it myself, by-and-by. Now what we do?"

"I must give you the order for the thousand dollars, Mesty," replied Jack. "The rascal here writes to me that for that sum he will consent not only not to oppose me, but agrees to assist my cause; but the great question is, whether he will keep his word with you, Mesty; if not, I shall lose my money. So therefore we must now have another palaver and argue the point."

The point was argued between Jack and Gascoigne. A thousand dollars was a large sum, but Jack's father was a philosopher. After many *pros* and *cons*, it was at last decided that the money should be given to Mesty; but that Mesty should state, when he took the money to the friar, that he had administered the powder, and claim it when he presented it.

The next day the order for the money was given to Mesty, and he went to the Friar Thomaso with it. The friar hastened with Mesty to the monastery and sent for the interpreter.

"You have given it?" inquired the friar.

"Yes—not one hour ago. Here de order for de money."

"You must run for the money before he is dead, for the powder is very rapid."

"And me," replied Mesty, apparently much alarmed, "where am I to go?"

"As soon as you bring the money here, you must go back to the barracks. Remain there till he is dead, and then return here. I will have all ready, and take you, as soon as it is dusk, to a monastery of our order in the mountains, where no one will think of looking for you till the affair is blown over; and then I will find you a passage in some vessel out of the island."

Mesty hastened for the money, and taking it in a large bag to the monastery, delivered it to the friar's charge and then returned to the barracks to Easy and Gascoigne. It was agreed that he should go with the friar, who would probably remain away some time; indeed, Mesty insisted upon so doing. Mesty stayed two hours, and then returned about dusk to the monastery and reported the death of our hero. He remained there until it was dark, and then the friar ordered him to tie the bag of dollars to his saddle-bow. They mounted two mules, which stood already caparisoned, and quitted Palermo.

In the morning, Don Philip, as usual, made his appearance, and told our hero that the friar had been summoned away by the abbot, and would not return for some time.

"I came to tell you this news," said Don Philip, "as I thought it would please you; the sooner you are now well, the better. I mean to propose your both being removed to my father's palazzo, and then you can recover your lost ground during the confessor's absence."

"And I have the means," replied Jack, showing the friar's letter. Don Philip read it with astonishment, but was still more surprised when he heard the whole story from Jack. He was for a time silent: at last he said:

"I am sorry for your poor black."

"Why so?" replied Jack.

"You will never see him again, depend upon it. A thousand dollars would sign the death-warrant of a thousand blacks; but there is another reason—they will put him out of the way that he may not give evidence. Where is the powder?"

"Mesty has it; he would not part with it."

"He is a shrewd fellow, that black; he may be too much for the friar," replied Don Philip.

"He means mischief, I'm sure," replied Gascoigne.

"Still I feel a great deal of alarm about him," replied Easy; "I wish now that I had not let him go."

"Are you sure that he went?"

"No, I am not; but the friar told him that he should take him to the mountains as soon as it was dark."

"And probably he will," replied Don Philip, "as the best place to get rid of him. However, the whole of this story must be told both to my father and my mother; to the former that he may take the right measures, and to my mother that it may open her eyes. Give me the copy of the letter you wrote to the friar, and then I shall have it all."

Two days after Don Philip had made his parents acquainted with the villainy of the friar, the midshipmen were transported to the palazzo.

To Don Rebiera Jack made known formally his intentions with regard to Agnes. He fully satisfied him as to his qualifications and his property, and Don Rebiera was fully aware of his debt of gratitude to our hero. But all he required was the consent of Jack's father, and until this was obtained, he would not consent to the marriage taking place. Jack attempted to argue the point; his father, he said, had married without consulting him, and therefore he had a right to marry without consulting his father. But Don Rebiera, not having any acquaintance with the rights of man and equality, did not feel the full force of Jack's argument, and made it a *sine qua non* that his parents should write and consent to the alliance before it took place.

CHAPTER XXVI

On the fourth evening after the removal of our two midshipmen to the palazzo of Don Rebiera, as they were sitting in company with Agnes and Don Philip in their

own room, a friar made his appearance at the door. They all started, for by his height they imagined him to be the Friar Thomaso, but no one addressed him. The friar shut the door without saying a word, and then lifting up his cowl, which had been drawn over it, discovered the black face of Mesty. Agnes screamed, and all sprang from their seats at this unusual and unexpected apparition. Mesty grinned, and there was that in his countenance which said that he had much to communicate.

"Where is the friar, Mesty?" inquired Easy.

"Stop a little, Massa—suppose we lock door first, and den I tell all."

Taking this precaution, Mesty threw off the friar's gown, and appeared in his own dress, with the bag of dollars slung round his body.

"Dat all right, sar. Friar and I get on two mules as soon as it quite dark. He make me carry all tousand dollars—and we ride out of town. We go up mountain and mountain, but the moon get up shine and we go on cheek by jowl—he nebber say one word, and I nebber say one word, 'cause I no speak his lingo, and he no understand my English. About two o'clock in de morning, we stop at a house and stay dere till eight o'clock, and den we go on again all next day, up all mountain, only stop once, eat a bit bread and drink lilly wine. Second night come on, and den we stop again, and people bow very low to him, and women bring in rabbit for make supper. I go in the kitchen, woman make stew smell very nice, so I nod my head, and I say very good, and she make a face, and throw on table black loaf of bread and garlic, and make sign dat for my supper; good enough for black fellow, and dat rabbit stew for friar. Den I say to myself, stop a little; suppose friar hab all de rabbit, I tink I give him a lilly powder."

"The powder, Mesty?" exclaimed Jack.

"What does he say?" inquired Don Philip.

Gascoigne translated all that Mesty had communicated. The interest of the narrative now became exciting. Mesty continued:

"Well, Massa Easy, den woman she go for dish to put stew in, and I take de powder and drop it in de pot, and den I sit down again and eat black bread, she say good

enough for black man. She tir up de stew once more, and den she pour it out into dish, and take it to friar. He lick um chops, by all de powers, and he like um so well he pick all de bones, and wipe up gravy with him bread. You tink it very nice, Massa Friar, tink I; but stop a little. After he drink a whole bottle of wine he tell em bring mules to de door, and he put him hands on de woman head, and dat de way he pay for him supper.

"The moon shone bright, and we go up all mountain, always go up, and 'bout two hour, he got off him mule and he put him hand so, and set down on de rock. He twist, and he turn and he groan for half an hour, and den he look at me, as much as to say, you black villain, you do this? for he not able to speak, and den I pull out de paper of de powder, and show him, and make him sign he swallow it: he look again, and I laugh at him—and he die."

Mesty, at the request of our hero, proceeded: "Den I thought what I should do, and I said I would hide him, and I tink I take his coat for myself—so I pull off him coat and I pull off all his oder clothes—he not wear many—and I take the body in my arm and carry him where I find a great split in de rock above all road. I throw him in, and den I throw plenty large pieces rock on him till I no see him any more; den I take de two mules and get on mine wid de dollars, and lead the other three four mile, till I come to a large wood—take off him saddle and bridle, turn him adrift. Den I tear up all clothes all in lilly bits, hide one piece here, noder piece dere, and de saddle and bridle in de bush. All right now, I say; so put on friar cloak, hide my face, get on my mule, and den I look where I shall go—so I say, I not be in dis road anyhow. I passed through wood till I find nother. I go 'bout two mile—moon go down, all dark, and five six men catch hold my bridle, and they all got arms, so I do nothing—they speak to me, but I no answer, and neber show my face. They find all dollars fast enough, and they lead me away through the wood. Last we come to large fire in de wood, plenty of men lie 'bout, some eat and some drink. They pull me off, and I hold down my head and fold my ams, just like friar do. They bring me along to one man, and pour out all my dollar before him. He give some order, and they take me away, and I peep through the

cloak, and I say to myself, he that galley-slave rascal Don Silvio."

"Don Silvio!" cried Jack.

"What does he say of Don Silvio?" demanded Don Philip.

Mesty's narrative was again translated, and he continued.

"Dey lead me away 'bout fifty yards, tie me to tree, and den leave me, and dey all drink and make merry, neber offer me anyting; so I hab noting den to eat. I eat de ropes and gnaw them through, and den I stay there two hour until all go asleep, and all quiet; for I say to myself, stop a little. Den when dey all fast asleep, I take out my knife and I crawl 'long de ground, as we do in our country sometime—and den I stop and look 'bout me; no man watch but two, and dey look out for squarl, not look in board where I was. I crawl 'gain till I lay down 'longside that galley-slave Don Silvio. He lie fast asleep with my bag thousand dollars under him head. So I tink, 'you not hab dem long, you rascal.' I look round—all right, and I drive my knife good aim into him heart, and press toder hand on him mouth, but he make no noise; he struggle little and look up, and den I throw off de head of de gown and show him my black face, and he look and he try to speak; but I stop dat, for down go my knife again, and de galley-slave dead as herring."

"Dead, Don Silvio dead! well, Mesty, we are eternally obliged to you, for there was no safety for my father while he was living. Let him go on."

"So when I put de knife through his body, I lie down by him, as if noting had happened, for ten minute, and den I take de bag of dollars from under him head, and den I feel him all over, and I find him pistols and him purse, which I hab here, all gold. So I take them and I look—all asleep, and I crawl back to de tree. Den I stay to tink a little; de man on watch come up and look at me, but he tink all right and he go away again. Lucky ting, by de power, dat I go back to tree. I wait again, and den I crawl and crawl till I clear of all, and den I take to my heel and run for um life, till daylight come, and den I so tired I lie down in bush: I stay in bush all day, and den I set off again back here, for I find road

and know my way. I not eat den for one day and one night, and come to house where I put my head in and find woman there. I not able to speak, so I help myself, and not show my face. She not like dat and make a bobbery, but I lift up my cloak and show my black face and white teeth, and den she tink me de devil. She ran out of de house and I help myself very quick, and den set off and come close here yesterday morning. I hide myself all day and come in at night, and now, Massa Easy, you ab all de whole truth—and you ab your tousand dollars—and you ab got rid of de rascal friar and de galley-slave Don Silvio."

"Tell them all this, Ned," said Jack, who, whilst Gascoigne was so employed, talked with Mesty.

"I was very much frightened for you, Mesty," said Jack; "but still I thought you quite as cunning as the friar, and so it has turned out; but the thousand dollars ought to be yours."

"No, sar," replied Mesty, "the dollars not mine; but I hab plenty of gold in Don Silvio's purse—plenty, plenty of gold. I keep my property, Massa Easy, and you keep yours."

The consultation between our two midshipmen and Don Philip was not long: they perceived the immediate necessity for the departure of Mesty, and the suspicion which would attach to themselves. Don Philip and Agnes left them, to go to Don Rebiera, and make him acquainted with what had passed, and to ask his advice.

When they went into the room, Don Rebiera immediately accosted his son.

"Have you heard, Philip, that Friar Thomaso has returned at last?—so the servants tell me."

"The report may be fortunate," replied Don Philip; "but I have another story to tell you."

He then sat down and imparted to Don Rebiera all the adventures of Mesty. Don Rebiera was for some time in deep thought; at last he replied:

"That Don Silvio is no more is fortunate, and the negro would be entitled to reward for his destruction—but for the friar, that is a bad business. The negro might remain and tell the whole story, and the facts might be proved by the evidence of Signor Easy and the letters; but what

then ? we should raise the whole host of the clergy against our house, and we have suffered too much from them already; the best plan would be the immediate departure, not only of the negro, but of our two young friends. The supposition of Friar Thomaso being here, and their departure with the negro servant to rejoin their ship, will remove much suspicion and destroy all inquiry. They must be off immediately. Go to them, Philip, and point out to them the absolute necessity of this measure, and tell our young friend that I rigidly adhere to my promise, and as soon as he has his father's sanction I will bestow upon him my daughter. In the meantime I will send down and see if a vessel can be chartered for Malta."

Our hero and Gascoigne fully admitted the wisdom of this measure, and prepared for their departure; indeed, now that Don Rebiera's resolution had been made known to Jack, he cared more for obtaining his father's consent than he did for remaining to enjoy himself at Palermo, and before noon of the next day all was ready, the vessel had been procured, Jack took his leave of Agnes and her mother, and accompanied by Don Rebiera and Don Philip (for Don Martin was on duty a few miles from Palermo), went down to the beach, and having bid them farewell embarked with Gascoigne and Mesty on board of the two-masted lateen which had been engaged, and before sunset not a steeple of Palermo was to be seen.

CHAPTER XXVII

On the fourth day they arrived at Malta, and our two midshipmen, as soon as they had settled with the padrone of the vessel, went up to the government-house. They found the Governor in the veranda, who held out both his hands, one to each.

"Glad to see you, my lads. Well, Jack, how's the leg, all right ? don't limp. And your arm, Gascoigne ? "

"All right, sir, and as sound as ever it was," replied they both.

"Then you're in luck, and have made more haste than you deserve, after your mad pranks; but now sit down, and I suppose, my friend Jack, you have a story to tell me."

"Oh, yes, Sir Thomas, and a very long one."

"Then I won't have it now, for I expect people on business; we'll have it after dinner. Get your things up and take possession of your rooms. The *Aurora* sailed four days ago. You've had a wonderful recovery."

"Wonderful, sir!" replied our hero; "all Palermo rings with it."

"Well, you may go now—I shall see you at dinner. Wilson will be delighted when he hears that you have got round again, for he was low-spirited about it, I can tell you, which is more than you deserve."

"He's right there," said our hero to Gascoigne as they walked away.

When dinner was over, Jack narrated to the Governor the adventures of Mesty, with which he was much interested; but when they were quite alone in the evening, the Governor called our two midshipmen into the veranda, and said:

"Now, my lads, I'm not going to preach, as the saying is, but I've been long enough in the world to know that a compound fracture of the leg is not cured in fourteen or sixteen days. I ask you to tell me the truth. Did not you deceive Captain Wilson on this point?"

"I am ashamed to say that we did, sir," replied Easy.

"How did you manage that, and why?"

Jack then went into further details relative to himself and his amour, stating his wish to be left behind and all that had passed.

"Well, there's some excuse for you, but none for the surgeons. If any surgeon here had played such a trick, I would have hung him, as sure as I'm Governor. This affair of yours has become serious. Mr. Easy, we must have some conversation on the matter to-morrow morning."

The next morning the packet from England was reported

off the harbour's mouth. After breakfast the letters were brought on shore, and the Governor sent for our hero.

"Mr. Easy, here are two letters for you, I am sorry to say with black seals. I trust that they do not bring the intelligence of the death of any very near relative."

Jack bowed without speaking, took the letters, and went to his room. The first he opened was from his father.

"My dear John—

"You will be much grieved to hear that your poor mother, after sitting in the corner for nearly two years waiting for the millennium, appeared to pine away; whether from disappointment or not I do not know; but at last, in spite of all Dr. Middleton could do, she departed this life; and, as the millennium would not come to her as she expected, it is to be hoped she is gone to the millennium. She was a good wife, and I always let her have her own way. Dr. Middleton does not appear to be satisfied as to the cause of her death, and has wished to examine; but I said no, for I am a philosopher, and it is no use looking for causes after effects; but I have done since her death what she never would permit me to do during her life. I have had her head shaved, and examined it very carefully as a phrenologist, and most curiously has she proved the truth of the sublime science. I will give you the result. Determination, very prominent; Benevolence, small; Caution, extreme; Veneration, not very great; Imagination, very strong: you know, my dear boy, she was always imagining some nonsense or another. Her other organs were all moderate. Poor dead creature! she is gone, and we may well wail, for a better mother or a better wife never existed. And now, my dear boy, I must request that you call for your discharge, and come home as soon as possible. I cannot exist without you, and I require your assistance in the grand work I have in contemplation. The time is at hand, the cause of equality will soon triumph; the abject slaves now hold up their heads; I have electrified them with my speeches, but I am getting old and feeble; I require my son to leave my

mantle to, as one prophet did to another, and then I will, like him, ascend in glory.—Your affectionate Father,

"NICODEMUS EASY."

From this it would appear, thought Jack, that my mother is dead, and that my father is mad. For some time our hero remained in a melancholy mood; he dropped many tears to the memory of his mother, whom, if he had never respected, he had much loved; and it was not till half an hour had elapsed, that he thought of opening the other letter. It was from Dr. Middleton.

"MY DEAR BOY—

"Although not a correspondent of yours, I take the right of having watched you through all your childhood, and from a knowledge of your disposition, to write you a few lines. That you have by this time discarded your father's foolish, nonsensical philosophy, I am very sure. It was I who advised your going away for that purpose, and I am sure that, as a young man of sense and the heir to a large property, you will before this have seen the fallacy of your father's doctrines. Your father tells me that he has requested you to come home, and allow me to add any weight I may have with you in persuading you to do the same. It is fortunate for you that the estate is entailed, or you might soon be a beggar, for there is no saying what debts he might, in his madness, be guilty of. He has already been dismissed from the magistracy by the lord lieutenant, in consequence of his haranguing the discontented peasantry, and, I may say, exciting them to acts of violence and insubordination. He has been seen dancing and hurrahing round a stack fired by an incendiary. He has turned away his keepers, and allowed all poachers to go over the manor. In short, he is not in his senses; and, although I am far from advising coercive measures, I do consider that it is absolutely necessary that you should immediately return home and look after what will one day be your property. You have no occasion to follow the profession with eight thousand pounds per annum. You have distinguished yourself—now make room for those who require it for their subsis-

tence. God bless you. I shall soon hope to shake hands with you.

"Yours most truly,
"G. MIDDLETON."

There was matter for deep reflection in these two letters, and Jack never felt before how much his father had been in the wrong. That he had gradually been weaned from his ideas was true, but still he had, to a certain degree, clung to them, as we do to a habit; but now he felt that his eyes were opened; the silly, almost unfeeling, letter of his father upon the occasion of his mother's death opened his eyes. For a long while Jack was in a melancholy meditation, and then, casting his eyes upon his watch, he perceived that it was almost dinner-time. That he could eat his dinner was certain, and he scorned to pretend to feel what he did not. He therefore dressed himself and went down, grave, it is true, but not in tears. He spoke little at dinner, and retired as soon as it was over, presenting his two letters to the Governor, and asking his advice for the next morning. Gascoigne followed him, and to him he confided his trouble; and Ned, finding that Jack was very low-spirited, consoled him to the best of his power, and brought a bottle of wine which he procured from the butler. Before they retired to bed, Jack had given his ideas to his friend, which were approved of, and wishing him a good-night, he threw himself into bed, and was soon fast asleep.

"One thing is certain, my good fellow," observed the Governor to our hero, as he gave him back his letters at the breakfast table the next morning; "that your father is as mad as a March hare. I agree with that doctor, who appears a sensible man, that you had better go home immediately."

"And leave the service altogether, sir?" replied Jack.

"Why, I must say that I do not think you exactly fitted for it. I shall be sorry to lose you, as you have a wonderful talent for adventure, and I shall have no more yarns to hear when you return: but, if I understand right from Captain Wilson, you were brought into the profession because he thought that the service might be of use in

eradicating false notions, rather than from any intention or necessity of your following it up as a profession."

"And yet, sir, I think, considering all, I have behaved pretty well."

"You have behaved very well, my good lad, on all occasions in which your courage and conduct, as an officer, have been called forth. I admit it; and had you been sent to sea with a mind properly regulated, and without such an unlimited command of money, I have no doubt but that you would have proved an ornament to the service. Even now I think you would, if you were to remain in the service under proper guidance and necessary restrictions, for you have, at least, learned to obey, which is absolutely necessary before you are fit to command. But recollect, what would your conduct have brought upon you if you had not been under the parental care of Captain Wilson? But let us say no more about that: a midshipman with the prospect of eight thousand pounds a year is an anomaly which the service cannot admit, especially when that midshipman is resolved to take to himself a wife."

"I hope that you approve of that step, sir."

"That entirely depends upon the merit of the party, which I know nothing of, except that she has a pretty face, and is of one of the best Sicilian families. I think the difference of religion a ground of objection."

"We will argue that point, sir," replied Jack.

"Perhaps it will be the cause of more argument than you think for, Mr. Easy; but every man makes his own bed, and as he makes it, so must he lie down in it."

"What am I to do about Mesty, sir? I cannot bear the idea of parting with him."

"I am afraid that you must; I cannot well interfere there."

"He is of little use to the service, sir; he has been sent to sick quarters as my servant: if he may be permitted to go home with me, I will procure his discharge as soon as I arrive, and send him on board the guard-ship till I obtain it."

"I think that, on the whole, he is as well out of the service as in it, and therefore I will, on consideration, take upon myself the responsibility, provided you do as you say."

The conversation was here ended, as the Governor had business to attend to, and Jack and Gascoigne went to their rooms to make their arrangements.

"The Governor is right," observed Gascoigne; "it is better that we part, Jack. You have half unfitted me for the service already; I have a disgust of the midshipmen's berth; the very smell of pitch and tar has become odious to me. This is all wrong; I must forget you and all our pleasant cruises on shore, and once more swelter in my greasy jacket. When I think that if our pretended accidents were discovered, I should be dismissed the service, and remember the misery which that would cause to my poor father, I tremble at my escape. The Governor is right, Jack: we must part, but I hope you never will forget me."

"My hand upon it, Ned. Command my interest, if ever I have any—my money—what I have, and the house, whether it belongs to me or my father—as far as you are concerned at least, I adhere to my notions of perfect equality."

"And abjure them, I trust, Jack, as a universal principle."

"I admit, as the Governor asserts, that my father is as mad as a March hare."

"That is sufficient; you don't know how glad it makes me to hear you say that."

Mesty's delight at leaving the service, and going home with his patron, was indescribable. He laid out a portion of his gold in a suit of plain clothes, white linen shirts, and in every respect the wardrobe of a man of fashion; in fact, he was now a complete gentleman's gentleman; was very particular in frizzing his woolly hair—wore a white neckcloth, gloves, and cane. Every one felt inclined to laugh when he made his appearance; but there was something in Mesty's look, which, at all events, prevented their doing so before his face. The day for sailing arrived. Jack took leave of the Governor, thanking him for his great kindness, and stating his intention of taking Malta in his way out to Palermo in a month or two. Gascoigne went on board with him, and did not go down the vessel's side till it was more than a mile clear of the harbour.

CHAPTER XXVIII

At last the packet anchored in Falmouth Roads. Jack, accompanied by Mesty, was soon on shore with his luggage, threw himself into the mail, arrived in London, and waiting there two or three days to obtain what he considered necessary from a fashionable tailor, ordered a chaise to Forest Hill. He had not written to his father to announce his arrival, and it was late in the morning when the chaise drew up at his father's door.

Jack stepped out and rang the bell. The servants who opened the door did not know him; they were not the same as those he left.

"Where is Mr. Easy?" demanded Jack.

"Who are you?" replied one of the men, in a gruff tone.

"By de powers, you very soon find out who he is," observed Mesty.

"Stay here, and I'll see if he is at home."

"Stay here! stay in the hall like a footman? What do you mean, you rascal?" cried Jack, attempting to push by the man.

"Oh, that won't do here, master; this is Equality Hall; one man's as good as another."

"Not always," replied Jack knocking him down. "Take that for your insolence, pack up your traps and walk out of the house to-morrow morning."

Mesty in the meantime, had seized the other by the throat.

"What I do with this fellow, Massa Easy?"

"Leave them now, Mesty; we'll settle their account to-morrow morning. I presume I shall find my father in the library."

"His father!" said one of the men to the other; "he's not exactly a chip of the old block."

"We shall have a change, I expect," replied the other, as they walked away.

"Mesty," cried Jack, in an authoritative tone, "bring those two rascals back to take the luggage out of the chaise; pay the postilion, and tell the housekeeper to show

you my room and yours. Come to me for orders as soon as you have done this."

"Yes, sir," replied Mesty. "Now come here, and take tings out of chaise, or I choke your luff, both of you."

The filed teeth, the savage look, and determination of Mesty, had the due effect. The men sullenly returned and unloaded the chaise. In the meantime, Jack walked into his father's study; his father was there—the study was lighted up with argand lamps, and Jack looked with astonishment. Mr. Easy was busy with a plaster cast of a human head, which he pored over, so that he did not perceive the entrance of his son. The cast of the skull was divided into many compartments, with writing on each; but what most astonished our hero was the alteration in the apartment. The book-cases and books had all been removed, and in the centre, suspended from the ceiling, was an apparatus which would have puzzled any one, composed of rods in every direction, with screws at the end of them, and also tubes in equal number, one of which communicated with a large air-pump, which stood on a table. Jack took a short survey, and then walked up to his father and accosted him.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Easy, "is it possible?—yes, it is my son John! I'm glad to see you, John—very glad indeed," continued the old gentleman, shaking him by both hands—"very glad that you have come home: I wanted you—wanted your assistance in my great and glorious project, which, I thank Heaven, is now advancing rapidly. Very soon shall equality and the rights of man be proclaimed everywhere."

Jack sighed, and to turn the conversation he observed, "You have made a great change in this room, sir. What may all this be for? Is it a machine to improve equality and the rights of man?"

"My dear son," replied Mr. Easy, sitting down, and crossing his legs complacently, with his two hands under his right thigh, according to his usual custom when much pleased with himself—"why, my dear son, that is not exactly the case, and yet you have shown some degree of perception even in your guess; for if my invention succeeds, and I have no doubt of it, I shall have discovered the great

art of rectifying the mistakes of nature, and giving an equality of organisation to the whole species, of introducing all the finer organs of humanity, and of destroying the baser."

"Will you do me the favour to explain an invention so extraordinary, sir?" said our hero.

"Most willingly, my boy. You observe that in the centre there is a frame to confine the human head, somewhat larger than the head itself, and that the head rests upon the iron collar beneath. When the head is thus firmly fixed, suppose I want to reduce the size of any particular organ, I take the boss corresponding to where that organ is situated in the cranium, and fix it on it. For you will observe that all the bosses inside of the top of the frame correspond to the organs as described in this plaster-cast on the table. I then screw down pretty tight, and increase the pressure daily, until the organ disappears altogether, or is reduced to the size required."

"I comprehend that part perfectly, sir," replied Jack; "but now explain to me by what method you contrive to raise an organ which does not previously exist."

"That," replied Mr. Easy, "is the greatest perfection of the whole invention, for without I could do that, I could have done little. I feel convinced that this invention of mine will immortalise me. Observe all these little bell-glasses which communicate with the air-pump. I shave my patient's head, grease it a little, and fix on the bell-glass, which is exactly shaped to fit the organ in length and breadth. I work the air-pump, and raise the organ by an exhausted receiver. It cannot fail. There is my butler now; a man who escaped hanging last spring assizes on an undoubted charge of murder. I selected him on purpose; I have flattened down murder to nothing, and I have raised benevolence till it's like a wen."

"I am afraid my poor father's head is an exhausted receiver," thought Jack, who then replied, "Well, sir, if it succeeds it will be a good invention."

Jack and his father went into the drawing-room and rang the bell; not being answered, Jack rose and rang again.

"My dear sir," observed Mr. Easy, "you must not

be in a hurry; every man naturally provides for his own wants first, and afterwards for those of others. Now my servants——"

"Are a set of insolent scoundrels, sir, and insolence I never permit. I knocked one down as I entered your house, and, with your permission, I will discharge two, at least, to-morrow."

"My dear son," exclaimed Mr. Easy, "you knocked my servant down!—are you not aware by the laws of equality——"

"I am aware of this, my dear father," replied Jack, "that by all the laws of society we have a right to expect civility and obedience from those we pay and feed."

"But, my dear boy, have you forgotten the principles I instilled into you? Did you not go to sea to obtain that equality foiled by tyranny and despotism here on shore? Do you not acknowledge and support my philosophy?"

"We'll argue that point to-morrow, sir—at present I want to obtain my supper;" and Jack rang the bell furiously.

The butler made his appearance at this last summons, and he was followed by Mesty, who looked like a demon with anger.

"Mercy on me, whom have we here?"

"My servant, father," exclaimed Jack, starting up; "one that I can trust to, and who will obey me. Mesty, I wish some supper and wine to be brought immediately—see that scoundrel gets it ready in a moment. If he does not, throw him out of the door, and lock him out. You understand me."

"Yes, massa," grinned Mesty; "now you hab supper very quick, or Mesty know the reason why. Follow me, sar," cried Mesty, in an imperative tone to the butler; "quick, sar, or I show you what Mesty can do;" and Mesty grinned in his wrath.

"Bring supper and wine immediately," said Mr. Easy, giving an order such as the butler had never heard since he had been in the house.

The butler quitted the room, followed by the Ashantee.

"My dear boy—my Jack—I can make every allowance for hunger, it is often the cause of theft and crime in the present unnatural state of society—but really you are too violent. The principles——"

"Your principles are all confounded nonsense, father," cried Jack in a rage.

"What, Jack!—my son—what do I hear? This from you—nonsense! Why, Jack, what has Captain Wilson been doing with you?"

"Bringing me to my senses, sir."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear! my dear Jack, you will certainly make me lose mine."

"Gone already," thought Jack.

"That you, my child, so carefully brought up in the great and glorious school of philosophy, should behave this way—should be so violent—forget your sublime philosophy, and all—just like Esau, selling your birthright for a mess of pottage. Oh, Jack, you'll kill me! and yet I love you, Jack—whom else have I to love in this world? Never mind, we'll argue the point, my boy—I'll convince you—in a week all will be right again."

"It shall, sir, if I can manage it," replied Jack.

"That's right, I love to hear you say so—that's consoling, very consoling—but I think now I was wrong to let you go to sea, Jack."

"Indeed you were not, father."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you say so; I thought they had ruined you, destroyed all your philosophy—but it will be all right again—you shall come to our societies, Jack—I am president—you shall hear me speak, Jack—you shall hear me thunder like Demosthenes—but here comes the tray."

The butler, followed by Mesty, who attended him as if he was a prisoner, now made his appearance with the tray—laid it down in a sulky manner and retired. Jack desired Mesty to remain.

"Well, Mesty, how are they getting on in the servants' hall?"

"Regular mutiny, sar—ab swear dat dey no stand our nonsense, and dat we both leave the house to-morrow."

"Do you hear, sir, your servants declare that I shall leave your house to-morrow."

"You leave my house, Jack, after four years' absence! —no, no. I'll reason with them—I'll make them a speech. You don't know how I can speak, Jack."

"Look you, father, I cannot stand this; either give me a carte-blanche to arrange this household as I please, or I shall quit it myself to-morrow morning."

"Quit my house, Jack! no, no—shake hands and make friends with them; be civil, and they will serve you—but you know upon the principles——"

"In one word, sir, do you consent, or am I to leave the house?"

"Leave the house! Oh, no; not leave the house, Jack. I have no son but you. Then do as you please—but you must not send away my murderer, for I must have him cured, and shown as a proof of my wonderful invention."

"Mesty, get my pistols ready for to-morrow morning, and your own too—do ye hear?"

"All ready, massa," replied Mesty; "I tink dat right."

"Right!—pistols, Jack! What do you mean?"

"It is possible, father, that you may not have yet quite cured your murderer, and therefore it is as well to be prepared. I will now wish you good-night; but before I go, you will be pleased to summon one of the servants that he may inform the others that the household is under my control for the future."

The bell was again rung, and was this time answered with more expedition. Jack told the servant, in the presence of his father, that, with the consent of the latter, he should hereafter take the whole control of the establishment, and that Mesty would be the major-domo from whom they would receive their orders. The man stared, and cast an appealing look to Mr. Easy, who hesitated, and at last said:

"Yes, William; you'll apologise to all, and say that I have made the arrangements."

"You apologise to none, sir," cried Jack; "but tell them that I will arrange the whole business to-morrow morning. Tell the woman to come here and show me

my bedroom. Mesty, get your supper and then come up to me; if they dare to refuse you, recollect who does, and point them out to-morrow morning. That will do, sir; away with you, and bring flat candlesticks."

CHAPTER XXIX

This scene may give some idea of the state of Mr. Easy's household upon our hero's arrival. The poor lunatic, for such we must call him, was at the mercy of his servants, who robbed, laughed at, and neglected him. The waste and expense were enormous. Our hero, who found how matters stood, went to bed, and lay the best part of the night revolving what to do. He determined to send for Dr. Middleton and consult him.

The next morning Jack rose early; Mesty was in the room, with warm water, as soon as he rang.

"By de power, Massa Easy, your fader very silly old man."

"I'm afraid so," replied Jack.

"He not right here," observed Mesty, putting his fingers to his head.

Jack sighed, and desired Mesty to send one of the grooms up to the door. When the man knocked he desired him to mount a horse and ride over to Dr. Middleton, and request his immediate attendance.

The man, who was really a good servant, replied, "Yes, sir," very respectfully, and hastened away.

Jack went down to breakfast, and found it all ready, but his father was not in the room: he went to his study, and found him occupied with a carpenter who was making a sort of a frame as the model of the platform or dais to be raised under the wonderful invention. Mr. Easy was so busy that he could not come to breakfast, so Jack took his alone. An hour after this Dr. Middleton's carriage drove up to the door. The doctor heartily greeted our hero.

"My dear sir—for so I suppose I must now call you—I am heartily glad that you have returned. I can assure you that it is not a moment too soon."

"I have found that out already, doctor," replied Jack: "sit down. Have you breakfasted?"

"No, I have not; for I was so anxious to see you, that I ordered my carriage at once."

"Then sit down, doctor, and we will talk over matters quietly."

"You, of course, perceive the state of your father. He has been some time quite unfit to manage his own affairs."

"So I am afraid."

"What do you intend to do then—put them in the hands of trustees?"

"I will be trustee for myself, Dr. Middleton. I could not do the other without submitting my poor father to a process and confinement which I cannot think of."

"I can assure you that there are not many in Bedlam worse than he is; but I perfectly agree with you; that is, if he will consent to your taking charge of the property."

"A power of attorney will be all that is requisite," replied Jack; "that is, as soon as I have rid the house of the set of miscreants who are in it, and who are now in open mutiny."

"I think," replied the doctor, "that you will have some trouble. You know the character of the butler."

"Yes, I have it from my father's own mouth. I really should take it as a great favour, Dr. Middleton, if you could stay here a day or two. I know that you have retired from practice."

"I would have made the same offer, my young friend. I will come here with two of my servants; for you must discharge these."

"I have one of my own who is worth his weight in gold—that will be sufficient. I will dismiss every man you think I ought, and as for the women, we can give them warning, and replace them at leisure."

"That is exactly what I should propose," replied the doctor. "I will now go, if you please, procure the assistance of a couple of constables, and also of your father's

former legal adviser, who shall prepare a power of attorney."

"Yes," replied Jack, "and we must then find out the tenants who refuse to pay upon the principles of equality, and he shall serve them with notice immediately."

"I am rejoiced, my dear young friend, to perceive that your father's absurd notions have not taken root."

"They lasted some time nevertheless, doctor," replied Jack, laughing.

"Well then, I only will quit you for an hour or two, and then, as you wish it, will take up my quarters here as long as you find me useful."

In the forenoon, Dr. Middleton again made his appearance, accompanied by Mr. Hanson, the solicitor, bringing with him his portmanteau and his servants. Mr. Easy had come into the parlour, and was at breakfast when they entered. He received them very coolly; but a little judicious praise of the wonderful invention had its due effect; and after Jack had reminded him of his promise that in future he was to have control of the household he was easily persuaded to sign the order for his so doing—that is, the power of attorney.

Mr. Easy also gave up to Jack the key of his secretary, and Mr. Hanson possessed himself of the books, papers, and receipts necessary to ascertain the state of his affairs, and the rents which had not yet been paid up. In the meantime the constables arrived. The servants were all summoned; Mr. Hanson showed them the power of attorney empowering Jack to act for his father, and in less than half an hour afterwards all the men-servants, but the two grooms, were dismissed: the presence of the constables and Mesty prevented any resistance, but not without various threats on the part of the butler, whose name was O'Rourke. Thus, in twenty-four hours, Jack had made a reformation in the household.

Mr. Easy took no notice of anything; he returned to his study and his wonderful invention. Mesty had received the keys of the cellar, and had now complete control over those who remained. Dr. Middleton, Mr. Hanson, Mr. Easy, and Jack, sat down to dinner, and everything wore the appearance of order and comfort.

Mr. Easy ate very heartily, but said nothing till after dinner, when, as was his usual custom, he commenced arguing upon the truth and soundness of his philosophy.

Presently he quitted the room.

"Are you aware, my dear sir, that your father has opened his preserves to all the poachers?" said Mr. Hanson.

"The deuce he has!"

"Yes, he has allowed several gangs of gipsies to locate themselves in his woods, much to the annoyance of the neighbourhood, who suffer from their depredations," continued Dr. Middleton.

"I find, by the receipts and books, that there is nearly two years' rental of the estate due; some tenants have paid up in full, others not for four years. I reckon fourteen thousand pounds still in arrear."

"You will oblige me by taking immediate steps, Mr. Hanson, for the recovery of the sums due."

"Most certainly, Mr. John. I trust your father will not commit himself to-night as he has done lately."

When they rose to retire Dr. Middleton took our hero by the hand. "You do not know, my dear fellow, what pleasure it gives me to find that, in spite of the doting of your mother and the madness of your father, you have turned out so well. It is very fortunate that you have come home; I trust you will now give up the profession."

"I have given it up, sir; which, by-the-bye, reminds me that I have not applied for either my discharge or that of my servant; but I cannot spare time yet, so I shall not report myself."

The next morning, when they met at breakfast, Mr. Easy did not make his appearance, and Jack inquired of Mesty where he was.

"They say down below that the old gentleman not come home last night."

"Did not come home!" said Dr. Middleton, "this must be looked to."

"He great rascal dat butler man," said Mesty to Jack; "but de old gentleman not sleep in his bed, dat for sure."

"Make inquiries when he went out," said Jack.

"I hope no accident has happened," observed Mr. Hanson; "but his company has lately been very strange."

"Nobody see him go out, sar, last night," reported Mesty.

"Very likely he is in his study," observed Dr. Middleton; "he may have remained all night, fast asleep, by his wonderful invention."

"I'll go and see," replied Jack.

Dr. Middleton accompanied him, and Mesty followed. They opened the door, and behold a spectacle which made them recoil with horror. There was Mr. Easy, with his head in the machine, the platform below fallen from under him, hanging, with his toes just touching the ground. Dr. Middleton hastened to him, and, assisted by Mesty and our hero, took him out of the steel collar which was round his neck; but life had been extinct for many hours, and, on examination, it was found that the poor old gentleman's neck was dislocated.

It was surmised that the accident must have taken place the evening before, and it was easy to account for it. Mr. Easy, who had had the machine raised four feet higher, for the platform and steps to be placed underneath, must have mounted on the frame modelled by the carpenter for his work, and have fixed his head in, for the knob was pressed on his bump of benevolence. The framework, hastily put together with a few short nails, had given way with his weight, and the sudden fall had dislocated his neck.

Mr. Hanson led away our hero, who was much shocked at this unfortunate and tragical end of his poor father, while Dr. Middleton ordered the body to be taken up into a bedroom, and immediately despatched a messenger to the coroner of the county. Poor Mr. Easy had told his son the day before that he felt convinced that this wonderful invention would immortalise him, and so it had, although not exactly in the sense that he anticipated.

We must pass over a few days of sorrow, and closed shutters, which always are given to these scenes. The coroner's inquest and the funeral over, daylight was again admitted, our hero's spirits revived, and he found

himself in possession of a splendid property, and his own master.

He was not of age, it is true, for he wanted nine months; but on opening the will of his father, he found that Dr. Middleton was his sole guardian. Mr. Hanson, on examining and collecting the papers, which were in the greatest confusion, discovered bank-notes in different corners, and huddled up with bills and receipts, to the amount of two thousand pounds, and further, a cheque signed by Captain Wilson on his banker, for the thousand pounds advanced by Mr. Easy, dated more than fifteen months back.

Dr. Middleton wrote to the Admiralty, informing them that family affairs necessitated Mr. John Easy to leave his Majesty's service, requesting his discharge from it forthwith. The Admiralty was graciously pleased to grant the request, and lose the services of a midshipman. The Admiralty were also pleased to grant the discharge of Mesty, on the sum required for a substitute being paid in.

The gipsies were routed out of their abodes, and sent once more to wander. The gamekeepers were restored, the preserves cleared of all poachers, and the gentry of the county were not a little pleased at Jack's succession, for they had wished that Mr. Easy's neck had been broken long ago. Cards and compliments were sent from all parts of the county, and every one was anxious that our hero should come of age, and then he would be able to marry, to give dinners, subscribe to the fox-hounds, and live as a gentleman ought to do.

But, during all these speculations, Jack had made Dr. Middleton acquainted with the history of his amour with Agnes de Rebiera, and all particulars connected therewith, also with his determination to go out to bring her home as his wife. Dr. Middleton saw no objection to the match, and he perceived that our hero was sincere. And Jack had made inquiries when the packet would sail for Malta, when Mesty, who stood behind his chair, observed :

" Packet bad vessel, Massa Easy. Why not go out in man-of-war ? "

"Very true," replied Jack; "but you know, Mesty, that is not so easy."

"And den how come home, sar? Suppose you and Missy Agnes taken prisoner—put in prison?"

"Very true," replied Jack; "and as for a passage home in a man-of-war that will be more difficult still."

"Den I tink, sar, suppose you buy one fine vessel—plenty of guns—take out letter of marque—plenty of men, and bring Missy Agnes home like a lady. You captain of your own ship."

"That deserves consideration, Mesty," replied Jack, who thought of it during that night; and the next day resolved to follow Mesty's advice. The Portsmouth paper lay on the breakfast-table. Jack took it up, and his eye was caught by an advertisement for the sale of the *Joan d'Arc*, prize to H.M. ship *Thetis*, brigantine of 278 tons, copper-bottomed, armed *en flute*, with all her stores, spars, sails, running and standing rigging, then lying in the harbour of Portsmouth, to take place on the following Wednesday.

Jack rang the bell, and ordered post-horses.

"Where are you going, my dear boy?" inquired Dr. Middleton.

"To Portsmouth, doctor."

"And pray what for, if not an impertinent question?"

Jack then gave Dr. Middleton an insight into his plan, and requested that he would allow him to do so, as there was plenty of ready-money.

"But the expense will be enormous."

"It will be heavy, sir, I grant; but I have calculated it pretty nearly, and I shall not spend at the rate of more than my income. Besides, as letter of marque, I shall have the right of capture; in fact, I mean to take out a privateer's regular licence."

"But not to remain there and cruise?"

"No, upon my honour; I am too anxious to get home again. You must not refuse me, my dear guardian."

"As a lady is in the case, I will not, my dear boy; but be careful what you are about."

"Never fear, sir, I will be back in four months, at the

furthest; but I must now set off and ascertain if the vessel answers the description given in the advertisement."

Jack threw himself into the chariot. Mesty mounted into the rumble, and in two hours they were at Portsmouth; went to the agent, viewed the vessel, which proved to be a very fine fast-sailing craft, well found, with six brass carronades on each side. The cabins were handsome, fitted up with bird's-eye maple and gilt mouldings.

This will do, thought Jack; a couple of long brass nines, forty men and six boys, and she will be just the thing we require. So Mesty and Jack went on shore again, and returned to Forest Hill to dinner, when he desired Mr. Hanson to set off for Portsmouth, and bid at the sale for the vessel, as he wished to purchase her. This was Monday, and on Wednesday Mr. Hanson purchased her, as she stood, for £1750, which was considered about half her value.

Dr. Middleton had, in the meantime, been thinking very seriously of Jack's project. He could see no objection to it, provided that he was steady and prudent, but in both these qualities Jack had not exactly been tried. He therefore determined to look out for some steady naval lieutenant, and make it a *sine qua non* that our hero should be accompanied by him, and that he should go out as sailing-master. Now that the vessel was purchased, he informed Jack of his wish; indeed, as Dr. Middleton observed, his duty as guardian demanded this precaution, and our hero, who felt very grateful to Dr. Middleton, immediately acquiesced.

"And, by-the-bye, doctor, see that he is a good navigator; for although I can fudge a day's work pretty well, latterly I have been out of practice."

Every one was now busy. Jack and Mesty at Portsmouth, fitting out the vessel, and offering three guineas a head to the crimps for every good able seaman. Jack found time to write to Don Philip and Agnes, apprising them of the death of his father, and his intentions.

In about six weeks all was ready, and the brigantine, which had taken out her British register and license under the name of the *Rebiera*, went out of harbour, and anchored

at Spithead. Dr. Middleton had procured, as he thought, a very fit person to sail with Jack, and our hero and Mesty embarked, wishing the doctor and solicitor good-bye, and leaving them nothing to do but to pay the bills.

The person selected by Dr. Middleton, by the advice of an old friend of his, a purser in the navy who lived at Southsea, was a Lieutenant Oxbelly, who, with the ship's company, which had been collected, received our hero as their captain and owner upon his arrival on board. There certainly was no small contrast between our hero's active slight figure and handsome person, set-off with a blue coat, something like the present yacht-club uniform, and that of his second in command, who waddled to the side to receive him. He was a very short man, with an uncommon protuberance of stomach, with shoulders and arms too short for his body, and hands much too large, more like the paws of a Polar bear than anything else. He wore trousers, shoes, and buckles. On his head was a foraging cap, which, when he took it off, showed that he was quite bald. His age might be about fifty-five or sixty; his complexion florid, no whiskers and little beard, nose straight, lips thin, teeth black with chewing. Altogether his countenance was prepossessing, for it was honest and manly, but his waist was preposterous.

"Steady enough," thought Jack, as he returned Mr. Oxbelly's salute.

The men were mustered, and Jack made them a long speech upon subordination, discipline, activity, duty, and so forth.

"A very good speech, Mr. Easy," said Mr. Oxbelly, as the men went forward; "I wish my wife had heard it. But, sir, if you please, we'll now get under way as fast as we can, for there is a Channel cruiser working up at St. Helen's, and we may give him the go-by by running through the Needles."

"But what need we care for the Channel cruiser?"

"You forget, sir, that as soon as she drops her anchor she will come on board and take a fancy to at least ten of our men."

"But they are protected."

"Yes, sir, but that's no protection nowadays. I have

sailed in a privateer at least three years, and I know that they have no respect for letters of marque or for privateers."

"I believe you are right, Mr. Oxbelly, so if you please we will up with the anchor at once."

The crew of the *Rebiera* had been well chosen; they were prime men-of-war's men, most of whom had deserted from the various ships on the station, and, of course, were most anxious to be off. In a few minutes the *Rebiera* was under way with all sail set below and aloft. She was in excellent trim, and flew through the water; the wind was fair, and by night they had passed Portland Lights, and the next morning were steering a course for the Bay of Biscay without having encountered what they feared more than an enemy—a British cruiser to overhaul them.

"I think we shall do now, sir," observed Mr. Oxbelly to our hero; "we have made a famous run. It's twelve o'clock, and if you please I'll work the latitude and let you know what it is. We must shape our course so as not to run in with the Brest squadron. A little more westing, sir. I'll be up in one minute."

CHAPTER XXX

On the eleventh day the *Rebiera* entered the Straits, and the Rock of Gibraltar was in sight as the sun went down; after which the wind fell light, and about midnight it became calm, and they drifted up. At sunrise they were roused by the report of heavy guns, and perceived an English frigate about eight miles farther up the Straits, and more in the mid-channel, engaging nine or ten Spanish gun-boats, which had come out from Algesiras to attack her. It still continued a dead calm, and the boats of the frigate were all ahead towing her, so as to bring her broadside to bear upon the Spanish flotilla.

The reverberating of the heavy cannon on both sides over the placid surface of the water—the white smoke ascending as the sun rose in brilliancy in a clear blue sky—the distant echoes repeated from the high hills—had a very beautiful effect for those who are partial to the picturesque. But Jack thought it advisable to prepare for action instead of watching for tints—and in a short time all was ready.

"They'll not come to us, Mr. Easy, as long as they have the frigate to hammer at; but still we had better be prepared, for we cannot well pass them without having a few shots."

"That, indeed," replied Jack—"but see, there is a breeze springing up from the westward."

"Very true, Mr. Easy, and a steady one it will be, for it comes up dark and slow; so much the better for the frigate, for she'll get little honour and plenty of mauling at this work."

"I hope we shall take it up with us," observed Jack; "how far do you reckon the gun-boats from the shore?"

"I should think about five miles, or rather less."

"Trim sails, Mr. Oxbelly—perhaps we may cut one or two of these off—steer inshore of them."

"Exactly. Up there, my lads, set top-gallant studding sails, top-mast studdings to hand—rig out the booms—keep as you go now, my lad—we shall be well inshore of them, and out of the range of the batteries."

The breeze came down fresh, and all sail was set upon the *Rebiera*. She took the wind down with her, and it passed her but little—half a mile ahead of them all was still and smooth as a glass mirror, and they neared and gained inshore at the same time. The gun-boats were still engaging the frigate, and did not appear to pay any attention to the *Rebiera* coming down. At last the breeze reached them and the frigate, light at first and then gradually increasing, while the *Rebiera* foamed through the water and had now every chance of cutting off some of the gun-boats. The frigate trimmed her sails and steered towards the flotilla, which now thought proper to haul off and put their heads inshore, followed by the frigate firing her bow-chasers. But the *Rebiera* was now within half gun-shot, inshore, and steering so as to intercept them.

As she rapidly closed, the flotilla scarcely knew how to act; to attack her would be to lose time, and allow the frigate to come up and occasion their own capture; so they satisfied themselves with firing at her as she continued to run down between them and the land. As they neared, Jack opened his fire with his eighteen-pound carronades and long nines. The gun-boats returned his fire, and they were within a quarter of a mile, when Jack shortened sail to his top-sails, and a warm engagement took place, which ended in one of the gun-boats being in a few minutes dismasted. The frigate, under all canvas, came rapidly up, and her shot now fell thick. The flotilla then ceased firing, passing about two cables' lengths ahead of the *Rebiera*, and making all possible sail for the land. Jack now fired at the flotilla as they passed, with his larboard broadside, while with his starboard he poured in grape and canister upon the unfortunate gun-boat which was dismasted, and which soon hauled down her colours. In a few minutes more the remainder were too far distant for the carronades, and, as they did not fire, Jack turned his attention to take possession of his prize, sending a boat with ten men on board, and heaving-to close to her to take her in tow. Ten minutes more and the frigate was hove-to a cable's length from the *Rebiera*, and our hero lowered down his other quarter boat to go on board.

"Have we any men hurt, Mr. Oxbelly?" inquired Jack.

"Only two; Spearling has lost his thumb with a piece of langrage, and James has a bad wound in the thigh."

"Very well; I will ask for the surgeon to come on board."

Jack pulled to the frigate and went up the side, touched his hat in due form, and was introduced by the midshipmen to the other side, where the captain stood.

"Mr. Easy!" exclaimed the captain.

"Captain Sawbridge?" replied our hero with surprise.

"Good heavens! what brought you here!" said the captain; "and what vessel is that?"

"The *Rebiera*, letter of marque, commanded and owned by Mr. Easy," replied Jack, laughing.

Captain Sawbridge gave him his hand. "Come down with me in the cabin, Mr. Easy; I am very glad to see you. Give you great credit for your conduct, and am still more anxious to know what has induced you to come out again. I knew that you had left the service."

Jack, in a very few words, told his object in fitting out the *Rebiera*; "but," continued Jack, "allow me to congratulate you upon your promotion, which I was not aware of. May I ask where you left the *Harpy*, and what is the name of your frigate?"

"The *Latona*. I have only been appointed to her one month, after an action in which the *Harpy* took a large corvette, and am ordered home with despatches to England. We sailed yesterday evening from Gibraltar, were becalmed the whole night, and attacked this morning by the gun-boats."

"How is Captain Wilson, sir?"

"I believe he is very well, but I have not seen him."

"How did you know, then, that I had left the service, Captain Sawbridge?"

"From Mr. Gascoigne, who is now on board."

"Gascoigne!" exclaimed our hero.

"Yes, he was sent up to join the *Aurora* by the Governor, but she had left the fleet, and having served his time, and a passing day being ordered, he passed, and thought he might as well go home with me and see if he could make any interest for his promotion."

"Pray, Captain Sawbridge, is the gun-boat our prize or yours?"

"It ought to be wholly yours; but the fact is, by the regulations, we share."

"With all my heart, sir. Will you send an assistant-surgeon on board to look after two of my men who are hurt?"

"Yes, directly; now send your boat away, Easy, with directions to your officer in command. We must go back to Gibraltar, for we have received some injury, and, I am sorry to say, lost some men. You are going then, I presume, to stay on board and dine with me: we shall be at anchor before night."

"I will, with pleasure, sir. But now I will send my boat away and shake hands with Gascoigne."

Gascoigne was under the half-deck waiting to receive his friend, for he had seen him come up the side from his station on the forecastle. A hurried conversation took place, after our hero had dismissed his boat with the assistant-surgeon in it to dress the two wounded men. Jack then went on deck, talked with the officers, looked with pleasure at the *Rebiera* with the gun-boat in tow, keeping company with the frigate, although only under the same canvas—promised Gascoigne to spend the next day with him either on shore or on board of the *Rebiera*, and then returned to the cabin, where he had a long conference with Captain Sawbridge.

"When you first entered the service, Easy," said Captain Sawbridge, "I thought that the sooner the service was rid of you the better; now that you have left it, I feel that it has lost one, who, in all probability, would have proved a credit to it."

"Many thanks, sir," replied Jack; "but how can I be a midshipman with eight thousand pounds a year?"

"I agree with you that it is impossible:—but dinner is serving; go into the after-cabin and the steward will give you all you require."

Our hero, whose face and hands were not a little grimed with the gunpowder, washed himself, combed out his curly black hair, and found all the party in the fore-cabin. Gascoigne, who had not been asked in the forenoon, was, by the consideration of Captain Sawbridge, added to the number. Before dinner was long off the table, the first lieutenant reported that it was necessary to turn the hands up, as they were close to the anchorage. The party, therefore, broke up sooner than otherwise would have been the case; and as soon as the *Latona's* sails were furled Captain Sawbridge went on shore to acquaint the Governor with the results of the action. He asked Jack to accompany him, but our hero, wishing to be with Gascoigne, excused himself until the next day.

"And now, Easy," said Gascoigne, as soon as the captain had gone over the side, "I will ask permission to go on board with you—or will you ask?"

"I will ask," replied Jack; "a gentleman of fortune has more weight with a first lieutenant than a midshipman."

So Jack went up to the first lieutenant, and with one of his polite bows hoped, "if duty would permit, he would honour him by coming on board that evening with some of his officers, to see the *Rebiera* and to drink a bottle or two of champagne."

The first lieutenant, as the *Rebiera* was anchored not two cables' lengths from him, replied, "that as soon as he had shifted the prisoners and secured the gun-boat, he would be very glad;" so did three or four more of the officers, and then Jack begged as a favour that his old friend, Mr. Gascoigne, might be permitted to go with him now, as he had important packages to entrust to his care to England. The first lieutenant was very willing, and Gascoigne and our hero jumped into the boat, and were once more in all the confidence of tried and deserved friendship.

"Jack, I've been thinking of it, and I've made up my mind," said Gascoigne. "I shall gain little or nothing by going home for my promotion: I may as well stay here, and as I have served my time and passed, my pay is now of little consequence. Will you take me with you?"

"It is exactly what I was thinking of, Ned. Do you think that Captain Sawbridge will consent?"

"I do; he knows how I am circumstanced, and that my going home was merely because I was tired of looking after the *Aurora*."

"We'll go together and ask him to-morrow," replied Jack.

"At all events, you'll have a more gentlemanly companion than Mr. Oxbelly."

"But not so steady, Ned."

The first lieutenant and officers came on board, and passed a merry evening.

CHAPTER XXXI

As Captain Sawbridge did not return on board that evening, Easy went on shore and called upon him at the Governor's, to whom he was introduced, and received an invitation to dine with him. As Gascoigne could not come on shore, our hero took this opportunity of making his request to Captain Sawbridge, stating that the person he had with him was not such as he wished and could confide everything to; that is, not one to whom he could talk to about Agnes. Jack, as he found that Captain Sawbridge did not immediately assent, pressed the matter hard; at last Captain Sawbridge, who reflected that Gascoigne's interest hereafter would be much greater through his friend Easy than any other quarter, and that the more the friendship was cemented the more advantageous it might prove to Gascoigne, gave his consent to our hero's wish, who called on board the *Latona* to acquaint Gascoigne and the first lieutenant of Captain Sawbridge's intentions, and then went on board of the *Rebiera* and ordered Mesty to come with his portmanteau on shore to the inn, that he might dress for dinner. Gascoigne, now considered as not belonging to the *Latona*, was permitted to accompany him.

The repairs of the *Latona* were all made good by the next day, and Gascoigne, having received his discharge-ticket, went on board the *Rebiera*. The gun-boat was put into the hands of the agent, and shortly afterwards purchased by Government. The *Rebiera's* crew did not, however, obtain their prize-money and share of the head-money, for she had seventy men on board, until their return, but, as they said, they had broken the ice, and that was everything. Moreover, it gave them confidence in themselves, in their vessel, and in their commander. Our hero weighed a short time after the *Latona*, having first taken leave of Captain Sawbridge, and committed to his care a letter to Dr. Middleton.

They rounded Europa Point, and with a fine breeze off the land, were lying close-hauled along the Spanish shore.

The *Rebiera* was steered in to the land, and at sunset they were not four miles from the lofty blue mountains which overhang the town of Malaga. There were many vessels lying at the bottom of the bay, close in with the town; the wind now fell light, and the *Rebiera*, as she could not fetch the town, tacked as if she were a merchant vessel standing in, and showed American colours, a hint which they took from perceiving three or four large vessels lying in the outer roads, with the colours of that nation hoisted at the peak.

"What is your intention, Jack?" said Gascoigne.

"I'll be hanged if I know yet. I think of working up to the outer roads, and anchoring at night—boarding the American vessels, and gaining intelligence."

"Not a bad idea; we shall then learn if there is anything to be done, and if not, we may be off at daylight."

"The pratique boat will not come off after sunset."

"And if they did, we could pass for an American, bound to Barcelona or anywhere else—the outer roads where the vessels lie are hardly within gun-shot."

Mesty, who had resumed his sailor's clothes, now observed, "What we do, Massa Easy, we do quickly—time for all ting, time for show face and fight—time for hide face, crawl, and steal."

"Very true, Mesty, we'll crawl this time, and steal if we can. It's not the warfare I like best of the two."

"Both good, Massa Easy; suppose you no steal board of polacca ship, you not see Missy Agnes."

"Very true, Mesty. 'Bout ship, Mr. Oxbelly."

"Mr. Oxbelly not good for boat sarvice," observed Mesty, showing his teeth.

It was dark before the *Rebiera* was anchored in the outer roads, a cable's length astern of the outermost American vessel. One of her quarter-boats was lowered down, and Gascoigne and our hero pulled alongside, and, lying on their oars, hailed, and asked the name of the vessel.

"Just now I forget her name," replied a negro, looking over the gangway.

"Who's the captain?"

"He gone on shore."

"Is the mate on board?"

"No, he gone shore too."

"Who is aboard then?"

"Nobody on board but Pompey—and dat me."

"Good ship-keepers, at all events," said Jack. "A ship in the outer roads with only a black fellow on board! I say, Pompey, do they always leave you in charge of the vessel?"

"No, sar; but to-night great pleasure on shore. Eberybody dance and sing, get drunk, kick up bobbery, and all dat."

"What, is it a festival?"

"I no know, sar."

"Is there any one on board of the other vessels?"

"Eberybody gone on shore. Suppose they have black man, he stay on board."

"Good-night, Pompey."

"Good-night, sar. Who I say call when captain come on board?"

"Captain Easy."

"Captain He-see, very well, sar."

Our hero pulled to another ship, and found it equally deserted; but at the third he found the second mate, with his arm in a sling, and from him they gained the information that it was a great festival, being the last day of the carnival; and that every one was thinking of nothing but amusement.

"I've a notion," said the mate, in reply, "that you're American."

"You've guessed right," replied Jack.

"What ship, and from what port?"

"Rhode Island, the *Susan and Mary*," replied Gascoigne.

"I thought you were north. We're of New York. What news do you bring?"

"Nothing," replied he, "we are from Liverpool last."

A succession of questions was now put by the American mate, and answered very skilfully by Gascoigne, who then inquired how the market was.

It was necessary to make and reply to all these inquiries before they could ask apparently indifferent questions of American traders; at last Gascoigne inquired:

"Do you think they would allow us to go on shore? the pratique boat has not been on board."

"They'll never find you out if you are off before daylight; I doubt if they know that you are anchored. Besides, from Liverpool you would have a clean bill of health, and if they found it out, they would not say much; they're not over-particular, I've a notion."

"What are those vessels lying inshore?"

"I guess they have olive oil on board, the chief on 'em. But there are two double lateens come in from Valparaiso the day before yesterday, with hides and copper. How they 'scaped the British, I can't tell, but they did, that's sure enough."

"Good-night, then."

"You won't take a glass of sling this fine night, with a countryman?"

"To-morrow, my good fellow, to-morrow; we must go on shore now."

Our hero and Gascoigne returned on board the *Rebiera*, consulted with Oxbelly and Mesty, and then manned and armed the two quarter and stern boats. They thought it advisable not to hoist out their long-boat; no fire-arms were permitted to be taken lest, going off by accident or otherwise, an alarm should be given. Our hero and Mesty proceeded in the first boat, and pulled in for the town; Gascoigne shortly after in the second, and the boatswain in the jolly boat, followed at some distance.

There was no notice taken of them; they pulled gently down to the landing-place, which was deserted. There was a blaze of light, and the sounds of revelry in every quarter on shore; but the vessels appeared equally deserted as the American ones in the offing.

Finding themselves unobserved, for they had taken the precaution to pull only two oars in each boat, they dropped gently alongside one of the double-masted lateen vessels, and Mesty stepped on board. He peeped down in the cabin, and perceived a man lying on the lockers; he came up in his stealthy manner, closed the hatch softly, and said, "all right." Jack left Gascoigne to take out this vessel, which he did very successfully, for it was very dark; and although there were sentries posted not far

off, their eyes and ears were turned towards the town, listening to the music.

A second vessel, the consort, was boarded in the same way, but here they found a man on deck, whom they were obliged to seize and gag. They put him down in the cabin, and Mesty, with another boat's crew, cut her cables and swept her gently out towards the American vessels. One more vessel was required, and Jack, pulling two oars as usual, saluted a galliot heavily laden, but of what her cargo consisted was not known. In this vessel they found two men in the cabin playing cards, whom they seized and bound, and cutting her cables were obliged to make sail upon her, as she was much too large to sweep out. As they were making sail, they, however, met with an interruption which they did not expect. The crew belonging to the vessel, having had enough amusement for the evening, and intending to sail the next morning, had thought it right to come off sooner than the others: it was then about midnight or a little later, and while some of Jack's men were aloft, for he had six with him, Jack, to his annoyance, heard a boat coming off from the shore, the men in her singing a chorus. The galliot was at that time just under steerage way, her topsail had been loosed and her jib hoisted, but the former had not been sheeted home, for the three men below could not, in the dark, find the ropes. The other three men were on the foreyard, loosing the foresail, and Jack was undetermined whether to call them down immediately or to allow them to loose the sail, and thus get good way on the vessel, so as to prevent the boat, which was loaded with men, from overtaking them. The boat was not more than twenty yards from the galliot, when, not finding her where they left her, they pulled to the right, and lay on their oars. This gave a moment of time, but they very soon spied her out. "Caramba!" was the exclamation—and the head of the boat was pulled round.

"Down, my lads, in a moment by the swifters," cried Jack. "Here's a boat on board of us."

The men were in a few seconds on deck, and the others, who had now sheeted home the topsails, hastened aft. The vessel soon gathered way, but before that her way

was sufficient, the boat had pulled under the counter, and the Spaniards, letting their oars swing fore and aft, were climbing up, their knives in their teeth. A scuffle ensued, and they were thrown down again, but they renewed their attempt. Our hero, perceiving a small water or wine cask lashed to the gunwale, cut it loose with his cutlass, and with one of the men who was by his side, pushed it over, and dropped it into the boat. It struck the gunwale, stove a plank, and the boat began to fill rapidly; in the meantime the galliot had gained way—the boat could not longer be held on, from its weight, and dropped astern with the men in it. Those who were half in and half out were left clinging to the gunwale of the vessel, and as they climbed up were secured and put down in the cabin. Fortunately, no fire-arms having been used on either side, the alarm was not given generally, but the sentry reported fighting on board one of the vessels, and the people of the guard-boat were collected, and pulled out; but they only arrived in time to see that the galliot was under way, and that the two other vessels from Valparaiso were not in their berths.

They hastened on shore, gave the alarm; the gun-boats, of which there were three at the mole, were ordered out, but half the crew and all the officers were on shore, some at balls, others drinking at taverns or posadas; before they could be collected all three vessels were alongside of the *Rebiera;* and not aware that anything had been discovered, our hero and his crew were lulled in security. Jack had gone on board, leaving fourteen of his men on board the galliot—Gascoigne had done the same—Mesty still remained on board his vessel; and they were congratulating themselves, and ordering the men on board to the windlass, when they heard the sound of oars.

"Silence!—what is that?" exclaimed Oxbelly. "The gun-boats or row-boats, as sure as I'm alive!"

At this moment Mesty jumped up the side.

"Massa Easy, I hear row-boat not far off."

"So do we, Mesty. Gascoigne, jump into the boat—tell the men in the prizes to make all sail right out, and leave us to defend their retreat—stay on board of one and divide your men."

"Dat all right, Massa Easy.—Mr. Gascoigne, be smart —and now, sar, cut cable and make sail; no time to get up anchor."

This order was given, but although the men were aloft in a moment, and very expeditious, as the *Rebiera* payed her head round and the jib was hoisted, they could perceive the boom of the three gun-boats pulling and sailing not five cables' length from them. Although rather short-handed, topsails, courses, and top-gallant sails were soon set, the men down to their quarters, and the guns cast loose, before the gun-boats were close under their stern. Then Jack rounded to, braced up, and the *Rebiera* stood across them to the westward.

"Why don't they fire?" said Jack.

"I tink because they no ab powder," said Mesty.

Mesty was right—the ammunition chests of the gun-boats were always landed when they were at the mole, in case of accidents, which might arise from the crew being continually with cigars in their mouths, and in the hurry they had quite forgotten to put them on board.

"At all events, we have powder," said Jack, "and now we'll prove it. Grape and canister, my lads, and take good aim."

The commanders of the gun-boats had hailed each other, and agreed to board the *Rebiera*, but she now had good way on her, and sailed faster than they pulled. A well-directed broadside astonished them—they had no idea of her force; and the execution done was so great, that they first lay on their oars and then pulled back to the mole with all speed, leaving the *Rebiera* in quiet possession of her prizes, which had already gained two miles in the offing.

The *Rebiera*, as soon as Jack perceived that the gun-boats had retreated, was put before the wind, and soon closed with her captures, when she was hove-to till daylight with the three vessels in company. Gascoigne returned on board, prize-masters were selected and Jack determined to keep them all with him, and take them to Palermo.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE two lateen vessels proved of considerable value, being laden with copper, hides and cochineal. The galliot was laden with sweet oil, and was also no despicable prize. At daylight they were all ready, and, to the mortification of the good people of Malaga, sailed away to the eastward without interruption.

"Me tink we do dat job pretty well, Massa Easy," observed Mesty, as he laid the breakfast table.

"Nothing like trying," replied Gascoigne; "I'm sure when we stood into the bay I would have sold all my prize-money for a doubloon. How do I share, Jack?"

"Only as one of the crew, Ned, for you are a supernumerary, and our articles and agreement for prize-money were signed previous to our sailing."

For ten days they ran down the coast, going much too fast for the wishes of the crew, who were anxious to make more money. They seized a fishing boat and put on board of her the four prisoners, whom they had found in the vessels, and arrived off Barcelona, without falling in with friend or foe. The next morning, the wind being very light, they discovered a large vessel at daylight astern of them to the westward, and soon made her out to be a frigate. She made all sail in chase, but that gave them very little uneasiness, as they felt assured that she was a British cruiser. One fear, however, came over them, that she would, if she came up with them, impress a portion of their men.

"As certainly as I'm here, and Mrs. Oxbelly's at Southsea," said Oxbelly, "they'll take some of the men—the more so as, supposing us to be a Spanish convoy, they will be disappointed."

"They will hardly take them out of the prizes," observed Easy.

"I don't know that; men must be had for his Majesty's service somehow. It's not their fault, Mr. Easy—the navy must be manned, and as things are so, so things

must be. It's the king's prerogative, Mr. Easy, and we cannot fight the battles of the country without it."

"We'll argue that point by-and-bye," replied Jack; "now let us consult as to our measures. My opinion is, that if I made sail more we should beat the frigate, but she would come up with the prizes."

"That's the best thing we can do, Mr. Easy; but let us send a boat on board of them, and take out all the men that can possibly be spared, that there may be no excuse for impressing them."

"Yes," replied Gascoigne; "and as the wind is falling it is possible it may fall calm, and they may send their boats; suppose we separate a mile or two from each other."

"Dat very good advice, Massa Gascoigne," observed Mesty.

This plan was acted upon; only three men were left in the lateens, and four in the galliot, and the vessels, in obedience to the orders, sheered off on both sides of the *Rebiera*, who made all sail and started ahead of the prizes. This manœuvre was perceived on board of the frigate, and made them sure that it was a Spanish convoy attempting to escape. The fire-engine was got on deck, sails wetted, and every exertion made to come up. But about four o'clock in the afternoon, when the frigate was eight or nine miles off, it fell calm, as Gascoigne had predicted, and the heads of all the vessels, as well as the frigate, were now round the compass.

"There's out boats," said Mr. Oxbelly; "they will have a long pull and all for nothing."

"How savage they will be!" observed Gascoigne.

"Never mind that," replied Jack; "Mesty says that dinner is ready."

After dinner, they all went on deck, and found that the boats had separated, one pulling for each of the prizes, and two for the *Rebiera*. In less than an hour they would probably be alongside.

"And now let us decide how we are to act. We must not resist, if they attempt to impress the men?"

"I've been thinking upon that matter, Mr. Easy, and it appears to me that the men must be permitted to act

as they please, and that we must be neuter. I, as a lieutenant in his Majesty's service, cannot of course act, neither can Mr. Gascoigne. You are not in the service, but I should recommend you to do the same. That the men have a right to resist, if possible, is admitted; they always do so, and never are punished for so doing. Under the guns of the frigate, of course, we should only have to submit; but those two boats do not contain more than twenty-five men, I should think, and our men are the stronger party. We had better leave it to them, and stand neuter."

"Dat very good advice," said Mesty; "leab it to us;" and Mesty walked away forward where the seamen were already in consultation.

Jack also agreed to the prudence of this measure, and he perceived that the seamen, after a consultation with Mesty, were all arming themselves for resistance.

The boats were now close on board, and English colours were hoisted at the gaff. This did not, however, check the impetus of the boats, which, with their ensigns trailing in the still water astern of them, dashed alongside, and an officer leaped on board, cutlass in hand, followed by the seamen of the frigate. The men of the *Rebiera* remained collected forward—Easy, Gascoigne, and Oxbelly aft.

"What vessel is this?" cried the lieutenant who commanded the boats.

Jack, with the greatest politeness, took off his hat, and told him that it was the *Rebiera* letter of marque, and that the papers were ready for his inspection.

"And the other vessels?"

"Prizes to the *Rebiera*, cut out of Malaga Bay," replied Jack.

"Then you are a privateer," observed the disappointed officer. "Where are your papers?"

"Mr. Oxbelly, oblige me by bringing them up," said Jack.

"Fat Jack of the bone house," observed the lieutenant, looking at Oxbelly.

"A lieutenant in his Majesty's service, of longer standing than yourself, young man," replied Oxbelly

firmly;—"and who, if he ever meets you in any other situation—will make you answer for your insolent remark."

"Indeed!" observed the lieutenant ironically; "now, if you had said you were once a boatswain or gunner."

"Consider yourself kicked," roared Oxbelly, losing his temper.

"Hey day! why, you old porpoise!"

"Sir," observed Jack, who listened with indignation, "Mr. Oxbelly is a lieutenant in his Majesty's service, and you have no right to insult him, even if he were not."

"I presume you are all officers," replied the lieutenant.

"I am, sir," retorted Gascoigne, "an officer in his Majesty's service, and on board of this vessel by permission of Captain Sawbridge of the *Latona*."

"And I was, until a few months ago, sir," continued Jack; "at present I am captain and owner of this vessel—but here are the papers. You will have no obstruction from us in the execution of your duty—at the same time, I call upon the two young gentlemen by your side, and your own men, to bear witness to what takes place."

"Oh, very well, sir—just as you please. Your papers I perceive are all right. Now you will oblige me by mustering your men."

"Certainly, sir," replied Jack; "send all the men aft to muster, Mr. Oxbelly."

The men came aft to the mainmast, with Mesty at their head, and answered to their names. As the men passed over, the lieutenant made a pencil-mark against ten of them, who appeared the finest seamen; and, when the roll had been called, he ordered those men to get their bags and go into the boat.

"Sir, as you must observe, I am short-handed, with my men away in prizes; and I, as commander of this vessel, protest against this proceeding: if you insist upon taking them, of course I can do nothing," observed Jack.

"I do insist, sir; I'm not going on board empty-handed, at all events."

"Well, sir, I can say no more," said Jack, walking

aft to the taffrail, to which Oxbelly and Gascoigne had retreated.

"Come, my lads, get those men in the boat," said the lieutenant.

But the men had all retreated forward in a body, with Mesty at their head, and had armed themselves. Some of the seamen of the frigate had gone forward, in obedience to their officer, to lead the men selected into the boat; but they were immediately desired to keep back. The scuffle forward attracted the notice of the lieutenant, who immediately summoned all his men out of the boats.

"Mutiny, by heavens! Come up, all of you, my lads."

Mesty then came forward, with a sabre in one hand and a pistol in the other, and thus addressed the seamen of the frigate:

"I tell you dis, my lads—you not so strong as we—you not got better arms—we not under gun of frigate now, and ab determination not to go board. 'Pose you want us, come take us—'pose you can. By all de power, but we make mince-meat of you, anyhow."

The seamen paused—they were ready to fight for their country, but not to be killed by or kill those who were their own countrymen, and who were doing exactly what they would have done themselves. The lieutenant thought otherwise; he was exasperated at this sensation.

"You black scoundrel, I left you out because I thought you not worth having, but now I'll add you to the number."

"Stop a little," replied Mesty.

The lieutenant would not take the Ashantee's very prudent advice; he flew forward to seize Mesty, who, striking him a blow with the flat of his sabre, almost levelled him to the deck. At this the men and other officers of the frigate darted forward; but after a short scuffle, in which a few wounds were received, were beaten back into the boats. The lieutenant was thrown in after them, by the nervous arm of Mesty—and, assailed by cold shot and other missiles, they sheered off with precipitation, and pulled back in the direction of the frigate.

"There will be a row about this," said Oxbelly, "as soon as they come clear of the vessel. If the frigate gets hold of us she will show us no merey. There is a breeze coming from the north-west. How fortunate! we shall be three leagues to windward, and may escape."

"I doubt if she could catch us at any point of sailing: they may come up with the prizes, but can do nothing with them."

"No, the boats which boarded them are already returned to the frigate; she must wait for them, and that will give us a start and it will be night before they can even make sail."

"Fire a gun for the prizes to close," said Jack; "we will put the men on board again, and then be off to Palermo as fast as we can."

"We can do no better," said Oxbelly. "If ever I chance to meet that fellow again, I will trouble him to repeat his words. Trim the sails, my lads."

"His language was unpardonable," observed Jack.

"Since I've been in the service, Mr. Easy, I have always observed that some officers appear to imagine that, because they are under the king's pennant, they are warranted in insulting and tyrannising over all those who have not the honour to hoist it; whereas the very fact of their being king's officers should be an inducement to them to show an example of courtesy and gentlemanly conduct in the execution of their duty, however unpleasant it may be."

"It is only those who, insignificant themselves, want to make themselves of importance by the pennant they serve under," replied our hero.

"Very true, Mr. Easy; but you are not aware that a great part of the ill-will shown to the service, is owing to the insolence of those young men in office. The king's name is a warrant for every species of tyranny and unwarrantable conduct. I remember Mrs. Oxbelly telling one of them, when——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Oxbelly," interrupted Jack, "but we have no time to chat now; the breeze is coming down fast, and I perceive the prizes are closing. Let us lower down the boat, send the men on board again,

and give them their orders—which I will do in writing, in case they part company."

"Very true, sir. It will be dark in half an hour, and as we are now standing inshore, they will think that we intend to remain on the coast. As soon as it is quite dark we will shape our course for Palermo. I will go down and look at the chart."

CHAPTER XXXIII

In half an hour the prizes were again alongside, the men put on board, and the boat hoisted up. The frigate still remained becalmed to leeward, and hoisted in her boats. They watched until she was hid by the shades of night, and then wearing round stood away, with the wind two points free, for the coast of Sicily. The next morning when the sun rose there was nothing in sight. Strange anomaly, in a state of high civilisation, where you find your own countrymen avoided and more dreaded than even your foes!

The run was prosperous, the weather was fine, and the prizes did not part company.

On the sixteenth day the *Rebiera* and her convoy anchored in Palermo Bay. The wind was light in the morning that they stood in, and as Jack had a large blue flag with *Rebiera* in white letters hoisted at the main, Don Philip and Don Martin were on board and greeting our hero, before the *Rebiera's* anchor had plunged unto the clear blue water.

The information which our hero received, after having been assured of the health of Agnes and her parents, was satisfactory. The disappearance of the friar had, at first, occasioned much surprise; but as the servants of Don Rebiera swore to his return without the black, and the letter of Don Rebiera, sent to the convent, requesting his presence, was opened and read, there was

no suspicion against the family. A hundred conjectures had been afloat, but gradually they had subsided, and it was at last supposed that he had been carried off by the banditti, some of whom had been taken, and acknowledged that they had seized a friar on a day which they could not recollect. The reader will remember that it was Mesty.

The *Rebiera* received pratique, and Jack hastened on shore with Don Philip and his brother, and was once more in company of Agnes, who, in our hero's opinion, had improved since his departure. Most young men in love think the same after an absence, provided it is not too long. The prizes were sold and the money distributed, and every man was satisfied, as the cargoes fetched a larger sum than they had anticipated.

We must pass over the *pros* and *cons* of Don Rebiera and his lady, the pleading of Jack for immediate nuptials, the unwillingness of the mother to part with her only daughter, the family consultation, the dowry, and all these particulars. A month after his arrival Jack was married, and was, of course, as happy as the day was long.

A few days afterwards, Mr. Oxbelly advised departure, as the expenses of the vessel were heavy, and it was his duty so to do. Don Philip and Don Martin obtained leave to go to England, with their sister and her husband. Nevertheless, Jack, who found Palermo a very pleasant residence, was persuaded by the Don and his wife to remain there a month, and then there was crying and sobbing, and embracing, and embarking; and at last the *Rebiera*, whose cabins had been arranged for the reception of the party, weighed and made sail for Malta, Jack having promised to call upon the Governor.

In four days they anchored in Valetta harbour, and Jack paid his respects to his old friend, who was very glad to see him. The Governor sent his own barge for Mrs. Easy, and she was installed in the state apartments, which were acknowledged to be very comfortable. Our hero had, as usual, a long story to tell the Governor, and the Governor listened to it very attentively, probably because he thought it would be the last, which oppor-

tunity Jack employed to narrate the unfortunate end of his father.

"I would not have said so at the time, Mr. Easy, but now the wound is healed, I tell you that it is the best thing that could have happened—poor old gentleman! he was mad, indeed."

Our hero remained a fortnight at Malta, and then Signora Easy was re-embarked, and once more the *Rebiera* made sail.

"Fare you well, my lad; what I have seen of your brothers-in-law pleases me much; and as for your wife, it will be your own fault if she is not all that you would wish. If ever I come to England again, I will pay my first visit to Forest Hill. God bless you!"

But Sir Thomas never did go back to England, and this was their final adieu. Once more the *Rebiera* pursued her course, stopped a day or two at Gibraltar, shared the proceeds of the captured gun-boat, and then made sail for England, where she arrived without adventure or accident in three weeks.

Thus ended the last cruise of Mr. Midshipman Easy. As soon as their quarantine at the Motherbank was over, they disembarked, and found Dr. Middleton and Mr. Hanson waiting for them at the George Hotel.

We have now come to the end of our hero's adventures; that afternoon they all started for Forest Hill, where everything was ready for their reception. The *Rebiera's* men were paid off, and were soon distributed on board of his Majesty's ships; the vessel was sold, and Mr. Oxbelly retired to Southsea, to the society of his wife and little Billy.

Our hero, who was now of age, invited all within twenty miles of home to balls and dinners; became a great favourite, kept a pack of hounds, rode with the foremost, received a deputation to stand for the county in the conservative interest, was elected without much expense, which was very wonderful, and took his seat in parliament. Don Philip and Don Martin, after two months' stay, took their passage back to Palermo, fully satisfied with the prospects of their sister as to competence and happiness.

Mesty held his post with dignity, and proved himself trustworthy. Gascoigne, by the interest of the conservative member, soon obtained the rank of post-captain, and was always his devoted and sincere friend. And thus ends the history of Mr. Midshipman Easy.

THE END

A Select List of Books for Young People: Published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press

Books for Boys

"Boys who read Mr. Strang's works have not merely the advantage of perusing enthralling and wholesome tales, but they are also absorbing sound and trustworthy information of the men and times about which they are reading."—DAILY TELEGRAPH.

By HERBERT STRANG.

Humphrey Bold: His Chances and Mischances by Land and Sea. A Story of the Time of Benbow. Illustrated by W. H. MARGETSON.

In this book, one of Mr. Herbert Strang's best-known historical romances, are recounted the adventures of Humphrey Bold from the time when he was a puny slip of a boy attending Shrewsbury School, the butt of his companions, who chaffed him for being Bold by name and timid by nature, until he had grown into a sturdy young giant, and sailed into Plymouth Sound as First Lieutenant of the *Bristol* frigate. The intervening chapters tell of Humphrey's service at sea under Admiral Benbow, his capture by the French and his escape from prison, and of the many exciting events that befell him in the West Indies.

The Long Trail

Illustrated by H. EVISON.

This is a story of African adventure that carries the reader on breathlessly. Two English lads, who had gone to Africa prospecting for tin, come into contact with the wild race of the Tubus, and unwittingly cross the ambitions of their leader, Goruba. They are besieged, with their carriers, in a tumbledown fort, have encounters with savage beasts as well as savage men, and ultimately, getting the better of Goruba, have their reward in the shape of a hoard of ivory which lay concealed beneath the fort.

A Gentleman-at-Arms

A Story of Elizabethan Days. Eight plates in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO, and thirty-eight line drawings by T. H. ROBINSON.

This book is unique in literature for boys. It relates the adventurous career of an Elizabethan gentleman, in a style carefully modelled on the simple prose of the century which produced the Authorised Version of the Bible. No previous writer for boys has ever attempted a similar achievement. Apart from its romantic and exciting incidents, this story has great value by reason of its historical and geographical information, and its exceptional style.

By HERBERT STRANG (continued)

The River Pirates: A Story of China in Revolt. Illustrated by ELLIS SILAS, F.R.G.S.

This story has a background in the disturbed China of the present day. The mouths of Chinese rivers have long been notorious as the haunts of pirates, and these desperadoes have taken advantage of the national unrest to resume their depredations. The story relates how two English lads become by accident involved with the pirates; one, a wireless operator, is captured by them and held prisoner in their fort, from which he is rescued by his brother. With the aid of some Chinese friends and one Tim Bunce, an English boatswain, the pirates are thoroughly beaten, and the neighbouring village is relieved of the heavy yoke that terrorism has laid upon them.

Dan Bolton's Discovery: Illustrated by C. E. BROCK.

Dan Bolton and Jack Merredew, while on a visit to the latter's uncle, Professor Merredew, come upon a wonderful discovery—nothing less than a transmuter of metals. It is soon obvious that others, too, have got wind of what is going on, and the mystery is developed when the precious substance is stolen, and the Professor kidnapped by some unknown agency. Thereafter the story is worked out with all Mr. Strang's usual skill; against our will we are forced to suspect one character after another, and it is not until the very end of the book that our doubts are settled for us.

Martin of Old London: Illustrated by C. E. BROCK.

The Great Fire of London is the historical background to this bustling story of mystery and adventure. Martin Leake, the orphan son of a master mariner, takes service with Farquer, the King's baker, and in the course of his duty has to convey bread to the ships in the river. He is puzzled by some strange incidents in which lodgers in his house are concerned, and in the end discovers that some valuable jewellery and plate, the property of a former master, a City goldsmith, is being smuggled on board a Portuguese vessel. He is the means of saving the stolen goods, and finds that the vessel is in reality one that had belonged to his father and was supposed to have been lost.

By PERCY F. WESTERMAN.

Mystery Island: Illustrated by D. C. Eyles and Savile Lumley.

Three apprentices aboard the sailing ship *Cosmos* are sent off in a whaleboat to examine some floating wreckage. Before they get back to their ship a furious White Squall strikes the *Cosmos* and she goes down, and the three boys are left, the sole survivors, in an open boat on the vast Pacific. After several days of extreme hardship they land on an uninhabited island, where they make their home and lead a Robinson-Crusoe sort of life. They have some thrilling adventures and make several remarkable discoveries on the island before they are taken off by the skipper of a trading schooner.

The War of the Wireless Waves: Illustrated by W. E. Wightman.

Mr. Westerman attempts an interesting forecast of the time, possibly not very remote, when electric rays shall have superseded high explosives as the most powerful weapon of war. The story opens with the theft from a British ordnance factory of the formula of the ZZ rays, until then the most effective known. The secret falls into the hands of a modern brigand, who has a stronghold on the Adriatic. He uses the rays to extort blackmail on an enormous scale from the nations of Europe. Within a certain range he can paralyse all communications, stop all electrically-driven traffic, and render ships' compasses useless. The British Government sends an expedition against him in which ships, weapons and equipment are made of wood or other material upon which the rays will not take effect. Not a scrap of metal must be used. In this way the dictator's teeth are drawn and the world can breathe again.

By PETER BLUNDELL.

The Star of the Incas: A Story of Brazil. Illustrated by Alfred Sindall.

Geoff Chamier is an apprentice, and his cousin, Jack Hylton, third engineer on the s.s. *Sydenham*, on a voyage from Antwerp to the Amazon. Geoff discovers a mystery concerning the mess-room steward, Alonze, who calls himself a Brazilian; he also becomes suspicious of some of the Chinese crew. Arrived in the Amazon, the Chinese attack the ship and carry off the safe; Alonze also disappears. A little later Geoff, Jack, and the chief engineer, Bidgood, go ashore, and are captured by a band of Incas, of whom Alonze is the chief. The Europeans are conveyed to the Incas' city, where Alonze's brother tries to maintain the dignity becoming the descendant of a line of powerful kings. The Incas, however, are few in number, and are surrounded by enemies. Geoff and his friends assist them to repel an attack led by the Chinese from the *Sydenham*, and enable the defenders to escape, although their city is destroyed.

By MAJOR CHARLES GILSON.

The Pirate Aeroplane: Illustrated in colour by CHRISTOPHER CLARK.

The heroes of this story, during a tour in an entirely unknown region of Africa, light upon a race of people directly descended from the ancient Egyptians. This race—the Asmalians—has lived isolated from other communities. The scientific importance of this discovery is apparent to the travellers, and they are enthusiastic to know more of these strange people; but suddenly they find themselves in the midst of exciting adventures owing to the appearance of a pirate aeroplane—of a thoroughly up-to-date model—whose owner has learnt of a vast store of gold in the Asmalians' city. They throw in their lot with the people, and are able in the end to frustrate the plans of the freebooter.

"The story is a riot of adventure. There is the groundwork of a complete new novel on every page."—*Manchester Guardian.*

The Spy: A Story of the Peninsular War. Illustrated in colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

The hero, Sir Jeffery Jones, Bart., when a boy of sixteen, secures a commission in a famous foot regiment, then under orders to sail for Portugal under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley. His first encounter with the enemy takes place before he is fifty miles from home, for on the road to London he pursues and comes near to capturing a spy in the pay of Bonaparte. Several times subsequently the paths of the two cross, and eventually Sir Jeffery is the means of thwarting the Frenchman's schemes. He takes part in much of the fighting in the Peninsula, and at the storming of Badajoz and elsewhere renders his country good service.

The Lost Island: Illustrated in colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

This is a rousing story of adventure in the little-explored regions of Central Asia and in the South Seas. The prologue tells how Thomas Gaythorne obtained access to a Lama monastery, where he rendered the monks such great service that they bestowed upon him a gem of priceless value, known as Gautama's Eye, of which he was subsequently robbed. "The Lost Island" describes the attempt of one of Thomas Gaythorne's descendants to re-discover the missing gem.

By LAWRENCE R. BOURNE.

Coppernob Buckland: Illustrated by SAVILE LUMLEY.

This book describes a boy's life aboard a modern tramp steamer with unusual vividness and a wealth of detail that betokens the author's intimate knowledge of the sea. Walter Buckland, nicknamed "Coppernob," after running away from school under a cloud, gets a berth on

board a ship, and after one or two trips across the Channel, finds himself engaged on a rum-running expedition to the United States. A derelict steamer is salvaged, on board of which is a solitary passenger named Hill. He and Walter are associated in various adventures in Maine and New Brunswick, in the course of which Walter discovers that Hill has robbed the bank of which his own father is manager, and is trying to dispose of some stolen valuables in the States. Walter is able to frustrate this scheme, and to restore the stolen property to its rightful owner.

"Mr. Lawrence R. Bourne's book, 'Coppernob Buckland,' will appeal to the boy with a taste for the sea. It is primed full of the flavour of ship-board affairs. Racy dialogues flow from the mouths of the sailors relating to all and every daily occupation; there is never a dull moment and each character lives. The reader is absorbed from the start in an atmosphere of sailors and the high seas, and can almost taste the tang of salt in his nose and on his tongue."—*London Mercury.*

Coppernob: Second Mate: Illustrated by MIGUEL MACKINLAY and LESLIE OTWAY.

In furtherance of his ambition to work his way up at sea, Walter Buckland—otherwise "Coppernob"—gets his second mate's ticket and obtains a berth on the tramp steamer *Ystalyfera* bound for the West Indies. At the Azores a passenger—a Cuban named Terceira—is taken aboard, who, after a while, gets on friendly terms with the captain and crew, and eventually tries to persuade all the officers to stand in with him on a treasure search on some island in the Caribbean Sea. The captain is already committed to the scheme, but Walter refuses to have anything to do with it. In consequence he is marooned on an island, where he lives for some time the life of a modern Robinson Crusoe. At length, by a turn of fortune, he is able to regain possession of the *Ystalyfera* and take her safely into Barbados.

The Radium Casket: A Story of Adventure in China and the South Seas. Illustrated by ELLIS SILAS, F.R.G.S.

Hugh Munro, escaping down the Yangtse-Kiang during the Sons of Heaven rising, rescues a Chinese student from a band of brigands. Later, in a fight, the Chinaman is killed, but before he dies he gives to Hugh a gold casket containing a mass of leaden-looking material that possesses wonderful properties: a ray emanates from it that is destructive of human life and all substances that come under its influence. In Shanghai the casket is stolen; Hugh is kidnapped by the leader of a Chinese Secret Society, and taken on a voyage to the South Seas. On regaining his freedom, he and the young skipper of a trading schooner decide to follow up the trail of the casket, which leads them into some strange places and stranger adventures.

By DESMOND COKE.

The School Across the Road: Illustrated by H. M. Brock.

The incidents of this story arise out of the uniting of two schools under the name of "Winton," a name which the headmaster fondly hopes will become known far and wide as that of a great seat of learning. Unfortunately, however, the two sets of boys do not take kindly to one another. There is discord and insurrection, and the feud drags on until the rival factions have an opportunity of uniting against a common enemy.

The Bending of a Twig: Illustrated in colour by H. M. Brock.

When "The Bending of a Twig" was first published it was hailed by competent critics as the finest school story that had appeared since "Tom Brown." It is a vivid picture of life in a modern public school. The hero, Lycidas Marsh, enters Shrewsbury without having previously been to a preparatory school, drawing his ideas of school life from his imagination and a number of school stories he has read. How Lycidas finds his true level in this new world and worthily maintains the Salopian tradition is the theme of this most entrancing book.

"A real live school story that carries conviction in every line."—*Standard.*

"Mr. Desmond Coke has given us one of the best accounts of public school life that we possess. . . . Among books of its kind 'The Bending of a Twig' deserves to become a classic."—*Outlook.*

The House Prefect: Illustrated by H. M. Brock.

This story of life at Sefton, a great English public school, mainly revolves around the trouble in which Bob Manders, new-made house prefect, finds himself, owing to a former alliance with the two wild spirits, whom, in the interests of the house, it is now his chief task to suppress.

The Worst House at Sherborough: Illustrated by H. M. Brock.

The "Worst House at Sherborough" relates a momentous chapter in the personal history of Dick Hunter, who, owing to a reverse in the family fortunes, is faced with the alternative of leaving Sherborough or taking up the post of Head Boy in Wilson's House, usually known as "Weary Willie's" on account of its general slackness. To Hunter, a keen athlete, Captain of the Boats, and hitherto the most popular boy in the School House, the idea of shepherding Weary Willie's black sheep is scarcely less repugnant than leaving the school altogether; however, he makes up his mind to go through with it. The "Willieites" have no desire to excel at games or anything else; they do not trouble about the reputation of their house. They are content to be a reproach to Sherborough. Dick hammers away at this unpromising material for a long time without result; but at last he succeeds in knocking out a few sparks of enthusiasm among the younger boys, which in due time lead to quite a little blaze of glory for "Willie's."

Books for Girls

By MARGARET STUART LANE

The Admiral's Daughter

Illustrated by W. H. MARGETSON.

This is a story of the stormy times of the Monmouth rising. The heroine, Marion Penrock, leaves her home in Cornwall to stay with her aunt in Kensington, and during her absence, her old chum and playfellow, Roger Trevannion, is betrayed into the hands of Jeffrey's men. The news reaches Marion in Kensington by means of a fisher girl who suspects foul play on the part of a young French girl, the Admiral's ward. It happens that when the fisher girls' letter arrives, Marion's aunt is away on duty as lady-in-waiting with Her Majesty's suite. Accompanied by her French waiting woman, Marion sets out on the long journey back to the west. Roger is in gaol in Exeter. Just when all hope of saving his life appears to have gone, Marion effects his rescue and rides with him, pursued by soldiers, down to the seaboard. Roger sails away; the traitress passes out of the story, and happier times dawn on the old Cornish homestead.

The Wild Bird: A Story of the Civil War. With Illustrations by BRYCE HAMILTON.

This book gives a vivid picture of the England of 1651, after the battle of Worcester. To Margery Denton and her aunt, both of whom are fervent royalists, is brought a young cavalier, Anthony Drew, badly wounded while carrying a message to the King. They take him in and conceal him from his pursuers, but it is obvious that his wound will prevent him from going further on his mission. It is Margery, therefore, who takes the task upon her shoulders. In spite of attempts to check her progress, both by the Roundhead soldiers and by a strong troop of robbers who are roaming the district, she wins through to the King, and is later instrumental in helping him in his perilous escape.

Just Peggy: Illustrated by M. D. JOHNSTON.

Shortly after Peggy Lane and her brother Peter have been left stranded in the world by the death of their father, there comes a letter from a cousin whom they have never seen, offering to shelter them at "Picket Stones," in Worcestershire. Peggy is rather frightened at the thought of going to live with a stranger, but Mr. Ramsay turns out to be a dear old man, very kind and very absent-minded—so absent-minded that he suddenly loses his memory one day while on a visit to London, and disappears. For months nothing is heard of him, and Peggy and Peter find it a hard task to keep the house going. Many sacrifices have to be made before Peter finds his cousin again, and the story ends with Peggy's discovery of a wonderful collection of Roman remains on the site of "Picket Stones."

BOOKS FOR GIRLS

By CHRISTINA GOWANS WHYTE

Nina's Career

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

" Nina's Career " tells delightfully of a large family of girls and boys, children of Sir Christopher Howard. Friends of the Howards are Nina Wentworth, who lives with three aunts, and Gertrude Mannering. Gertrude is conscious of always missing in her life that which makes the lives of the Howards so joyous and full. They may have " careers " ; she must go to Court and through the wearying treadmill of the rich girls. The Howards get engaged, marry, go to hospitals, study in art schools ; and in the end Gertrude also achieves happiness.

" We have been so badly in need of writers for girls who shall be in sympathy with the modern standard of intelligence, that we are grateful for the advent of Miss Whyte, who has not inaptly been described as the new Miss Alcott."—*Outlook.*

The Story-Book Girls

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

This story won the £100 prize in the *Bookman* competition.

The Leightons are a charming family. There is Mabel, the beauty, her nature, strength and sweetness mingled ; and Jean, the downright, blunt, uncompromising ; and Elma, the sympathetic, who champions everybody and has a weakness for long words. And there is Cuthbert, too, the clever brother. Cuthbert is responsible for a good deal, for he saves Adelaide Maud from an accident, and brings the Story-Book Girls into the story. Every Girl who reads this book will become acquainted with some of the realest, truest, best people in recent fiction.

" It is not too much to say that Miss Whyte has opened a new era in the history of girls' literature. . . . The writing, distinguished in itself, is enlivened by an all-pervading sense of humour."—*Manchester Courier.*

The Five Macleods : Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

Each of the Five Macleods possesses an individuality of her own Elspeth is the eldest—sixteen—and her lovable nature makes her a favourite with everyone ; she is followed, in point of age, by the would-be masterful Winifred (otherwise Winks) and the independent Lil ; while little Babs and Dorothy bring up the rear. Altogether they are a delightful family, and their doings, as described by Miss Whyte, make most entertaining reading.

" Altogether a most charming story for girls."—*Schoolmaster*

By BRENDA GIRVIN

Three Adventurous Schoolgirls

Illustrated by JAMES DURDEN.

In this story Miss Girvin takes her readers into a new and attractive locality. Mr. Rutherford, the father of one of the adventurous schoolgirls, has bought a house in the Highlands of Scotland, and here the other two heroines come to spend a midsummer holiday. Before they have been in the house very long the girls scent a mystery in which the old, impoverished and eccentric laird (from whom Mr. Rutherford bought the place), an isolated mountain hut, and packing-cases containing aeroplanes seem hopelessly mixed up. It is a mystery after the girls' own hearts, and they solve it, in the course of twenty very interesting chapters, by their own methods, in the end succeeding in laying bare a very clever scheme of smuggling.

By CASTLEDEN DOVE

Lowanna

Illustrated by H. COLLER.

This very clever story deals with life in an Australian school. Lowanna Laurenson, the central figure, is a lovely egoist who relies on her beauty to procure that popularity and power for which she craves. She gets closely into touch with Joan Grantham, a new girl, intending to use her as a tool for her ambitious schemes. Joan, however, is torn between her love for Lowanna and her devotion to Miss Cranmer, a mistress, and for a time there is fierce conflict between the girls' opposite natures. In the end it is Joan's sweetness which triumphs, and Lowanna is softened.

The Girl Scout

Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

This is the story of a patrol of Girl Scouts, and the service they rendered their country. Colonel Norton announces that some silver cups, which he values as souvenirs of the time when he could win races and gymnastic competitions, have been stolen, and calls on the Boy Scouts to catch the thief, promising, if they succeed, to furnish their club-room in time for the reception of a neighbouring patrol. Aggie Phillips, sister of the boys' leader, hears of this, and at once organises a girls' patrol to help solve the mystery. In tracing the thief, the girls manage to entrap two foreigners, who, in all kinds of disguises, try to get hold of valuable papers in the hands of the Colonel. Meanwhile the boys continually follow up the tracks left by the girls, or are purposely misled by Aggie The girls win the prize but arrange to join forces with the boys.

By BRENDA GIRVIN (continued.)

The Tapestry Adventure

Illustrated by H. R. MILLAR.

Miss Girvin's readers have learned to expect from her thrilling and elaborate plots, and this new story is worked out with all her usual skill. It centres round a Gobelin tapestry, the property of Mrs. Carlyon, of such value that it is difficult to find a purchaser for it. But money is needed if Stephanie Carlyon is to be sent to school, and it is Stephanie's little friend, Lancelot, who hits on the brilliant idea of stealing the tapestry and thus making the Insurance Company pay her school fees. But there are other thieves after the tapestry that night, and when it finally disappears it is difficult to guess which of them can be hiding it. In the end, however, it is returned to its rightful owner and Stephanie's career proceeds smoothly.

June, the Girl Guide

Illustrated by R. H. BROCK.

June Redgrave and three of her guide friends set out to solve the mystery of a lost snuff-box. The box has been stolen, but how or when is not revealed until the end of the story. At one stage June suspects the Guide Captain's brother of being the thief, and later June herself falls under suspicion. She decides, therefore, that she will not attend Guide meetings or practices until her character is cleared. This makes the little band of Guides more determined than ever to find the real culprit, and so persistently do they follow up clues that the snuff-box is at last tracked down.

By ELSIE J. OXENHAM

Mistress Nanciebel

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

This is a story of the Restoration. Nanciebel's father, Sir John Seymour, had so incurred the displeasure of King Charles by his persistent opposition to the threatened war against the Dutch, that he was sent out of the country. Nothing would dissuade Nanciebel from accompanying him, so they sailed away together and were duly landed on a desolate shore, which they afterwards discovered to be a part of Wales. Here, by perseverance and much hard toil, John o' Peace made a new home for his family, in which enterprise he owed not a little to the presence and constant help of Nanciebel, who is the embodiment of youthful optimism and womanly tenderness.

"A charming book for girls."—*Evening Standard.*

By WINIFRED DARCH

Chris and Some Others

Illustrated by SAVILE LUMLEY.

The heroine, a new day-girl at an up-to-date High School, is the daughter of a scientist, whose labours presently carry him off to mid-Africa. By this time Chris has settled down very happily at school with the delightful Marion as her special chum. To Chris's horror, the aunt to whose care she is confided during her father's absence is very desirous of making her into a young lady, and not a schoolgirl. News comes of her father's death in a native rising; Chris becomes her aunt's ward. The lady's first action is to take Chris from her school and send her to share a daily governess with another girl. Chris is nearly heartbroken. But her aunt dislikes learned girls, and wishes Chris to acquire skill in embroidery instead of working for a college career. In the meantime the great scientist has been nursed back to health and returns unexpectedly home. Chris goes back to her school and friends, and the story ends with the heroine looking forward to promotion to the Upper Fifth.

Katharine Goes to School:

This delightful book deals with the adventures of Katharine Moreton at Starring High School. Her impulsive nature and easily aroused sense of justice quickly lead her into difficulties with those in authority. Later, by a series of mistakes, she not only becomes unpopular with the girls in her own form, but quarrels violently with her great friend, Valentine Dormer. Valentine, moved by a generous impulse, makes a vain attempt, in the scholarship examination, to efface herself in favour of her old friend, and with the exposure of Katharine's secret enemy the mistakes of the past are smoothed away.

Heather at the High School: Illustrated by C. E. BROCK.

The book recounts the experiences of Heather, a scholarship girl, during her first two terms at the local High School. At first she finds much that is perplexing; the code and the interests of her companions are both different from what she has known at the Council School. But Heather is not one to be long dismayed; she throws herself into all the school activities, and although she gets laughed at for some impulsive mistakes, she gains fame as a cricketer. Very soon she finds her feet in her new surroundings, and makes many friends—a happy consummation due largely to her own cheerful and willing spirit and partly to the influence of the Girl Guides that pervades the school.

By WINIFRED DARCH (continued.)

Varvara Comes to England : Illustrated by M. D. JOHNSTON.

A Russian Princess, Varvara Voronzov, comes to take a post in an English High School. Her difficulties are complicated by the presence in the school of her young step-sister, Michelle, on whose account she quarrels with her best friend, Rachel Weston. Some time afterwards she mislays the key of the safe in which the papers for Rachel's examination for an entrance scholarship to Cambridge are placed. Despite heroic efforts on her part, the papers are late in getting to their destination, and Rachel's career is thereby endangered. The suspense is too much for Varvara, and she runs away. While looking for another post she is discovered by English relatives, and all ends happily with Varvara back at the High School looking forward to a University career.

By IERNE L. PLUNKET

Sally Cocksure : Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE.

This delightful story tells of the school life of Sally Brendon, a clever but thoroughly spoiled and conceited little girl. Her self-accurance and generally rebellious attitude quickly made her unpopular at school and earn for her the nickname of " Sally Cocksure." She presently falls under the bad influence of Trina Morrison, and when the latter is expelled for a serious offence she herself is only saved from a similar fate by the kindly intervention of Violet Tremson. Sally is not at first disposed to feel friendly towards Violet, but a thrilling rescue of Autolycus, her dog, from some dangerous caves draws them together, and by this new friendship Sally is softened and tamed.

Princess Natalie's Adventure : Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE.

A runaway princess at an English boarding school under false pretences—that is the exciting theme of this story. It opens in Kravonia, where the Princess Natalie bemoans her fate and wishes that she could go to school in England. Owing to political activities, she is obliged to escape to this country, and while taking refuge in a seaside village she runs away from her entourage from sheer boredom. She is given sanctuary by Anglo-Indian children, who get her into their school. A search for the princess is instituted, not only by her guardians but by revolutionaries from her own country, who wish to kidnap her for political reasons. The revolutionaries are successful, but Natalie's school friends rescue her under exciting circumstances, and finally restore her to her rightful guardians.

By IERNE L. PLUNKET (continued.)

Juanita : A Story of the Moors in Spain. Illustrated by GORDON BROWNE.

This book deals with eleventh-century Spain. Juanita, the heroine, during a hard and bitter childhood, gains the favour of the great chief Ruy Diez of Burgos, and becomes his ward. Later she is captured by Moors and is sold as a slave in Toledo to a Moslem of high rank who has a Christian wife. After some years of her captivity have passed, the Cid (Ruy Diez) enters Toledo in triumph, and Juanita effects not only her own freedom, but also that of her mistress.

By MRS. HERBERT STRANG

The Girl Crusoes : A Story of Three Girls in the South Seas. With Colour Illustrations by N. TENISON.

It is a common experience that young girls prefer stories written for their brothers to those written for themselves. They have the same love of adventure, the same admiration for brave and heroic deeds, as boys ; and in these days of women travellers and explorers there are countless instances of women displaying a courage and endurance in all respects equal to that of the other sex. Recognising this, Mrs. Herbert Strang has written a story of adventure in which three English girls of the present day are the central figures, and in which the girl reader will find as much excitement and amusement as any boy's book could furnish.

By WINIFRED M. LETTS

The Quest of the Blue Rose

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

After the death of her mother, Sylvia Sherwood has to make her own way in the world as a telegraph clerk. The world she finds herself in is a girls' hostel in a big northern city. For a while she can only see the uncongenial side of her surroundings ; but when she has made a friend and found herself a niche, she begins to realise that though the Blue Rose may not be for her finding, there are still wild roses in every hedge. In the end, however, Sylvia, contented at last with her hard-working, humdrum life, finds herself the successful writer of a book of children's poems.

" Miss Letts has written a most entertaining work, which should become very popular. The humour is never forced, and the pathetic scenes are written with true feeling."—*School Guardian.*

Bridget of All Work. Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN

The scene of the greater part of this story is laid in Lancashire, and the author has chosen her heroine from amongst those who know what it is to feel the pinch of want and strive loyally to combat it. There is a charm about Bridget Joy, moving about her kitchen, keeping a light heart under the most depressing surroundings. Girl though she is, it is her arm that encircles and protects those who should in other circumstances have been her guardians, and her brave heart that enables the word Home to retain its sweetness for those who are dependent on her.

" Miss Letts has written a story for which elder girls will be grateful, so simple and winning is it ; and we recognise in the author's work a sense of character and ease of style which ought to ensure its popularity."—*Globe.*

BOOKS FOR GIRLS

By DORITA FAIRLIE BRUCE

Dimsie Goes to School: (The Senior Prefect). Illustrated by WAL PAGET.

In this, the first of the " Dimsie " books, Miss Bruce has divided her interest between Daphne Maitland, a prefect who has been obliged in the absence of the head girl to act in her place, and Dimsie herself, Daphne's cousin, who is spending her first term at school. The term is a stormy one. A new head mistress marks her introduction by changing the time-table and cutting out half the time allowed for hockey practice. This innovation provokes the enmity of the " games section " of the school, headed by a rebellious girl, Nita Tomlinson. When the trouble is at its height a piece of malicious gossip about a Mrs. Maitland comes to Nita's ears. She hastens to circulate it through the school. The story really concerns Dimsie's mother, but as Daphne is unable to prove its untruth, she allows Nita and her friends to think the Mrs. Maitland referred to is her own mother, wishing to shield Dimsie from the evil, clinging effects of such a story. At the eleventh hour the mystery is cleared up.

Dimsie Moves Up: A School Story. Illustrated by WAL PAGET.

Dimsie is still in the Junior Division of the Jane Willard School. In the course of her adventures in this book she finds the secret entrance to an old smugglers' cave under the cliffs, and she also nearly succeeds in drowning herself in the bay. But the chief interest lies in the character development of Dimsie and her group of friends, and in the famous Junior Eleven.

Dimsie Moves Up Again: Illustrated in Colour by GERTRUDE DEMAIN HAMMOND.

In this story we see Dimsie advanced a stage farther on her course through " Jane's." She is a little older, a little more inured to school discipline ; but otherwise she is unchanged, and as impulsive, as kind-hearted, and as candid as ever. She takes under her wing a new girl who, being the daughter of a learned professor, loses no opportunity of airing her own knowledge, and generally acts in a stupidly pedantic manner. The friendship of this ill-assorted pair forms the main thread of the story, and leads to some exciting events, including the discovery of a genuine Van Dyck in the school attics, its subsequent theft, and its breathless recovery by Dimsie and some other girls.

By DORITA FAIRLIE BRUCE (continued.)

Dimsie Among the Prefects : Illustrated by GERTRUDE DEMAIN HAMMOND.

Dimsie is now a prefect. Her chief difficulty is in dealing with a very trying junior, who almost succeeds in wrecking the peace of the whole school. In the end the girl, Hilary, runs away. Dimsie follows in pursuit and brings her back at the risk of her own life. This naturally leads to a better understanding between the two girls, and the story ends with the atmosphere of happy freedom, which the reader of the Dimsie books associate with " Jane's," completely restored.

Dimsie, Head Girl : Illustrated by MARY STRANGE REEVE.

The aggressive efficiency of two new prefects leads to the juniors declaring open warfare, and Jean Gordon, the head girl, is too absorbed in poetry to take any effective steps. Things go gradually from bad to worse, and after a really serious lapse Jean is deposed and the reins of leadership given into Dimsie's hands. At first she has no very easy task before her, but by tact and kindly understanding the rebellion is broken, and the machinery of " Jane's " once more runs smoothly.

Dimsie Grows Up : Illustrated by H. COLLER.

Dimsie has now grown up, and has to think of her career. Her great ambition has been to become a medical student, but for more than one reason that is impossible ; consequently she settles down at her home in the Highlands, and sets to work to cultivate the herb garden which was started by her great-grandmother. Though thus tucked away in a quiet backwater Dimsie finds much to interest her. She helps to bring about a reconciliation between her school friend Pamela and the Ogre, who had quarrelled, and sees them happily married. She aids " the Lintie "—a comically serious child with no relations. Since she cannot be a doctor herself, she does the next best thing by becoming engaged to one ; and her herb garden is useful, too, in effecting cures of minor ailments. Dimsie is a born helper and healer.

Dimsie Goes Back : Illustrated by MARY STRANGE REEVE.

Dimsie having left school and become engaged to be married, returns to " Jane's " for one term as secretary to the headmistress. The school has deteriorated in tone owing to the slackness of the seniors, and Dimsie's return inspires some of the girls to greater efforts, with the result that the Anti-Soppist League is revived. Affairs improve all round, and Dimsie earns the gratitude of the headmistress and of the whole school. The more serious side of school life is much enlivened by the pranks of the juniors ; not to mention those of Jeems, a West Highland dog of strong character, and an Anti-Soppist.