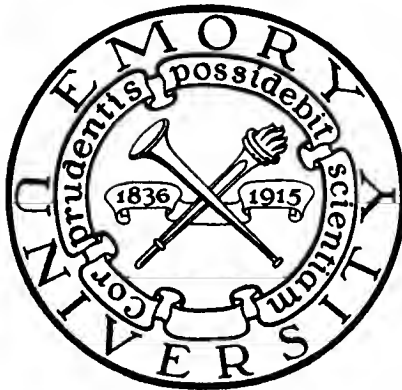




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RALPH RUTHERFORD.

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VOL. II.

RALPH RUTHERFORD.

A NAUTICAL ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE PETREL,"

&c., &c.

"Safe am I arrived in haven, a weather-beaten but experienced shipman, enabled to indicate the hidden rocks and quicksands of this life's perturbed shores. Often have I struck, often been wrecked, but never foundered. Possible, though little probable, are future storms."

MEMOIRS OF BARON FREDERIC TRENCK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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RALPH RUTHERFORD.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN MERIVALE, once more alone, paced up and down his cabin in deep thought. He had been much interested in Brady's case, and was indignant at the conviction that such atrocious crimes could be committed upon our seamen with impunity. It struck him that whilst seeking justice for Brady, he might, at the same time, find means to crush the whole crimp system itself.

“A heavy squall, Sir, and two vessels entangled together are driving down upon

us," reported a youngster from the officer of the watch.

Thus recalled to passing events, Merivale ascended at once to the quarter-deck; but having passed from a strong light to utter darkness, it was some time before he could see even the large objects so near to them.

"I begin to hope, Sir," said Mr. Birchall, "that they may clear us yet; but we have spars upon the gangway and quarter ready for booming them off."

"I see them now," said the Captain standing by the first Lieutenant, and watching everything closely, though he scrupulously abstained from interference; for Birchall was both able and zealous, with all his oddities and eccentricities.

The crews of the two vessels, as they drifted close past the 'Boadicea,' without absolutely touching her, were silent and orderly. It was an anxious moment for them all.

“Quite near enough,” observed the Captain; “but as they have cleared us, I hope they will be able to bring up. There is yet a considerable space between them and the rocks, and from their silent, orderly conduct, when endangered, they must be well manned, and well commanded too.”

Another tremendous squall came on.

“A ship driving right for our hawse,” reported Ralph’s voice from the fore-castle, “There are two of them, and they cannot clear us.”

“Haul in the starboard head-braces, top the foreyard to port, Mr. Birchall,” exclaimed the Captain, who had proceeded to the fore-castle to judge of the danger, having first desired Birchall to have the stern and quarter boats ready for lowering. All was now silent: the shock was clearly inevitable.

A heavy crash ensued—a deep-laden bark had struck the ‘Boadicea’ at the larboard cathead. Her quarter must have evidently

been stove in by the blow, for a much larger ship was lying across her bows; she was jammed between the two, her foremast was already gone, and her light mizen mast fell with the shock; it rested for a moment upon the cathead, and one man was rescued from it before it went overboard.

Ralph was actively employed in cutting away everything which had become entangled with the frigate's rigging, but the Captain's attention, and Ralph's too, was soon turned to the rescue of the unfortunate crew of the bark. The man already saved was in too exhausted a state to give any information relative to his shipmates; it was hoped they had escaped to the other ship, as there could be little difficulty in so doing for men capable of making an effort to save their lives, but much of the bark's rigging was lying under the frigate's bows. Ralph, with three or four active hands, went down under the fore-channel to search amongst the fallen wreck.

It was too dark to see much; the roar of the wind and sea would inevitably drown any feeble cry, and the spray which beat upon them all was intensely chilling.

“Here’s one!” cried a voice from the water’s edge; it was Ben Buntline’s voice. “Here’s one!” he repeated; “but send down a bowline knot, messmates; bear a hand, boys, for he can’t help himself, and my limbs are getting struck stiff like. That’s it, shipmates,” he resumed, “that’s it! I’ve got him into it; gently—pull handsomely—that’s it!”

A man was safely drawn up, and conveyed with great gentleness and care to the hospital—his left arm was broken.

“Go down, youngster, to the sick bay: learn how these men are, and if possible, find out if there was any one else amongst the wreck with them,” said the Captain.

“The last man, Sir,” reported the youngster, who was up again in an instant,

“muttered something which sounds like poor boy! poor boy! but very indistinctly, and he is a foreigner too.”

“There is yet a boy amongst that rigging, lads, and we must save him,” said the Captain.

This call was cheerfully responded to. Three or four active young fellows instantly sprang over the bows, and an interval of painful suspense followed.

“We’ve got him,” exclaimed a voice from the water’s edge. “Ben and I have got him; but be smart, messmates, with the bowline knots, for the frost has got Ben, and he is almost as bad as the poor boy.”

A small slender lad was soon drawn up, quite insensible, and Buntline himself very little better; for exhausted by his exertions, the cold had seized him severely.

The spars were now manned, everything had been cut away which had connected the sinking bark with the frigate.

“Now then together, my lads,” said Ralph. A great and well combined effort was made.

“She’s going, she’s going !” exclaimed several voices.

“She is clear of us, and of the other ship too,” said the Captain ; “but I fear she is sinking : we can do no more for her.”

The night passed off without farther accident. Mr. Griffith, the surgeon, reported that his patients were doing well ; in fact, Buntline was just now the worst of the four : for having exerted himself so much, and having been so long in the water, his case required great care ; but Mr. Griffiths hoped, he said, that no permanent injury would ensue. Captain Merivale expressed great interest about him indeed ; every one did.

The gale continued without abatement till next morning, but with fewer accidents. Perhaps the bad cables had already given

way, for all the rest seemed likely to ride it out.

“That small brig,” observed the Captain, at daylight, “which took such an outside berth yesterday, must have parted in the night, for she is much nearer the rocks than she was yesterday, and she appears to ride hard. Her situation is certainly full of danger, though she is by no means so near the rocks as she seems to us, who are so far ahead of her.”

“She has no anchor left on this side, Sir,” observed the first lieutenant, after a long look with his glass.

“Well, Doctor,” said the Captain, “how are your new patients? and above all, how is Buntline? Nothing alarming there I hope?”

“No, Sir,” replied Griffiths. “Far from it: he is better than I could have expected. Mr. Rutherford has been to see him, which cheered him up wonderfully. You will lose

his services for a time, but I apprehend nothing worse."

The two men saved from the wreck were foreigners, and there is every reason to believe that the remainder of the crew of the bark, which was a Dane, had got on board the ship which had caused all their difficulties by driving athwart the bark's hawse, and breaking her adrift.

"The lad is English, he is now quite recovered, and ready for examination. He's a sharp boy," added the Doctor.

After breakfast the youth was sent for to the quarter-deck. He was a slight made, shrewd looking boy, and might be considered very small for his age, if he was twelve years old, though his countenance suggested that he was still older. He appeared to be much at his ease, though as he had been rigged out in slop clothes far too long and too large for him, he cut a queer figure, which would probably have excited the ridicule of

the young Mids, but that they knew better than to forget the decorum due to the quarter-deck in Captain Merivale's presence. The Captain was struck with the queer, but intelligent expression of the boy's looks in such a situation, and in such a ridiculous masquerade.

"Well, youngster," said the Captain, "how came you, an English boy, on board a foreign ship? have you run away from your friends?"

"No, Sir," replied the urchin, "I have not run away."

"Did they know of your being taken there then?"

"No, Sir, I went aboard that bark without either my father's leave or my own."

"You seem to be an odd boy, who is your father?"

"My father is a Captain, Sir."

"What sort of a Captain? for it is a most indefinite denomination."

“My father is Captain of a King’s ship, and has been so these twenty years, Sir.”

“Ay, indeed! that’s a very unusual length of command. What’s his name? Some of us may know him.”

“His name is Tandy, Sir, Titus Tandy, Sir.”

“I never heard of him. There is some mistake here. What ship does he command?”

“The ‘Harpy’ cutter, Sir, and my name is Titus too, so they call me Tit for distinction.”

“Oh, I know Titus Tandy, Sir,” said Birchall. “He’s an active Revenue officer, and a worthy man with a very large family.”

“Yes, Sir, there’s eleven of us. I am the youngest of the lot.”

“Have you not a brother in the Service? or what’s become of him,” asked Birchall.

“The last we ever heard of him he was in the China seas, for he never would write, but

as my father says, Tim's sure to turn up again. He never will come to any harm. He's been drowned twice, but 'twas no use."

The Captain who appeared to have had quite enough of Mr. Tit, retired to the cabin, but Birchall, who enjoyed beyond measure Tit's free and easy manner, and perhaps the ridiculous figure the confident urchin made in a jacket which reached half way down his leg, and trousers nearly up to his chin, though well rolled up at the bottom, took the boy into the gun room, as his father's friend, and fitted him out more respectably.

After having given him a good dinner, he resumed his examination of the boy. "How was it, Mr. Tit, that you got on board that Dansker, without either your father's leave or your own?"

"Why," replied Tit, who dearly loved to attract notice, and to hear his own tongue; "I lived on board the 'Harpy,' for since we lost my mother, we had no house, and there

were but Tom and I left at home. Many of the gentlemen's families on the coast were very kind to us, and there was one house where I was often asked to stay. There was a good deal of smuggling going on, and as I was bird's-nesting and sky-larking among the cliffs, I found out one day a cave filled with goods. My father had often told me to have my eyes about me, so I wrote him word what I had seen. He came down in his boat and seized the goods. Nobody suspected me, and my father gave me a bran new suit of clothes, and a crown piece to spend. You may be sure after that I did keep a good look-out, and it wasn't long before I found another batch of tubs concealed. Tony Squash, the son of the clerk of the parish, was with me that time. I said nothing to him, but the tubs were seized in no time, and I suspect Tony must have said something, for a few days afterwards, whilst I was rambling amongst the cliffs, on the

look-out, I was seized all at once by two great fellows, gagged, and carried off to a small cutter I had seen laying off, and next day they put me on board that Danish bark, bound to Dantzic. The Danes were very kind to me, and, as they were afterwards chartered for London with a cargo of wheat, I was to work my passage back with them, for I had a great desire to see London."

Birchall, as a humourist, took a great fancy to Tit, and prevailed upon the Captain to receive him as a Mid, pleading that he was the son of an old friend of his, which, by the bye, was stretching the term far beyond its just limits. But there was nothing singular in that, for the word friend is certainly the most abused, and shamefully misused word in the language.

Birchall fitted the boy out generously, and he soon became a favourite on board, but he never did attain to any considerable degree of favour with the Captain, though proving to be

a sharp lad ; for Merivale was a serious man, whose thoughts were fully occupied with the strict performance of his own duties, and with exacting a similar devotion, as far as it was possible, from those around him. He had no relish for the facetious or the ridiculous.

Late in the afternoon, the wind abated considerably, but dark heavy clouds still loaded the eastern horizon.

“ We shall have a trying night of it again, Rutherford, notwithstanding this lull,” said the Captain to the officer of the watch, speaking with at least his usual kindness of tone. Ralph had served for some years with Captain Merivale, during which the sternest temporary displeasure of that excellent and discerning officer had found ample expression in addressing Ralph as *Mr.* Rutherford, perhaps with some variations of intonation ; that *Mr.* was absolutely intolerable to Ralph, for though it was unavoidably applied to him on public or important occasions, as to any other

officer, without in the slightest degree discomposing him, yet when applied unnecessarily, as on a recent occasion in the cabin, when Ben Buntline's case had first come under discussion, it had galled him to the quick.

What a heaven upon earth would a man-of-war become if even amongst the officers such a sensitive spirit of consideration could be habitual on the one side, calling forth a congenial spirit of submission to deserved reproof on the other; and very many individual instances of this high feeling have existed, and no doubt do still exist, though it is not the rule.

“ Yes,” continued the Captain, after surveying the horizon to windward, and then taking a long look with his telescope at the small brig, whose dangerous position had attracted his attention from the moment in which she had anchored there, thus avoiding a considerable peril by rushing into one much more imminent, as one sees women

and children doing daily in this our crowded go-ahead Babylon, where butcher's carts and reckless cabs turn corners at speed and rush furiously into a throng of foot passengers. "Yes," he repeated, "that vessel is in a most dangerous situation, as I suspect she is riding by her last anchor. She can hardly hope to ride out such a night as we are now likely to have." And again he looked anxiously to windward.

"Permit me, Sir," said Ralph, "to take one of the cutters and remove the crew. There is yet light enough for that, and though it would be impossible to get back to this ship with the boat, there's the 'Sycorax' on her starboard quarter; we should be sure to reach her, blow as it might."

"Unfortunately," replied the Captain, "we cannot be certain of the extremity of her danger, which would alone justify so desperate an attempt; she may have another anchor on the offside, and she makes no signal of

distress. They are too apt to accuse us of exceeding our ill-defined authority, and may sue me for ship and cargo if we remove the crew."

"There goes the ensign union downward," said Ralph.

"He ought to have done that two hours ago," said the captain; "but it must not be neglected. You may certainly reach the 'Sycorax' from her, though I doubt the possibility of your boarding her, should it freshen much, of which there is every appearance. The sea seems at times to break completely over her, for she is very deeply laden, and a poor looking craft."

A crew, selected from a host of volunteers, started with Ralph, in the 'Boadicea's' cutter, to remove the crew of the brig, if possible, to the 'Sycorax,' the only ship it would be practicable to reach after leaving the brig, and that only by the most strenuous exertions.

As they approached the brig a heavy squall, the forerunner of a renewal of the furious gale, covered the little vessel with foam, for she was very deep in the water. The boat was now turned with her head to the short curling seas, and dropped with great skill till she was nearly abreast of the brig, the crew of which were on the alert to afford her every assistance in boarding, a most difficult and dangerous undertaking, upon the success of which depended, in all probability, the lives of both parties. For should the boat be permitted to strike against the vessel, tossed up and down as she and the boat both were, more especially the latter, by the short high irregular waves, she must be crushed, most of her crew smashed or drowned, and no chance left for those who might get on board the brig, but the desperate hope of riding out the gale.

A rope was dexterously thrown into the boat from the brig's fore-chains, and another

into her stern sheets, from the main-chains, but scarcely had Ralph seized the latter, when a huge sea broke over the brig's bows, and threw the boat up on end, half filling her with water. The men in the bow of the boat, dazzled by vivid lightning, were compelled to let go their rope; for should the upraised boat cast with her head towards the brig in her descent, the next wave must smash her to atoms against the hull. Had the men forward held on the ropes, this must have been inevitable: Ralph therefore had called to them to let it go. At the same time it was indispensable to pull hard upon the rope in the stern sheets which he held in his hand, thus drawing the boat's stern towards the vessel, to make sure of the boat's bow turning, or as the nautical phrase is, casting from her. The whole thing was instantaneous. It was nearly dark and bitterly cold. The combined movement partly ordered by Ralph, and partly executed

by his own hand, succeeded. The boat cast clear of the vessel, and escaped immediate destruction, but the violence of the jerk threw Ralph overboard into the boiling surge. To recover the boat was impossible; the crew lost sight of him almost instantly, and had not a moment to lose in getting their boat once more end on to the sea and baled out, before another breaking wave should wholly swamp her. The squall was furious and they could now see nothing but the lights hoisted on board the 'Sycorax' for their guidance, for all their movements had been anxiously watched from her, and indeed from every other ship. To reach her was a question of life or death. The gale increased, she was the last, the only point of safety between them and the foam-covered rocks to leeward. They were certain they had seen Rutherford clinging to the main-chains of the brig, and they had also distinctly heard him call 'Sycorax.' What else he might

have attempted to say was either smothered by the waters which rushed over him, or lost in the roaring of the storm, but the word 'Sycorax' was certainly heard, and it was clear that amid all the horrors of his situation, the thoughts of Ralph Rutherford had dwelt upon them, and his greatest desire had been to secure their safety.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN MERIVALE and the 'Boadiceas,' both officers and men, had watched their boat with great interest as she made her way over or across the short breaking seas, passing under the bows of one vessel, and the stern of another, whilst she threaded her dangerous way amongst the throng of shipping. All perceived her object, and many cheered her gallant crew as they passed on their bold errand of mercy; for the perilous situation of the brig had long been

obvious to every one, and now the signal of urgent distress was flying from her mast, while a long, long winter night was rapidly approaching, hastened by the dark and threatening clouds, swelling and springing up with increasing gloom, in the cold north east. Forward the little skiff darted, on the face of the wild, high crested, troubled waters, twisting and turning to meet the varied dangers in her track, as if she were a thing instinct with life. And she was so, for the little band she bore were brave and hardy seamen, each fearlessly and almost instinctively meeting the peculiar difficulty of the moment, with unwavering tact, each relaxing, suspending, or redoubling the efforts of his brawny arm at the slightest indication from their leader. He had indeed joined the 'Boadicea' but recently, but well did they know what Ralph was.

While all watched with deep interest this desperate attempt to rescue their fellow-

creatures from impending destruction, with what intense anxiety was every movement of the boat followed by the officers and men of the 'Boadicea,' especially by Merivale. He had sanctioned, though he had not ordered the enterprise, and he could scarcely be said to have approved of it. 'Tis a perilous point to decide, when fellow-creatures on the brink of destruction call for rescue, and brave men claim the service. 'Tis a most delicate matter then for authority to decide whether the desperate attempt shall or shall not be made; but when, as here, there was clearly a possibility of success, and a probability of finding a place of refuge even after failure, and those who pleaded for permission to make the dangerous attempt were competent judges of the perils they must encounter, and admirably qualified to overcome them, it can scarcely be said that, under such circumstances, the commanding officer has an option. 'Tis hard to pronounce sentence of death upon men

imploing assistance whilst brave and skilful lookers-on crave permission to make one effort to save them. Well might Merivale, having thus been compelled to sanction an attempt which his judgment inclined him to deem equally hopeless and dangerous; well might he watch the frail boat on her perilous career, but the light failed him rapidly. Still, though he could no longer see her constantly, when the boat had cleared the throng of shipping, and had entered the void space between the fleet and the unhappy brig, she once more became for a time indistinctly visible, and his thorough knowledge of the difficulties with which Ralph had to contend, and the best mode of meeting them, enabled him to comprehend, from the slightest glimpse, all that was passing. But when drawing near to the brig, the boat was brought round with her head to the seas, the light totally failed him. In vain he strove to pierce the gloom. One minute would have sufficed

to have told the result of Ralph's attempt to board the brig, and as he still kept his eyes intently fixed upon the spot, a vivid flash of lightning, the prelude to the rapidly approaching storm, afforded him a momentary glimpse. The boat appeared to be alongside the brig, but a huge wave had broken over both, and the boat was only discerned as a dark speck in a sheet of white glittering foam. She appeared at that instant to have been thrown almost up on end. Tenfold darkness followed the short and dazzling glare of light; and whether Ralph with his daring companions had been smashed against the ill-fated brig, or had been swallowed up by the yawning waters which raged and foamed around her, Merivale could not even guess. There was little hope that they could have escaped one fate or the other.

Merivale shuddered as he came to this dreadful conclusion. Birchall had silently adopted the same opinion. Not a word was

spoken, but poor MacDonald, inexperienced in such matters, and unable to gain information, watched the countenance of the Captain with insufferable anguish. Had his friend—had Ralph Rutherford really perished?

“Is there then no hope?” he said, in a voice tremulous with deep feeling.

“God forbid else!” answered Merivale. “There is yet hope. Watch the lights yonder; should they disappear, our friends are safe—a short half hour will decide it. May God protect and spare them!”

Anxiously did they all watch from the ‘Boadicea’ the glaring lights on board the ‘Sycorax,’ the only beacon of hope to their venturous shipmates, the only possible source of information to themselves. But the half hour of intolerable duration had at length passed away, and the bright signal lanterns still gleamed steadily.

It was not on board the ‘Boadicea’ alone,

that the well-known signal was watched with deep interest. The whole fleet had distinctly seen the attempt to board the brig, and now awaited, almost hopelessly, the only possible indication of their safety, in the disappearance of the signal still displayed at the peak of the 'Sycorax.'

Nothing was thought of on board the 'Boadicea,' but Ralph and his gallant companions; but little was said, and that little in whispers. A cluster of officers at the taffrail stood shivering in the piercing blast, but they felt it not; MacDonald suddenly exclaimed:

"I see a light moving on board the 'Sycorax,'—what can it mean?"

But it had disappeared. Others, however, besides our young Highlander, were certain they had seen it, and even on this slight ground hope arose.

"You were right, MacDonald," said the Captain, with emphasis; "a light did move—and there it is again!"

Other lights, indeed, were now seen moving on board the 'Sycorax,' and after ten minutes more of painful suspense, the signal was lowered from her peak. How many weary anxious eyes had watched, and almost ceased to hope for its disappearance. All was congratulation now, the storm still roared, but no one heeded it—their boat was safe!

Merivale alone appeared to feel uneasy, but he said nothing; and having delivered to the officer of the watch his written night orders, he retired hastily to his cabin, as if he had wished to escape observation. At least, so thought MacDonald, who had observed this; but he was no babbler, and he kept his thoughts to himself. There had been something in the look and manner of the Captain which chilled him. "But how," thought the kind-hearted young man, "should he know more than we do?—the boat is safe, and the Captain has no further information than the rest of us."

But it was in vain that he thus endeavoured to satisfy himself, MacDonald was a man endowed with no ordinary degree of intelligence, and the look and manner of the Captain continued to haunt him; he could not close his eyes.

And why was the Captain thus discomposed, when all others were satisfied?

On reaching his cabin, he threw himself upon a couch. He was exceedingly weary, but no idea of repose entered his mind, whilst he communed uneasily with his own thoughts.

“’Tis strange,” he said, “that no blue light has been burned, though it is clear that our boat has reached the ‘Sycorax.’ My private instructions to Rutherford were, that so soon as he should have reached that ship, one blue light should be burned, two if they should have rescued part of the brig’s crew, three if the whole of them should have been brought away.”

He rose—he strode hastily up and down in his cabin excitedly. “How can it be, then, that although the boat is certainly there, no blue light should have been burned?—Can any accident have occurred to Rutherford himself? if so, it must have been fatal; for if he lives, he is not a man to forget or neglect an important duty.”

The last glimpse he had caught of the boat in the lightning, had shown her in a position of extreme danger, but she had escaped, and the private signal concerted with Rutherford had not been made. It was incomprehensible, and many weary hours must pass before any explanation of this painfully alarming omission could reach him.

Captain Merivale was informed at midnight that a heavy squall had brought the wind two or three points more off the Danish shore, and that the extremely wild appearance of the sky, or rather of the clouds, intimated a probability of farther change.

He went upon deck, for, weary as he was, he was still up and dressed. The change of wind, as far as it had taken place, was favourable to the safety of the fleet, and particularly so to that of the unfortunate brig.

“This is a fortunate change of wind if it holds, and I do not now think there will be a total change from east to west, which I at first apprehended,” said the Captain. “That would be full of mischief.”

“Why, yes, Sir,” replied Birchall, who had just come on deck, “the thought of so many ships so closely crowded together, suddenly swinging round each with so long a scope of cable out, was awful. Half the fleet must have been disabled. It brought me on deck at once, but I am glad to see there is no longer any danger of it.”

As Birchall spoke, the wind began to show symptoms of returning to its old quarter, and before long a heavy, but a steady gale

blew once more directly through the roadstead.

All were early astir that morning, but even at eight o'clock, little could be seen. Gradually, but very slowly, the pale dull light of a stormy winter's morning began to spread abroad. The brig was gone, but the rocks in front of which she had been anchored were strewn with broken planks and spars.

The wind having in some degree abated, a buoy, with a tow line, was veered astern to meet the cutter, which was rowing up towards the ship, making but slow progress, in despite of the extraordinary exertions of her crew. But as the light increased, it became evident that Rutherford was not in the boat. Consternation seized upon all, though Merivale had not imparted his too well grounded apprehensions to any one. It was concluded that he must have received some injury, broken an arm or a leg, such accidents being very likely to happen in services of the kind,

and that it had been judged necessary to keep him on board the 'Sycorax,' till removal should become safe and easy. Such were the speculations respecting Ralph's absence, as the boat having got hold of the buoy which had been veered astern to her, was rapidly drawn up under the frigate's stern.

There was no officer in her, for it had been decided that to row the boat up to the 'Sycorax' as Rutherford had hoped to do, with the brig's crew in her, would have been a task so difficult, that the weight of one sifter more would have been a serious evil, and might, possibly, compromise the safety of all. But impatient as all were to learn what had become of Ralph, considerable delay necessarily intervened, the boat being half filled with water, and her crew exhausted with toil, and dispirited at the result of their enterprise. They had no sooner made fast the tow-line and laid in their oars, than the cold seized them painfully—a natural conse-

quence of their being cramped up in their places and continually drenched with a heavy icy spray, with their legs and feet moreover immersed in ice and water. It became necessary, therefore, to send men down the stern ladder into the boat, to sling them up.

No sooner had the coxswain thus reached the frigate's deck, than Captain Merivale, who could not conceal his agitation, gasped out :

“ Where is Mr. Rutherford, Sumner ? ”

Poor Sumner could not speak. Shivering with cold, and perhaps with agitation, as he was, he might have been able to utter a simple affirmative or negative : but, alas ! he had a long and difficult story to tell, the result of which would be as unsatisfactory to his auditors as to himself. It would have formed a most exciting picture, that anxious group, straining to catch what they feared to hear. Merivale and Mac Donald alone would have been a study for a painter ; but poor

Sumner could only shake his head mournfully, and far from regaining the power of utterance, he was evidently getting worse. They were all taken to the hospital, and by degrees, as warmth and nourishment restored their powers, the melancholy facts were gradually elicited.

They had received a bow-fast and a stern-fast from the brig, but at the instant, a heavy sea broke over her bows, half filling the boat with water, and raising her on end fearfully. Rutherford himself held the stern-fast. Had they come into absolute contact with the brig, nothing could have saved them. The immediate danger now was, lest the boat's bow, as she fell, should catch the projecting forechannel of the brig. Rutherford called to the bowman to let go the bow-fast; he himself, at the critical moment, when it was an equal chance whether the boat should cast towards, or from the brig, threw his whole weight and strength upon the stern-fast.

Thus he had turned the scale. The boat's bow, once turned in the right direction, she separated rapidly from the brig. Whether Ralph had become entangled in the rope he held, or whether, in his exertion to haul the boat's stern towards the brig, thereby to ensure the contrary tendency of her bow, he had overbalanced himself, it was impossible to say. A sharp flash of lightning at the instant blinded them, but the coxswain and strokesman both asserted, that their officer was clinging to the main-channel of the brig, one of whose men had caught hold of him.

“All right, Sumner,” he said; and after some broken words, they heard distinctly the word *Sycorax*. To regain the brig was no longer in their power. The whole thing had been instantaneous. The dark squall soon hid everything from them, but the signal lights of the ‘*Sycorax*.’ It was with the utmost difficulty they had reached her; and

Sumner declared that had they taken on board the brig's crew, or even part of them, they could never have done it, but that all must have perished together on the rocks.

CHAPTER III.

THE details of Rutherford's proceedings, as given by the boat's crew, were of course somewhat confused and inconsistent ; nor did closer investigation reconcile them in all points. It seemed, however, to be pretty clearly established, that he had got on board the unlucky brig. Some were inclined to infer, from his having used very strong expressions of surprise and impatience, at sight of the strangely unprepared state in which they had found the brig, considering

the danger of her position, that Ralph had purposely thrown himself from the boat that he might get on board of her, hoping, as he could do this by no other means, to save the lives of the crew by his own personal exertions, it being quite clear that they had no leader equal to the emergency.

But it was probably owing to the unexpected rapidity with which the boat had been carried off, that Rutherford in his helpless position, had escaped the danger of being crushed between the boat and the brig, as he clung breathless, half-frozen, and half-drowned to the main chains of the latter. All these things had passed with startling rapidity, amidst storm and darkness, whilst the parties who shared in them, tossed resistlessly hither and thither, were involved in an almost hopeless struggle for their lives.

The 'Boadiceas' questioned and cross-questioned the boat's crew individually, and were never weary of discussing their statements, but

still without arriving at any further conclusion, than that Rutherford had certainly been taken on board the brig, and must have shared her fate, whatever it might have been.

The whole line of surf-covered rocks, from the spot abreast of which the brig had been anchored, to the point which formed the outlet from the anchorage, was studded with planks and broken spars; but although the whole range had been carefully investigated by anxious and experienced persons, with powerful telescopes, no portion of a broken hull could be discovered, nor any spars connected by rigging, and yet the surf was not such as could have been expected to have broken up a vessel's hull altogether in a few hours, without having left some conspicuous fragments of it. But the continued violence of the gale rendered it impossible to examine the rocks more closely.

The boat's crew had been drawn on board the 'Sycorax' in a state of great exhaustion,

and deeply distressed by the loss of their officer, and it is scarcely to be wondered at if these brave fellows, owing their lives to the clear judgment, and the firm resolution of Rutherford, should feel disposed to accuse themselves of having abandoned him too precipitately, leaving him to share the fate of the doomed brig, especially when at day-break next morning that brig was nowhere to be seen. But Captain Merivale wholly acquitted them, a decision in which the officers and crew of the 'Boadicea' heartily concurred, deeply as they all deplored the loss of Rutherford. He had stood high in the estimation of all, and in a man-of-war the character of an officer is thoroughly appreciated.

Ben Buntline's history, which was now generally known, had gained Ralph great credit. His having volunteered for this desperate attempt to save the brig's crew had won all hearts, and the cool seaman-like

tact with which they had seen him carry his boat safely through so many difficulties, whilst the old salts, the oracles of the fore-castle, had watched and applauded his every movement as long as the boat could be seen, had altogether created a strong feeling of interest for him, and seldom had the loss of a young officer been more universally deplored. It had cast a deep gloom over the ship, little else was thought of or spoken of by officers and men, but poor Ralph Rutherford.

MacDonald had listened with painful interest to every remark that had fallen from the lips of the more experienced officers, and especially from the Captain—for he perceived instinctively that Merivale's feelings upon the subject were akin to his own—but he derived no consolation from what he had heard. The prevailing opinion throughout the ship was, that the brig had foundered at her anchor, and that all on board must have

perished with her. MacDonald was a clear-headed matter-of-fact person, not in the slightest degree imaginative, but he steadily refused to believe that of which no positive proof could be adduced.

Ralph in their friendly discussions had more than once told him in reference to his constant demand for proof, where a shadow of doubt remained, that if his fate had placed him at Trinity or at St. John's, he would assuredly have been a high Wrangler; but this dogged craving for proof in every case in which doubt might possibly exist, now proved a considerable source of consolation to him. Prompted by his regard for Ralph, he took a lively interest in his protégé Ben Buntline; and whilst he was visiting one of his own men in hospital, he spoke to Buntline about Rutherford, and unexpectedly found in Ben, who was certainly no philosopher, one quite as determined as he was himself not to give credit to the loss of

Ralph. But honest Ben took his own view of the case.

“ I’ll tell you what it is, Sir,” said he, “ it’s very kind of you to come and talk to me about Mr. Rutherford. I knowed him well when he was a youngster in the old ‘ Galatia.’ He was just the same then, and ’tant likely that harm should have come to him. He’s far too good for the likes of that ere, Mr. Macdonald.”

Griffiths, the surgeon, brought at the accustomed hour his report of the sick to the Captain.

“ Buntline, Sir,” he said, “ is not so well. I had hoped to have seen him out of the list in a few days, but he frets about poor Rutherford. His fever has returned, and I almost fear that the poor fellow’s mind is turned, for he persists in asserting that Rutherford is not dead—cannot be dead. He’s sure, he says, he can’t be dead.”

“ I can scarcely believe it myself, Doctor,”

said the Captain. "Tell poor Buntline that I will be to him what Rutherford was, if he is really dead. And, indeed, should it unhappily prove so, I, Doctor, will consider Buntline as a charge left to me by a valued friend, for he will need support."

"Mr. MacDonald visiting the hospital to-day has been talking with Buntline. Indeed, I left him there. MacDonald feels this unhappy affair more than any one, and he positively seems to derive hopes from poor Buntline's incredulity."

"I wish I could do so, Mr. Birchall," said the Captain, addressing that officer, who had just entered the cabin; "but I have thoroughly considered the short distance at which the brig lay from those rocks, and I cannot conceive it to have been possible that any man could have got canvas upon her when she parted, which was probably during a furious squall, and could have carried canvas enough upon her to get fresh way at

once upon the dull overladen tub, so as to enable her to weather the rocks, with a strong current setting her to leeward, and in a short heavy breaking sea too, every heave of which must have thrown her nearer to the surf. Poor Rutherford was young, active, and resolute, and knew his work well. If any man could have done it he might, but—" and he shook his head mournfully, "it was impossible! Is not that your opinion, Mr. Birchell?"

"Entirely, Sir," replied Birchell, "as to the impossibility of getting canvass on her when she parted, enough to carry such a craft clear of the reef, even if she had cast the right way. And yet if she had gone upon those rocks, however rotten the old tub might have been, some lumps of wreck must have been visible. And should she have foundered at her anchorage so near the shore, her mast heads must have remained above water, unless indeed they had cut away her masts,

to lessen the strain upon the cable, in hope to ride it out.”

The more the subject was discussed, the more inscrutable the mystery appeared.

For three days after this untoward event, it continued to blow hard, with little interval or change, excepting only that some of the heaviest squalls blew for a time more off the Danish shore; but the gale always resumed its former direction almost immediately. Near the close of the third day, the gale at length began to abate. No more ships had reached the anchorage from the Baltic during the last two days, and the ‘Commodore’ made the signal to prepare for sea.

At the first dawn of the following morning, the signal was made to weigh—stern-most and leeward-most ships first; there was a moderate breeze from the eastward. The ‘Sycorax’ instantly set the example of weighing, and took the lead of the fleet. The same dull, heavy, sombre sky prevailed. It

was of vast importance to the safety of the fleet to enforce obedience to the prescribed order of getting under weigh, as any material deviation from it must involve this vast assemblage of merchant ships in perilous confusion. It was, however, not possible to do this. A large proportion of those who commanded the merchant ships, were sensible and experienced men, fully aware of the mischief which must arise from throwing so large a fleet, confined to so narrow a space, into confusion ; but amongst some hundreds, all eager to avail themselves of the fair wind, and to be first home, so late in the season, there were necessarily some few obstinate pig-headed men, who would at all risks weigh and push out before the ships to leeward of them, who had properly awaited their turn, could get out of the way, and leave a clear passage for them.

The extreme shortness of the days was a great evil, and to lose precious hours in

waiting for others was trying and vexatious to all. The ships of war were on the alert, but the usual practice of checking irregularities at sea by firing a shot over or athwart the offender, was here, amidst a dense forest of masts, utterly impracticable.

“That brig on our larboard quarter is weighing, Sir, in the hawse of the bark,” said Birchall.

“Brig ahoy ! hold fast till the bark astern of you is out of your way.”

“Send a boat,” said the Captain, “to that ship abeam of us ; and if he persists in weighing, withdraw his instructions.”

“The bark half a mile astern, Sir, has cast to starboard, and is athwart the hawse of the ship astern of her, the bark’s foremast is gone.”

“There is mischief going on in that cluster,” said Birchall. “I cannot exactly make it out so far off ; but, hark how those

fellows are cursing and abusing each other. We shall have a nice mess of it.”

Such were the remarks upon scenes passing in different parts of the fleet, from the impossibility of enforcing obedience to the signals, which the men-of-war laboured to do, by firing unshotted guns, hailing and sending boats.

Still, before the short day closed, the convoy was fairly under weigh, and steering for the Cattegat with a moderate breeze, except about a dozen chiefly of the smaller craft, which having been brought into rude contact with larger vessels, had been crippled. A gun brig was left in charge of them.

The night, though very dark, proved fine, and the wind steady ; and as they had only to run before it, the confusion in which the fleet had started was attended by no farther mishaps. The ships of war carried lights in their several stations, which served as so many rallying points ; and there was no temptation for the merchant ships to loiter.

They were anxious to get clear of this dangerous coast whilst the wind was fair, and to attain the comparative safety of the open sea; and had, moreover, a wholesome dread of privateers lurking in the rear of the convoy to pick up stragglers.

Throughout that long dark night every one had looked anxiously forward to daylight, which they expected would enable them to get into some sort of order, short as the days were.

“ I fear, Sir,” said Birchall, making his morning report to the Captain, who had just fallen into a sound sleep on his couch, after an anxious and wearisome night, passed chiefly on deck, “ we are doomed to have a day still darker than the night.”

This was a most unwelcome announcement to Merivale, who had been looking forward to their few hours of daylight as a great and most important relief, and whose thoughts still dwelt on Rutherford.

“ A fog,” continued the officer, “ has been for some time settling down upon us, and it appears to thicken as the day approaches, we can no longer see the Commodore’s lights.”

“ Humph,” said the Captain, “ fog, is it ? Is the wind steady ?”

“ Steady, but very light ; so light indeed, that though, as the water is smooth, we have good steerage way, it seems to be almost calm.”

“ Every mile we claw off this shore, with such a fleet in charge so late in the season, with tides and currents to bewilder us, as soon as we cease to be able to steer a course, must be important. Send for the pilot. There’s a gun from the Commodore. Repeat it: I will be on deck immediately.”

“ Please to want me, Sir,” said a rough voice, issuing from a huge mass of flushing coats and coarse worsted neckerchiefs, standing upon legs not unlike those of an elephant ;

for naturally short and thick, they were now enveloped in huge stockings drawn over boots, and ascending nearly to the waist. It was a most uncouth-looking figure, with a very red face, perfectly sober, but redolent of rum, "Please to want me, Sir," he said.

"What sort of an offing have we made, Mr. Mengs? I fear there's not much wind."

"We are a drawing faster off the land than you'd think, Sir; we've had a good breeze at whiles in the night."

"Are we steering sufficiently to the north? I don't like the Jutland coast. How are your soundings?"

"We can't steer no better course, Sir. The Commodore's pilot know what he's about; no man don't know this course better than him. We are deepening our water fast; twenty-four hours more, with anything of a breeze, will give us sea-room enough."

Merivale had now risen from his couch, for

he had merely laid down for a little rest. He examined his barometer, and having closed the door to exclude the light, looked out from his quarter gallery window. Nothing could be more chilly, damp, and unsatisfactory, for the season.

“The barometer continues high,” he said, “and that’s something ; for winter fogs and light winds in this part of the world, are pretty sure to wind up with heavy gales. We shan’t escape them, depend upon it ; but if they were coming from the westward, which would be full of danger to the convoy, the glass would fall fast, and an easterly gale for a few days would blow away this detestable fog, and carry us over to the other shore.”

“It is a fog indeed,” he continued, as he mounted the quarter deck ladder, and looked around.

“Yes, Sir,” said Birchall, “it thickens fast, as I thought it would when I saw it settling down upon us from aloft. We have stationed

look-out men round the ship, for we are closely surrounded by craft of all sorts and sizes.”

Two guns from the Commodore were now heard.

“Mark,” said the Captain, “the position of the different ships of war as they repeat the signal. ’Tis very hard to lose our scanty proportion of daylight thus, but there is no help for it.”

The fog had now become as dense as was ever witnessed on the banks of Newfoundland; but as that comparison would enlighten few people, it might more appropriately be compared to the thickest and yellowest of the November fogs, in the lowest and dampest parts of the City. Those who have been compelled to make their way through and across its most crowded thoroughfares, when the said fog has suddenly come on about two in the afternoon, in the full springtide of business, when carriages, cabs, omnibusses,

discover no other buildings, nor any trace of a path, or road, that might lead to a village. The flood had evidently surrounded the church at high water, and destroyed the pathway.

“We will soon bring assistance to you, my good friend,” said Ralph to the Captain, after having listened to this report. “You and I, Mr. Brown,” he added, “will return with these men to the shore, and if we can do nothing else we’ll find our way into the church, and toll the bell. That will astonish the natives, and bring some of them out of their holes to us.”

“Take my dark-lantern with you,” said the Captain; “it will be very useful.”

Thus equipped they started, Ralph occasionally throwing from the dark lantern a strong light before him to discover obstacles, and then again withdrawing it. Having reached the church, they found that they could not get the door open.

“Come here, boy,” said Ralph; and they soon hoisted the lad up on the man’s shoulders against one of the church windows, and directed him to knock out a pane of glass that he might put in his hand, and remove the fastening of the window. Thus he was enabled to enter, and being a bold, active lad, he let himself down into a pew, and groped his way down the centre aisle towards the tower, with the intention of tolling the bell. Gradually gaining courage, he proceeded more rapidly, but as he was quitting the aisle, abreast of the principal entrance, he fell over some incomprehensible obstacle which fell with him. He was somewhat daunted, but rallied his courage, though a little hurt, and putting out his hand to assist him to rise, he felt beneath it the cold clammy face of a corpse. He uttered a piercing shriek and fainted.

Alarmed at his cry of terror, Ralph called to the boy, to ask what was the matter and

close on our larboard beam," said Birchall.

"Ship ahoy! port your helm a little."

"Ay, ay, Sir! but I've a vessel almost locking yards on t'other side o' me."

"Beat off drummer, strike up fifer," roared Birchall, "there goes a regular crash," he resumed.

This smashing of spars was followed forthwith by volleys of oaths and abuse between the angry crews of two ships close to them, but wholly invisible.

Sound was now the only guide, hearing the only available sense, and a diabolical concert was soon in full play. Horns of all sorts were braying, squeaking, and bellowing; bells of all sizes were clanging and clinking; trumpets, gongs, rough voices in angry dispute roared forth vituperations in most objectionable language, with the occasional booming of guns from the ships of war, forming a medley most discordant midst darkness tangible.

“The barometer, though still high, Sir,” said Birchall, “is beginning to fall. We shall catch it before long. Pray heaven the wind may stand. To be taken aback with westerly gales, just now, especially if the change should be sudden, and at night, would be the destruction of half the fleet.”

“I fear,” said the Captain, “many of these vessels are but ill prepared for heavy gales upon a lee shore, but everything confirms me in my opinion that the gale will come from the eastward. The ships are slipping through the water faster than we could expect with this breeze, but were westerly gales at hand there would be an opposing heave of the sea, which even when scarcely perceptible would check our way seriously. Hail that ship to keep farther off.”

At that instant a large ship struck the ‘Boadicea’ on the larboard quarter; but as both were proceeding in the same direction and at the same rate, or nearly so, she merely

stove in the broadside of the quarter boat whilst her foreyard arm caught the frigate's cross-jack yard.

“Starboard your helm,” said Birchall, rather roughly. “Starboard your helm, will you?”

“There's a large ship has hooked my mainyard on the larboard side,” hailed the unwilling delinquent, “and another is poking us up with her jib-boom over our traffrail.”

They were scarcely clear of her when the breeze freshened considerably, and the fog was broken up, revealing a scene of confusion, which if there had been any considerable change in the wind would have caused much damage, but every man was so strongly impressed with a desire to secure elbow room, that in two hours the often repeated signal for open order, had been so far obeyed, that the fleet extended on all sides as far as the eye could reach in that dull hazy atmosphere. The wind fortunately still hung to the east-

ward ; and their progress, though it seemed to the ships of war slow, and some ill commanded ships gave trouble occasionally, was not interrupted by any important event.

“ We get off for the fright after all,” said Birchall, as he sat down quietly to his breakfast.

CHAPTER IV.

WE left Ralph, when having made a violent effort to save his boat, by casting her head from the brig, as she descended from her semi-erect position to meet the next approaching wave. He had succeeded in doing this, but so unstable was his footing upon a wet and slippery thwart, with his limbs partially benumbed by the cold, that when the boat's bow met the sea, he was pitched overboard in the shock, which was the more likely to happen, because he had still been dragging with all his strength

upon the sternfast attached to the brig. Thus thrown headlong into the breaking, foaming sea, between the vessel and the boat, both of them in violent motion, he must have been crushed between them, but for the extreme rapidity with which the boat was severed altogether from the brig, the moment her bow, by slightly diverging from the vessel, received the violent impulse both of wind and current. The rope was still in his grasp, and a seaman not only clings instinctively to a rope in such a case, but avails himself of it dexterously. Chilled and half choked by the broken icy waters around him, and at first above him, Ralph seized hold of the main chains of the vessel, which were little above the water's edge, for she was small and deeply laden, and a powerful hand from above grasped his collar. This saved him, for the cold had by this time almost deprived him of the use of his limbs, and he must have sunk.

His first reflection, when he had recovered his breath was, that as the boat had so rapidly driven to leeward, the current must be much stronger than he anticipated; that any attempt, therefore, on her part to get hold of him, would not only be useless to himself, but would most probably ensure her destruction, for he felt satisfied that the utmost exertions of her hardy crew, without losing one moment, would scarcely enable them to reach the 'Sycorax,' their only place of safety. This conviction was instantaneous, and he endeavoured to order Sumner to proceed to that ship without a moment's delay; but the dashing of the waters, as they once more broke over him, strangled his words in their utterance. But by a desperate effort, he raised his head once more above the waves, and shouted 'Sycorax' in a tone of command which could not, he thought, be misunderstood. He saw that he was obeyed, and when he was drawn upon the brig's

deck, shivering with cold, and drenched with icy water, but unhurt, it was some consolation to believe that the boat's crew would be saved, whatever might become of himself.

He was carried down into a small close cabin, with a fire in it, and when he had been supplied with dry clothing, and a hot strong cordial, he began to recover. In a small side cabin, lay a respectable middle-aged man, with a broken leg : this was the captain of the ' Eliza and Anne,' and with him Ralph immediately proceeded to business, waving all acknowledgments. He found, as he had supposed, that the brig was riding by her last cable. Nor was that by any means the worst of it, for in endeavouring to veer fresh service into the hawse, they had been unable to stopper the cable, and bring the vessel up again. The windlass had been upset, the master had been thrown down, and had broken his leg ; the cable had run out to the clench, and, consequently, it had

been, and still was, impossible to get fresh service into the hawse, so that their last cable was exposed to be continually and severely chafed by the constant pitching of the vessel in a short high sea. No cable could stand this long, and they could scarcely hope to ride out the night.

This was truly alarming ; but Ralph was glad to find that the master estimated his distance from the shore to be greater than he had expected to find it. It had been impossible to judge accurately from a ship so far ahead as the ' Boadicea ' was. The coast, also, Captain Chase said, receded towards the point of land, to weather which was their only chance of safety, should the cable part.

The Captain was evidently an experienced seaman, and had made all these observations carefully before his accident.

On the other hand, they were certainly anchored on foul ground, though in deep water, so that there was too much reason to

apprehend that the cable was chafing on rocks at the anchor, as well as in the hawse, creating a double risk of parting at any moment.

The mate was an active young seaman, but he had never been in authority before, and had been accustomed to the coasting trade only. He was somewhat bewildered by the responsibility which had so suddenly devolved upon him, in consequence of the master's accident, being wholly unaccustomed to it, and feeling his own inexperience. The master, who was suffering severely, having besought Ralph to take charge of the 'Eliza and Anne,' his plans were soon arranged. He saw but one chance of safety, and however small the prospect of success, however difficult the attempt to extricate the brig, he at once turned all the energies of his mind towards such preparations as would give him the best chance of clearing the rocky shore, and getting round the point

under canvass, and thus open to themselves a passage to sea, before the wind, whenever circumstances might offer a favourable opportunity; or, what was much more probable, whenever the cable having parted, there would be no other possible chance of safety. Even that chance would be utterly hopeless, unless he could cast the vessel to port, which was a very doubtful matter. He was happy to find that, however inefficient he might be in command, the young mate, Mr. Brown, was admirable as a second, being as obedient as he was active, intelligent, and fearless. From the moment, indeed, in which he had a superior authority to look up to, Brown was extremely valuable in many ways. He not only confirmed the master's statement as to their distance from the rocks astern of them, but had satisfied himself that their distance was still greater than the master had calculated it, which was a point of such vital importance to their hope of escape.

Ralph saw that Brown was a competent judge of the matter, and he drew no small degree of hope from his opinion. And yet, when he reflected upon the difficulty of getting fresh headway upon such a vessel as the 'Eliza and Anne,' so deeply laden, he could not but feel that the difficulties he had to contend with were almost insuperable.

"Had I anything of a handy craft under me," he said to himself, "I should feel little doubt of getting her out of the scrape; but such a tub as this! built to carry double her registered tonnage, and, consequently, deficient in every sea-worthy quality. Our chance is small indeed."

Whilst these things were passing through his mind, Mr. Brown with his two men and apprentices had been, by his directions, getting ready a fore storm stay-sail and a main try-sail; the head yards were braced in to starboard; the after yards pointed to the wind. Brown told him there was a small

kedg anchor, but no cable for it : fortunately it was on the starboard side, for they could not have shifted it over. They then, having no hawser, or spare rope, of a sufficient size to be available, unrove the main haulyards, and passing the rope round a timber head on the starboard quarter, carried it forward, bent it to the kedg anchor and let it go, for although such an anchor or such a rope could not hold the brig for a moment, should the bower cable part, as they expected it must do, this same kedg, with its cable on the brig's quarter, would check her round as soon as she should get her stern way, and greatly increase their chance of casting her head the right way. These preparations having been made, an axe was placcd by the cable, ready to cut, and having completcd these important measures in all haste, Ralph proceeded to lighten, and to clear her dcks as far as possible, with a view to making her as manageable as he could under canvass, whenever the

moment of trial might arrive, for her decks were lumbered with tiers of deals, especially abaft. These were thrown overboard; there were also spars secured outside which were all cut away.

During this time it had been blowing hard, with frequent heavy snow squalls, which occasionally for a moment drew the wind more off the Danish shore, but it immediately backed again to its old quarter.

Ralph amidst all his labours had been greatly cheered by the disappearance of the signal lanterns on board the 'Sycorax.' He felt that the boat with his fellow-adventurers was safe. All his preparations being now completed, he availed himself of a momentary lull to seek a conference with the Captain.

"It looks very wild," he said, as he entered the little cabin. "I see small hope of riding out the night; but I have done all I can to secure casting her to port, upon which our only chance of safety depends should she

part. It would be difficult under such circumstances to get canvass enough upon her to give us a chance of weathering the point, and I doubt her being able to carry it if we could get it set, as the wind now is."

"I calculate," replied the Captain, "our distance from the rocks is much greater than it is easy for you to believe, judging as you must do from the only point of view in which you could have seen us, and I think also that although the current where we are sets direct to leeward, you will find as you draw nearer to it, a counter current, especially as you approach the point, which will both hold the vessel to windward and carry her along shore, by which means your chance of escape is much better than you imagine. Still it is an attempt that nothing but the last necessity could justify, for should she touch the rocks or even cast the wrong way not one of us can be saved. She is very deep in the water, the surf would sweep her decks,

and my poor old brig would not hold together ten minutes. 'Tis hard to be laid up here at such a time. Brown is young, but you may rely on him."

Their conference was interrupted by the mate, who thrusting his head down the half opened companion, addressed Ralph in some alarm.

"It's getting to look very wild," he said, "I can't tell what to make of it."

Rutherford started up and sprang upon deck. Never had he seen a more threatening sky. He could trace the line of breakers distinctly to the point. He felt that the crisis was at hand, for it was impossible that the overstrained cable, chafed as it was in the hawse, should hold much longer.

He drew the rope on the quarter attached to the kedge as taut as he dared. Mr. Brown was forward, ready if necessary to cut the cable, and to superintend the setting the storm fore-staysail, and once sufficiently

off the wind, the two apprentices were ready to loose the fore-sail. Every thing was prepared, every man was at his post. There was an awfully mischievous-looking lull of some minutes' duration. The storm was out of breath, when a furious squall came roaring on, but providentially three points more off the Danish shore than hitherto. Ralph could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses, but there was not a moment to be lost. He saw plainly that the gale was far from breaking up, and had no doubt that the wind would return to its old quarter when the squall should have passed away. Fortunately he was fully prepared to avail himself of the favourable moment: the cable was instantaneously cut before the vessel could swing head to wind. Overstrained as it was, one blow sufficed to sever it; the rope on the starboard quarter attached to the kedge, came into important play, as soon as the vessel got sternway, and it threw her bow

rapidly off to port. The fore-staysail was hoisted, the wind was soon abaft the beam, and the surf upon the point still broad under the lee. The first fury of the squall had abated; the kedge rope was cut away, the larboard head-braces drawn well in, the fore-yard secured, the foresail was set, the brig gathered head way, and with the wind two points abaft the beam, they began to draw the point aft fast. But the wind was a mere gust, which certainly would not last long and which threatened every moment to resume its former direction. Meanwhile every ship's length they could gain inspired fresh hope, as they dragged along the reef, tottering on the brink of eternity.

Soon (for the distance they had to run was not more than half a mile,) they were enabled to keep her gradually more away, till within a quarter of an hour they had passed the point, and were running before the wind for the Cattegat.

Their preservation had hinged upon a few minutes, for they were scarcely clear of the Point, when the wind backed to its old quarter. Rutherford thanked God from his heart for so unexpected a deliverance, but although thus providentially relieved from immediate destruction, his situation was by no means enviable. He was running before the wind through the dangerous passage of the Cattegat, and if the wind should continue steady, guided by the Anholt Light on the one side, and the Scaw Light on the other, he would soon get into the open sea; but should the wind fly round to the north-westward, which was often the case at the breaking up of an easterly gale, the coast of Jutland would become a lee-shore to him. Nor is there perhaps a more fatal shore in the known world. What would it be to him then in this dull, crazy, old craft, without an anchor to let go, even in the greatest emergency?

But the wind continued fair; the old brig

was still seaworthy, and her Captain was a good North Sea pilot; and having put all things in order, Ralph left Mr. Brown in charge of the deck, and being nearly exhausted by the labour and excitement of that eventful day, he ventured to take some rest.

Next morning they were still running before the gale, which had every appearance of steadiness, nor did it materially vary for several days. Once arrived in the open sea, the chief object of his anxiety became to ascertain the exact position of the vessel, for if, as appeared probable, they were to cross the North Sea before a heavy easterly gale, they were running for a lee-shore on the coast of England, more or less dangerous according to the part of the coast they might fall in with. Some parts of the English coast being bold and rocky, might be approached without danger, whilst at other points dangerous shoals projected into the

sea for many miles, which with so many hours of darkness, and so short a day, and that frequently obscured by fogs or snowsqualls, gave ample ground for serious consideration. Being wholly without anchors and cables, they would, if once embayed, have nothing for it, but to run their vessel on shore at whatever risk, were it even at an unfavourable time of tide, for she would never work off a lee-shore in such weather as they had, and were likely to have. The cold was bitter, but that was much less felt now that they were running before those easterly gales, than if they had been facing them; and as they had little more to do than to attend to the ship's steerage, which however required unremitting care, they were enabled in a great degree to shelter themselves from cold and wet, and Ralph was somewhat surprised to find that although he was, as Captain Merivale had expressed it, "red-hot from the West Indies," he was little if at all more

susceptible than the hardy north-country seamen around him. The accidental recollection of his Captain's words brought the 'Boadicea' more vividly than ever before him, though he had often thought of his friends there, who could not possibly have imagined that the slight change of wind during a squall, which perhaps had appeared to them almost momentary, could have served to rescue him from a situation which they must have with good reason deemed hopeless. He knew, too, that Sumner, and the boat's crew, could throw no farther light upon his fate, than an assurance that he had got on board the brig.

He was now at leisure, for they were merely running for the Dogger Bank, with a view to taking a fresh departure, which they might depend upon, for the master was well experienced in these soundings, so important in North Sea navigation. They had seen nothing since they had left the Scaw Light,

nor was it probable that they would have any means of correcting their reckoning after crossing the Dogger Bank, so that the opportunity must not be lost.

But though relieved of immediate anxiety, Rutherford was still silent and gloomy. His mind, once turned to painful subjects, soon reverted to Jamaica and those past happy days. There was ample ground for bitter self-reproach, and he thought with remorse of his momentary estrangement from Julia. How could he claim any right to resent a deviation from an evident purpose of complying with whatever wishes he might, in his unreasonable jealousy, express? And then, how beautiful did Julia's regret for this trifling dereliction, and all her previous and subsequent conduct, as described by Shuldham, now appear to him.

'Tis thus that danger and adversity operate beneficially upon minds of the higher caste, purifying them from narrow and un-

worthy thoughts, as the summer storm, suddenly overcasting and bursting with violence upon field and grove, whilst they fade and droop under the too long-continuance of a cloudless sun, soon passes away, to leave them more bright, more fragrant than before, restoring to plant and flower their native beauty.

And deeply did Ralph, now awakened from his folly, feel humiliated, when he recollected his capricious and ungrateful treatment of Shuldham, who, in the true spirit of friendship, had shown so much generous solicitude, and considerate foresight in the pains he had taken to guard him from the possibility of being misled by any chance rumour, misrepresenting that which was natural and innocent. And he had not even written to Shuldham, who, possessing a nature so sensitive, would undoubtedly feel deeply hurt at his neglect, and discontinue his correspondence. Thus, he would not only

lose the pleasure of hearing from his friend, but be cut off from all communication with Julia.

Meanwhile the brig pursued her way, pitching and rolling with unabated violence. At length they got soundings on the Dogger Bank, and shaped a course for Flamborough Head, wishing, if possible, to take shelter in the Humber, or the Tees. But before they had run half their distance, they lost the wind, and were for two nights and days knocked about by a heavy sea, whilst the light west winds, which had succeeded to the eastern gale, afforded no means of steadying the ship, which laboured heavily in the trough of the sea. The same dull leaden sky prevailed, and it was evident that the easterly gale would soon return, for the violence of the sea was scarcely abated, and the swell rolling in from the eastward appeared to increase. Ralph's situation was now a perfect purgatory,

not only from excessive discomfort, aggravated by hourly increasing impatience, but also because, whilst tumbling about so long at the mercy of the tides and currents, and the heave of a heavy swell, it had become impossible even to guess at the position of the brig, though the probability was that they must have been thrown far to the southward of their intended landfall, and would, he apprehended, be caught by the approaching gale, upon the low and shoal-encumbered coast of Lincolnshire, or the northern part of the Norfolk coast, which was probably more dangerous still. The working of the old brig, during the last two days, had made her upper works leaky. Corn is a heavy and dangerous cargo, for if the water reaches it, which in case of leaks in the seams of the upper works it inevitably must do, the corn heats and swells, which is in the highest degree perilous to the ship, whilst there is also no inconsiderable danger of its finding a

way into the pump-well, and choking the pumps. Both these disagreeable events were now discovered to have occurred, and the only hope remaining was that the gale would soon return in all its fury, and give them, if they could once get her before it, the means of running the brig on shore, however desperate the chance of saving themselves might be.

“Is there no appearance of this loy weather breaking up?” said the Captain of the brig to Ralph, who had gone down into the cabin to cheer up, as well as he could, the poor man who had been suffering severely with his broken leg during the violent motions of the vessel. “I can have little chance for my life,” he added, “in a wreck, being quite helpless ; but I hope you who so generously came to save us, or to share our danger, will be saved. You are young and active. I am an unlearned man, Mr. Rutherford ; but my mother, God bless her ! taught me to put

my trust in God, and I think His blessing will be upon you. I thought it was so when that sudden gust off the land so providentially enabled you to get us off that lee-shore. I see, too, that Brown and the people place their whole confidence in you."

"There is a cold threatening break in the horizon to the north-east," replied Ralph. "The swell increases. I came to tell you that I have little doubt of the immediate return of the gale from the east; but I do not know the coast, and be it what it may, we can only run before the wind. Were the brig to broach to, she would go down from under us; but judging from our present soundings, whereabouts do you consider us? Night will be down upon us soon."

"Why, we are certainly to the southward of the Yorkshire coast, and must be on the Lincolnshire Flats, but it is impossible to say precisely whereabouts, and indeed, the flood tide, which has long been made up, will carry us

rapidly southward. The Norfolk coast is more dangerous after passing Lynn and Boston Deeps. Our only chance will depend, therefore, upon the gale coming on at once."

"My chief difficulty is to keep her head to the westward, and I must see to that," replied Ralph. "Do not be surprised if you hear the mainmast cut away. It was one of my objects in coming down, to warn you of the probable crash. If we can once more get her before the gale, we must take our chance of a landfall; but rest assured, that under any circumstances, I will do my best to save you."

They shook hands cordially. Both felt that they should probably never meet again in this world.

A movement was heard upon deck. Brown was hoisting the fore-stay sail to catch the rising gale. Rutherford sprang upon deck; the sail had caught a strong breeze, but the vessel paid off very slowly.

“She’s stopped altogether,” said Brown, from the binnacle ; for not a star could be seen to guide them ; and he flew to the axe. The men stationed at the shrouds and the stays were ready ; and everything that could connect the mainmast with the ship had been previously severed. The vessel took a heavy lurch to port, and the sea broke over her ; Ralph seized the critical moment.

“Cut away,” he said. The cool judgment of Brown placed his furious blows so accurately, that before the vessel could recover from her lurch, the tottering mast with all its gear was clear off the brig. The wind freshened, and the vessel, thus relieved from all counteracting influence abaft, once more paid slowly off, and as the storm came howling on, impatient as it seemed to seize its shattered victim, she was prepared for the shock. The immediate danger of foundering had, therefore, passed away, and all felt a sensible relief. It was a respite.

The 'Eliza and Ann' was once more running before the storm in a heavy sea; her only present danger was the probability that, as the sea ran with considerable irregularity, a heavy wave striking her on the quarter might broach her to against the helm, and at once engulf them all.

Ralph committed the steering of the vessel to Brown, who was fully equal to the charge, and descended once more to hear the Captain's opinion respecting their probable land-fall: and the last soundings were closely examined, while the directions for that part of the coast were referred to.

"As far as I can judge," said the Captain, after some hesitation, "the land before us is low, and the coast, which is shallow itself, abounds in shoals, many of which show themselves at low water. It is now, fortunately for us, nearly high water, and the top of the springs, and although the surf will still break upon these shoals, so that to touch

upon any one of them would be immediate destruction, the greater part of them will just now be covered with such a depth of water, that we should pass over them without difficulty. This is our hope, nor if we had anchors and cables, should we have any other in such a vessel so crippled. Should we be able to run the old brig ashore on the low muddy coast without touching those dangerous shoals, the vessel shattered as she is, will probably hold together till the tide, whose ebb will be very rapid, shall have left her dry. You have only to avoid broaching to, and we, or at least you, may possibly escape."

Meanwhile it had only been by the greatest vigilance that Brown had humoured the helm to the irregular seas which were continually curling up over the brig's stern or quarter, threatening destruction to everybody on board as they broke over them.

"She answers the helm better than I could

have expected," said Brown, "the poor dear old cripple!"

"Yes," replied Ralph, "she does not appear to settle in the water since we got her before the wind, as she did when tumbling about in the cross sea, and labouring so heavily for want of wind to steady her."

The water continued to shoal gradually with a muddy bottom. They could not be very far from the land.

"Breakers on the starboard bow!" said Brown, and immediately they rushed past a heavy range of breakers, the nearest point of which could not have been more than a cable's length to the north of them, a rolling surge as if rebounding from the reef, broke heavily over their starboard gangway. It was an awful moment; each man clung to a rope for his life, one of the apprentices was washed overboard; a piercing shriek was heard above the storm, and so exhausted were they all with fatigue, so benumbed with cold, drenched

as they had all so long been, that a second such breach over the vessel would most probably have carried away Rutherford and the remainder of the crew.

“By Heaven!” exclaimed Ralph, “we are in smooth water, port a little, Brown, that reef upon which we were so near perishing, will now shelter us; port the helm a little more, so,—steady, steady. We have passed a reef, and are sheltered by it from the surf,” he shouted to the poor invalid below, thrusting his head down the companion, which he instantly closed again.

The water continued to shoal irregularly until at length the vessel struck the ground, fortunately in soft deep mud, and she was gradually brought up by a mud-bank, sustaining, however, some severe shocks.

“Poor Jem Bowes!” said the mate, “if he could have held on one minute more, he might have been safe, too.”

“ A large ship on the starboard bow,”
cried one of the seamen.

“ A ship ?” said Ralph, gazing intently
through the dark haze, with a more practised
eye. “ A *ship*, man ! why it’s a church !”

CHAPTER V.

AND a church it was ! for the haze clearing away a little, a village church upon a rising ground at no great distance was distinctly seen by all. 'Twas strange, but there could be no doubt of the fact, and a very acceptable fact it was, for assistance of every kind was certainly at hand, and the poor Captain, who had endured so much with inflexible courage, would at length receive the help he so much required.

The tide soon began to ebb. It had evi-

dently been an unusually high flood, such as under a rare concurrence of tidal influences sometimes deluges these low districts to a fearful extent, and it now ebbed with such rapidity that the 'Eliza and Ann,' was soon left certainly neither high nor dry, and as certainly a shattered dismantled wreck, yet in perfect safety, perched on a mud-bank, amidst ooze and seaweed, and as far as they could see, in a dreary, desolate swamp ; but the little church was there, now as always, a beacon of hope in extreme distress.

It was near midnight, and Ralph certain that the returning flood could not possibly reach them much before noon next day, and most probably not at all, for the gale had abated, and the spring tides would begin to take off, was so satisfied with his position that he would have directed every one to turn in, for all needed rest sadly, but consideration for the suffering Captain forbade this. He collected the crew, and offered up a concise but heart-

felt thanksgiving for the protection so graciously extended to them, when almost without hope. At such times the prayers and thanksgivings of all men come from the heart, for a momentary sense of religious duty is, in such cases, impressed even upon the godless and profligate.

By this time it became feasible to attempt to wade to the shore, and impatient to procure relief for the poor suffering Captain, one of the men, and the remaining apprentice, were sent, each with a lantern in his hand, to explore their way to the rising ground upon which the church stood, for it was very dark, and one uniform coat of slimy mud appeared to cover everything as far as they could see; and there was reason to presume that in such a country there might be deep drains and ditches between the vessel and the higher land, although the distance was inconsiderable. The adventurers reached the church without much difficulty, but could

discover no other buildings, nor any trace of a path, or road, that might lead to a village. The flood had evidently surrounded the church at high water, and destroyed the pathway.

“We will soon bring assistance to you, my good friend,” said Ralph to the Captain, after having listened to this report. “You and I, Mr. Brown,” he added, “will return with these men to the shore, and if we can do nothing else we’ll find our way into the church, and toll the bell. That will astonish the natives, and bring some of them out of their holes to us.”

“Take my dark-lantern with you,” said the Captain; “it will be very useful.”

Thus equipped they started, Ralph occasionally throwing from the dark lantern a strong light before him to discover obstacles, and then again withdrawing it. Having reached the church, they found that they could not get the door open.

“Come here, boy,” said Ralph; and they soon hoisted the lad up on the man’s shoulders against one of the church windows, and directed him to knock out a pane of glass that he might put in his hand, and remove the fastening of the window. Thus he was enabled to enter, and being a bold, active lad, he let himself down into a pew, and groped his way down the centre aisle towards the tower, with the intention of tolling the bell. Gradually gaining courage, he proceeded more rapidly, but as he was quitting the aisle, abreast of the principal entrance, he fell over some incomprehensible obstacle which fell with him. He was somewhat daunted, but rallied his courage, though a little hurt, and putting out his hand to assist him to rise, he felt beneath it the cold clammy face of a corpse. He uttered a piercing shriek and fainted.

Alarmed at his cry of terror, Ralph called to the boy, to ask what was the matter and

to encourage him by reminding him that he and his party were close at hand ; but there was no reply. All within the church was still and silent as the grave.

“ How stupid,” said Brown, “ not to have taken his lantern with him. What can ail the fool ?”

Ralph, by the assistance of his companions, soon, though with difficulty, squeezed himself through the window, and dropped down inside the church. All was perfectly still. In vain he called to poor Bill loudly by name, there was no answer ; but having entered the aisle, he threw the full glare of his lantern before him, and was startled to see amidst the surrounding darkness, the poor boy stretched motionless on the pavement, with an empty coffin on one side of him, and a corpse on the other. By this time, Brown was with him, and now the whole case was clear enough. They soon replaced the shattered coffin upon the tressels, and restored the body to its proper place.

Poor Bill, recovering a little, heard well-known voices around him, and seeing a light, was not a little ashamed of his folly.

“No wonder, Sir,” he said apologetically, and rubbing his head, where a considerable bump gave evidence of the severity of his fall, “no wonder, Sir, if I was scared. The dark church set me a thinking o’ poor Ben, who was washed overboard from alongside of me, and I was somewhat frightened when I fell over the coffin, though I did not suspect what it was, and I was hurted too on my head. But when I tried to get up, and found my hand on a dead body, the thought came over me that it must be poor Ben, come to ask to be buried, for my head was aching from my fall, and I was daft like.”

Bill, who was really a bold, manly lad, though perhaps a little superstitious, was so ashamed of the part he had played, especially before Ralph, that he entreated permission to go and toll the bell, which he did most lustily,

to the extreme terror and astonishment of old Reuben, who had been for forty years parish clerk and sexton to the hamlet of Lapwater, and who at that moment, late as it was, sat in conclave, with most of the old women of the vicinity of both sexes around him.

Reuben was a man in authority, and (his own wife excepted) ruled the whole hamlet to a considerable extent. Reuben was a good sort of man in his way, but a sad gossip, and vain of his acquirements withal, which was natural enough, for he was the only man in the little community who had any pretensions to be a scholar. For Reuben, by dint of long practice and a most ingenious method of swallowing hard words, contrived to stumble through his portion of the Church service, to the admiration of the little congregation, and then he would give out the Psalm, with a nasal twang, and an involuntary quaver, which from long use, they had learned to consider very fine ; and it was with no small elevation

of his honest old grey head that Reuben chaunted the said stave, in his own peculiar style, accompanied or rather assisted by a cracked fiddle, and a shrill clarionet, worthy of the vocal part of the performance.

The only person who was not perfectly satisfied with this state of things in Lapwater Church, was the worthy old curate, Mr. Brooks. This gentleman lived at the vicarage-house in the village of Seaham, three miles off, a distance which in such a country was very considerable, especially in winter, for the ways (we will not call them roads), were always difficult, and often dangerous. Indeed, on dark nights they were never safe, being bordered throughout with large deep drains. Yet was the hamlet never neglected by our worthy curate, though he felt uneasy about the musical department of his cure. It is true he had the power to suppress the evil, but as with many other potentates, circumstances forbad him to use that power.

Honest Reuben felt, and his neighbours felt with him, that his long tenure of office, added to his irreproachable character, gave him a sort of vested right (though they had never heard of the term), in the honour and emoluments of the clerkship of Lapwater; and those emoluments, small as they were, formed now his only means of support. Could a man like Mr. Brooks throw his faithful old servant upon the parish, and break an honest heart, already suffering under severe domestic affliction? His office and the little emoluments of it conferred, moreover, considerable local importance on Reuben; for except old John Dodds, the thatcher, who owned several cottages, and was the millionaire of Lapwater, he was the only man in the community who possessed any certain income at all, beyond the produce of daily labour; and John Dodd, keen as he was in making and in saving money, had no other ambition.

But surely, though Mr. Brooks would not destroy poor old Reuben, he might at least have stopped this musical display, which, to a stranger's ear, would inevitably suggest so much that was ludicrous, as to put to flight all thoughts of devotion. Alas, difficulties quite as important, and far more extensive controlled poor Mr. Brooks here also, and perplexed the good man sadly, for his sense of duty, and his kindly feelings, were at issue upon this all-important subject.

To compel Reuben to give up his singing would be to deprive his office of its chief grace and ornament; nor could Reuben have been made to comprehend the object of so cruel a privation inflicted upon himself and the congregation. It would make the old man wretched; whilst the musicians thus despotically silenced, would in their indignation quit the church in which their zeal and talents had been so cruelly outraged, and join a methodistical chapel, which was already

becoming formidable, and in which musical talent was appreciated.

'Tis easy to cast reproach upon those in authority, or to set forth in strong terms their neglect of obvious duties, but before we cast the first stone at an erring brother, it would be well to question our own hearts, whether we ourselves, even whilst judging others, do not leave undone much that we could and should do, and that too from motives far less excusable than those which had tied up the hands of good old Mr. Brooks.

How could this worthy man be expected to sign the death-warrant of his faithful old servant Reuben, or to drive weak brethren from the bosom of the church into secession from it? 'Twas not in man to do this, at least not in such a man as Philip Brooks. He endured therefore the crying evil he could not cure, bending his neck meekly to the galling yoke of necessity.

But how came all the old women of the place, of both sexes, to have been found in full conclave around Reuben at midnight, asking counsel and support?

Now it had so happened, that second in authority to Reuben, amongst the neighbours, and in some respects, perhaps, before him, was and had long been, Joan Saunter, a decrepit creature, whose age was unknown, though the elders of the community recollected her as an old woman in their childhood, when they had entertained a great dread of humpty old Joan, as they had irreverently called her, when they were quite certain she was out of hearing.

This early inspired awe of her, the cunning old woman had taken care should grow with their growth, and strengthen with their strength. The urchins of the rising generation inherited the feeling, and carefully shunned old Joan, which as her locomotive powers had long been at a very low ebb, was

no difficult matter ; and if any of them chanced to stumble unexpectedly upon Joan, they fled in terror from her horrid grimaces and fearful mutterings, for there is something almost terrible in the aspect of a woman impatient of the presence of infancy. Joan exacted a sort of black mail from the matrons of the place, both in supplies and in attendance ; they in return pronounced her uncanny, and it was whispered that she must be in league with the evil one ; an idea which, except inasmuch as she herself encouraged it, rested chiefly upon her extraordinary skill and success in extracting oil from dog fish liver. This fish, at a certain season, frequented the coast in such myriads, as to injure the herring-fishery materially, shaking the herrings out of the nets, and devouring or mangling them by thousands. The extraction of oil from the livers of these dog-fish formed an important item in the mercantile transactions of Lapwater, and the

noxious effluvia caused in the autumn by the process was horrible; whilst the witch-like appearance of old Joan and her wrinkled competitors in their working attire beside their reeking cauldrons was anything but bewitching.

Humpty Joan's success at this unsavoury vocation always greatly exceeded that of others, both in quantity and in quality. This, and their habitual awe of her from childhood, were quite sufficient to make a witch of her; but suspicion became certainty, when it was observed that, as time advanced, Joan appeared not to increase in age and ugliness like the others, which indeed had with respect to Joan long been impossible, and they began to believe that old Joan would never die, an idea originating in and sustained by some mysterious hints from Joan herself, that she was at least to outlive them all, and this idea had lately gained strange force from a curious circumstance. Old Joan had twice

within the last six months appeared to be dying in convulsions, and the doctor having been sent for had, in both instances, when leaving his patient, assured the gossips around her that nothing more could be done for her, and that she could not live two hours. The old woman (for, rashly presuming that she was already void of all consciousness, the whole conversation had passed in her presence) had nevertheless within the prescribed two hours, recovered all her usual energies, and ridiculed the doctor's prophecy, her knowledge of his expressed opinion appearing to the by-standers to have been a convincing proof of her dealing with evil spirits, "How else could she know that?" they said.

But on the third evening before the 'Eliza and Ann' had so strangely intruded herself into this earthly paradise, old Joan had once more appeared to be at the point of death. Her neighbours had been sufficiently

harassed with her two previous alarms. It was a horrid night; indeed the waters were out, and who was to go at the risk of his life three long miles on a dark, stormy night in such roads to call the doctor, only to be laughed at by the old creature for his pains. No one went for the doctor, and all were greatly surprised to find next morning that humpty old Joan was really dead.

Great was the agitation throughout the cluster of huts and cottages which constituted the hamlet of Lapwater. The weather had been bad beyond all former example, especially in the night which had closed the earthly career of old Joan. Winks, and nods, and significant shrugs expressed opinions which no tongue had dared to utter; but there was evidently an impression that the last awful storm was some way connected with the sudden death of old Dame Saunter, and that there would be neither peace nor safety in Lapwater until she was fairly buried. They

felt hardly secure even now from the possibility of her rising up to scoff and to jeer at them for the third time, for having believed that she could die.

Messengers were sent off to the curate, entreating that he would fix an early day for the burial, and the little community waited with nervous impatience for the third day.

Reuben, who was more relieved than any one else by the death of the old woman, would probably have checked this feeling by intimating that she was really dead, and that after all it was a good riddance, but Reuben's spirits had for some months past, been sadly depressed. A severe family affliction had befallen him; he had lost an only son, his pride and support, in a most mysterious and distressing way. The youth, though rarely at home, had been from boyhood a general favourite, but he was of a bold and venturous disposition, and had served his

apprenticeship to the sea, in a neighbouring seaport. Great part of his wages had always reached his parents, but all at once they had ceased to hear from him, and nearly a twelve-month had passed, during which neither letters nor remittances had arrived, and poor Reuben was almost heart-broken.

No sooner was old Joan really dead, than it fell suddenly calm, and remained so, though with a gloomy and threatening sky, till the day fixed for the burial, when the storm had returned suddenly with more fury than ever. Two o'clock had been the time fixed for the funeral: the grave was ready, and the whole community were in attendance. They had no very accurate means for measuring time, but were resolved to be early enough. Just as they had reached the churchyard with old Joan's corpse, flattering themselves in rather an un-Christian-like spirit that they would at length get rid of her altogether, than down came the storm with torrents of sleet and rain;

and it became evident that the curate could not accomplish his journey. By Reuben's direction, the corpse was, therefore, placed within the church, and all hope of the funeral being at an end for that day, they made the best of their way home ; most of them more or less suspecting that old Joan must, through the agency of her nameless ally, have had something to do with the delay, and doubting whether she would ever consent to be buried.

One avowed cause of the suspicion of her unholy league with the Evil One was, that she had not been known to enter the church for twenty years, for they did not take into consideration that from the position of the church, it had been physically impossible for her to get there ; but this is the spirit in which we, as well as those poor ignorant people, do often judge each other.

As the night closed in, the tide came roaring on before the gale, with a violence which threatened to exceed the far-famed

irruption of 1750. This also was attributed to old Joan, and her unmentionable friend. Not a soul ventured to go to bed that night, but most of the elders were in Reuben's cottage, relating strange stories of humpty Joan's sayings and doings, when one of them, who had left the cottage a few moments before, rushed in again terribly alarmed, declaring that there were lights moving about in the churchyard !

This strange statement was soon confirmed to the great consternation of the whole party, and soon after they were all assembled round the door, watching the supposed diabolical proceedings, a most portentous glare of light flashed upon them, but was instantly withdrawn again. It appeared this time inside the church, which was for a moment fully lighted up. Great was the alarm. What could old Joan be about with those lights ? All the inhabitants of the hamlet were now collected, and in a state of great agitation, wondering

what would come next, when suddenly the bell began to toll with great violence. Nothing could exceed the superstitious terror of the mystified villagers, nor did any one of them dare to look up till the bell had ceased for some minutes, when Reuben mustered courage to turn his eyes upon the dreadful scene. The lights were then seen as if slowly, but with fantastic movement, retiring seaward, and once more that strong fitful glare flashed upon them, but this time it rested upon a new object, lighting up for an instant the hull of a vessel; a second flash of that startling light showed the same object more distinctly, and before long the lights were gathered together upon her deck.

The spell was dissolved; and a suspicion of something very like the truth relieved the villagers from their alarm, turning the current of their thoughts into a much more solid channel. There was a wreck brought to their very doors by the late overwhelming

tide. Never had such a circumstance happened within the memory of man : though old Joan had been used to quote a traditionary legend, that the same thing had occurred in the great flood of 1750. Some of the more active of the members of the little community now made the best of their way to the wreck, going some way round, however, to avoid the churchyard, as if even yet they had to a certain degree the fear of old Joan before their eyes.

Their arrival at the brig was joyfully hailed by Ralph. Messengers were soon dispatched for a surgeon, and to announce the state of affairs to the clergyman.

The Captain was carefully conveyed to Reuben's cottage, where he soon received the assistance he so much required, and Rutherford having directed that a messenger should start early in the morning with a note, summoning the Agent of Lloyd's from the nearest port to take charge of the 'Eliza and Ann'

with her cargo, retired at length to rest, for he was worn out with fatigue ; and now that all cause for excitement had happily ceased, he could scarcely thank God for his deliverance before he fell into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

THE morning which succeeded the wreck of the 'Eliza and Ann,' though cold and dismal, was calm. She lay in a very shattered and desolate-looking state at the foot of the Church Mount, which had evidently been surrounded by the sea at the top of the recent extraordinary flood, as a considerable drain was running down round each end of the little detached hill.

On a somewhat less elevated spot, but still considerably above the level of the surround-

ing swamps and marshes, were scattered a few huts, and poor-looking cottages, only one of which bore an appearance of comfort. Nothing could be more dreary than was the face of the country in every other direction. The overwhelming flood of the preceding night had levelled the dykes, and swept away the cattle-sheds, which usually give some small show of life, and some variation of surface, to such districts. A few melancholy-looking draining-mills alone remained, far apart from each other, most of them more or less injured by the storm, whilst the whole surface of the land was covered with one uniform coat of slimy mud, relieved only by scattered lumps of sea-weed, accumulated here and there by the eddies of the retiring tide. Not a tree was to be seen ; a screen of low hills, with abrupt cliff-like terminations towards the sea, concealed the village of Seaham, whilst they protected it both from storm and flood. Large lake-like pools of

water still covered the lower lands in many directions, whilst drains worked their tortuous way, following the undulations of the earth's surface, over which they flowed on, to meet the now advancing tide of flood, which however was happily shorn of its recent terrors. There was no longer the furious gale to urge it on; the spring tides had passed their extreme point of elevation, and to use the sea phrase, had begun to take off, which they do rapidly in each successive flood after having attained their greatest height.

Our experienced mariners therefore had entertained no apprehensions of inconvenience from the rising tide, which indeed scarcely reached the keel of the 'Eliza and Ann,' as she lay quietly imbedded in the mud, no longer sea-worthy, having succumbed in a good old age (and well insured) to the irresistible power of winds and waves, like a faithful servant of the olden times. Reuben and his people, sought no undue advantage

from the wreck, lending their aid cheerfully in removing poor Captain Mengs to Reuben's cottage, but there can be no doubt that they rejoiced in a disaster which would give them so much profitable employment at that dead season, so fraught with difficulty and suffering to these poor people in their cold, damp houses, where fuel was so scarce, and so dear, particularly as much of the vessel's frame which would not pay for removal, must be left to them, to cheer their ill-supplied hearths.

The fractured leg of Captain Mengs was soon skilfully treated by a clever surgeon, and carefully attended to by Reuben and his wife. Mr. Brooks the curate arrived after breakfast, to Ralph's great satisfaction, and indeed, very much to his advantage, for he proved to be a most agreeable companion, and gave full information as to the best mode of reaching Yarmouth, whither Ralph was desirous to proceed, as the 'Boadicea,' after having con-

voyed her division of the Fleet to Yarmouth Roads, was there to find orders for her farther proceedings.

Mr. Brooks kindly offered him a pony to carry him six miles across the country, with a boy to guide him. There he would find a tolerable inn, at which a stage-coach going to Norwich would pull up next morning, and then he would have no farther difficulty in getting to Yarmouth. This was all very kind and looked admirably, but Ralph had a difficulty, and a very serious one, which it did not occur to Mr. Brooks to suspect, and which he could not have obviated if he had.

The fact was, he was not in the habit of carrying money in his pockets when on board his ship, where no one thinks of such a thing, and though he had, by mere accident, a sixpence, that was of course wholly inadequate to defray travelling expenses, and he might almost be considered penniless.

Mr. Brooks now summoned the people to

prepare for the interment of old Joan in half-an-hour from that time, and meanwhile Ralph being alone with him, began to make inquiries about Reuben, and the cause of the old man's evident depression of spirits.

“ It is a painful story,” said the curate, “ and I pity him with all my heart. He bears it with a truly Christian spirit, but I fear he will sink under it at last, though it is no uncommon affliction in these days of war. Reuben had an only son, and a fine youth he was, much beloved here. He was the pride of the old man's heart, and always remitted a considerable portion of his earnings to his parents, who really needed it. Their correspondence and his remittances always passed through my hands, for Jack could write, though Reuben cannot. Some months since we ceased to hear from his son, and now so long a time has elapsed without any news of Jack, the old man feels assured that he must have met with a sudden and violent death.

I do all I can to keep hope alive, but in vain ; the bereavement has been too sudden and too severe for the poor old parents.”

Ralph did not of course attend the funeral, but walked up and down before the cottage door. He felt sincerely for the good old couple ; but, however kindly we may feel for other people's troubles, our own will intrude, and will soon claim our exclusive attention. Ralph could neither travel to Yarmouth, nor equip himself properly when there, without money. And how was he to get money ? Had he possessed credit with a banker in London, which he did not, there would have been no possibility of getting a cheque cashed at Lapwater. He could not apply to Mr. Brooks for money. There were many unmistakable proofs that the curate had little cash at his command. Ralph puzzled himself with plans for getting out of this scrape, but with little success ; for the only plausible thing appeared to be to write to his mother

for a small remittance, but that he had strong reasons for wishing to avoid; and moreover, it implied the necessity of remaining some days where he was, and he was heartily tired of living on board that old wreck. Whilst he was debating on this important matter with himself, he was suddenly joined by a respectable looking stranger from the cottage.

“Lieutenant Rutherford I believe, Sir,” he said.

Ralph bowed, and pleaded guilty.

“I am the Agent of Lloyd’s, at ——,” resumed the stranger. “Captain Mengs of the Eliza and Ann, of ——, has been telling me that he is wholly indebted to you for saving his vessel and cargo, and indeed the lives of the crew. The cargo, though damaged, is still valuable. Your services will be appreciated by the under-writers, but it is my duty to pay your expences, and to supply money for your going wherever you may choose; and if you will give me your

address you will hear farther upon this subject before long.”

The agent who was a plain, straightforward man of business, drew from a large black pocket-book a small parcel of bank-notes, which he thrust into Ralph's hand.

This sudden address followed by such prompt action, so surprised Ralph that he held the notes in his hand mechanically, in a state of considerable perplexity. He certainly needed the money very much, but no thought of being paid for his services had ever crossed his mind, and he felt great reluctance to having his exertions considered in that light. But on the other hand, he had certainly incurred or certainly must now incur considerable expense, in consequence of this shipwreck, which he had no immediate means of meeting, and if as was probable, this gentleman would lend him the money, for he felt himself entitled to ask this under present

circumstances, even that would only modify and postpone the evil.

Mr. Lease, the agent, perceived Rutherford's astonishment, but mistook its cause.

"I am aware," he said, "that this is a sum wholly inadequate, but it is all I have about me, and I will immediately on my return to —— remit you a cheque for a hundred pounds more, if you will tell me where to address you."

"My dear Sir," said Rutherford smiling, "I had no thought of making any claim upon the under-writers, though really when you unexpectedly presented me with so large a sum, I was in a state of great perplexity, for having come on board the brig in such haste as I did, I of course brought no money with me. My duty requires me to proceed to Yarmouth, expecting to join the 'Boadicea' there, which I am the more desirous to do as quickly as possible, because my friends on

board her must long have given up all hope of seeing me again. It will be necessary moreover as I am almost certain to arrive there before the frigates that I should purchase the means of making a respectable appearance there in the meantime; and when I tell you that all I could command for the accomplishment of this, was a single sixpence accidentally in my pocket, you may imagine my surprise at having been so unexpectedly relieved by you from all my embarrassments. I will accept this fifty pounds, giving you my receipt for it, and submitting all the circumstances of the case to my captain, act as he shall direct, for I am wholly unused to such matters."

Mr. Lease was much pleased with his new acquaintance, and invited him to return home with him, but Ralph declining this, Mr. Lease undertook to set him down at the inn mentioned by Mr. Brooks, and which lay in his way home. This settled, the pro-

cession was seen returning from the burial, but the only person of the group who appeared to have been painfully affected by the fate of the old woman, was Mr. Brooks himself. Reuben indeed looked weary and almost heart-broken, but certainly the death of old Dame Saunter was by no means the cause of that. For her no tear was shed, no sorrow felt. The whole community indeed were relieved from a moral nightmare, for old Joan Saunter was really dead and buried.

Mr. Brooks and Ralph entered the cottage to visit Captain Mengs.

“Well, Dame Brady,” said the curate “I am glad to find from the doctor that your patient is doing so well. He speaks highly of your attention to him.”

The good woman courtseyed, and simpered in reply to Mr. Brooks, as she placed a chair for him by the bedside of the patient. But Ralph seized the curate’s hand before he could sit down, and drew him out of the

cottage with a degree of precipitation which astonished the old gentleman.

“My dear Sir,” said Ralph with an excited countenance, “did I not hear you call the good dame Mrs. Brady? Who is she? I thought she was Mr. Reuben’s wife.”

“She is the wife of Reuben Brady,” replied Mr. Brooks.

“Reuben Brady!” exclaimed Ralph, interrupting Mr. Brooks. “Is their name Brady? and are they not lamenting the supposed death of a son, a seaman, named John Brady?”

“It is a melancholy fact,” replied the curate.

But Rutherford had quitted his side most unceremoniously, and rushing into the cottage had loudly declared that their son Jack Brady was well, that he had long known him, and recently seen him, that he could explain his silence, adding that he would henceforth be

more than ever able to comfort and support his parents.

The news soon spread through the hamlet, and the restoration of Jack Brady, made this one of the merriest and happiest days in the annals of Lapwater, for Ralph contributed handsomely to a little festivity hastily got up. Mr. Lease also cheerfully subscribed, for he was a true liberal, we mean with his purse, for we know nothing of his politics, but the distinction is important, for the liberality that flatters our self-love, and costs us nothing, is clearly spurious.

Rutherford explained to the delighted father so much of his son's position, as quite relieved his mind.

“Mr. Lease tells me,” said the curate entering the cottage, “that you go with him in his gig to Strumpsal Fallgate, which will be far more agreeable and less tedious than riding upon my poor old pony; but I would

propose that you should both partake of my simple dinner, at two o'clock, and I have an inducement to offer you, which will I think have weight. You take great interest in Reuben Brady's son, and have brought much more happiness here, by assuring us that he is alive and well, than you are yet aware of, for in addition to his merits, and he was always the best lad in my little flock, I have another reason for rejoicing in his safety. My housekeeper's niece, little Amy, has, since Jack Brady was despaired of, lost all the buoyancy of youth, and from being the happiest and most cheerful creature living, has become a pale, melancholy sufferer, looking as if she would sink into an early grave. Jack Brady, when a boy, always petted the delicate and timid orphan-girl, who, as she grew up, became devotedly attached to him. They are worthy of each other, and I had looked forward to the day when I might have hoped to unite my two

favourites in matrimony. You may be sure that I have lost no time in sending word to the Vicarage, that Jack was safe, and poor Amy is, I doubt not, dying to see the gentleman who has brought such good news, who has seen Jack so lately, and will soon see him again. I know that it will give you pleasure to see poor Amy: I almost envy the joy that awaits Jack, when you, whom he doubtless mourns sincerely, shall not only return to him, but shall bring him tidings from his parents and from Amy. Nor will my greeting to him be unwelcome, for he is grateful and warm-hearted.”

This proposal of dining at the Vicarage, and of seeing the fair Amy, pleased Ralph much, not only because there was a spice of romance in the thing, but also because Rutherford, who had a full share of the weaknesses of humanity, had begun to feel that he had put up with a scanty and most unattractive breakfast, and that, although the

day was fast advancing, he had not heard a single allusion made to dinner. This had been distressing, and Mr. Brooks's proposal, therefore, was cordially accepted.

"Mr. Lease," observed the Curate, "has, he tells me, business here, which will detain him at least an hour longer. What say you to walking home with me? I should much like to hear somewhat of poor Brady's adventures. 'Tis a strange life you sailors lead, and you in that wretched-looking vessel, in such furious gales, have had a most providential escape."

Ralph took leave of Reuben and his good dame, Captain Mengs and his friends of the 'Eliza and Ann,' and received Reuben's messages to his son.

"God bless you, Sir," said Reuben ; "you have saved these poor people, as they tell us, and now you have brought comfort to us. We are very thankful that Jack have got so kind a friend."

“And now,” said Mr. Brooks, as soon as they were fairly clear of the hamlet, “I must trespass upon your kindness for some account of Brady’s adventures.”

Ralph gave his new friend an outline of poor Jack’s misfortunes, which was listened to with intense interest.

“God is just and merciful in all his ways,” said the Curate, with deep feeling. “He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. Happy are they, my young friend, on whom is conferred the rare and precious privilege of saving and protecting the innocent!”

A silence of some duration ensued. At length Ralph roused his companion from deep and earnest thoughts, by telling him the difficulty from which Mr. Lease had so unexpectedly relieved him, and his faithful sixpence which had once before, in early youth, been his last resource. The Curate was highly amused at the recital.

“I fear,” he added, with a smile, “that

I could scarcely have been of much use to you in your pecuniary difficulty. But how was it that when so young and inexperienced, you accomplished your former journey, and saved this singular sixpence?"

"Nay," replied Ralph, laughing, "it was my very youth and inexperience which carried me through so triumphantly."

Mr. Brooks having expressed a wish to hear the particulars, Rutherford gave them as they walked on. It was a dull and dreary road—so much so, that even a tedious tale would run no risk of being interrupted by any more interesting object.

"When quite a boy, and a mid in the 'C——'" said Ralph, "we had proceeded from Woolwich to Longreach, being nearly ready for sea. I was walking the deck in my watch on a fine evening in autumn, when suddenly the first lieutenant rushed on deck: 'Man the cutter,' he said, 'and come along with me!' I obeyed without

knowing, or indeed caring whither we were to go, or for what purpose. We steered for a hoy which was dropping up the river with the flood-tide, having several boats in tow which she had brought from Deal, where they had been built, and which she was taking to Woolwich dockyard. The first lieutenant having selected two of the boats, wrote the ship's name upon them with chalk, and directed me to proceed to Woolwich in the hoy, and to point out these boats as having been selected by him. Having done this, he returned to his wine.

“The weather was beautiful, and though the wind was fair, it was so light, that when the tide turned we could scarcely stem it. Indeed, I think the skipper did not make any persevering effort to do so, but anchored very willingly opposite to a large, gaudily-bedizened public-house, as did several other vessels. The country looked very inviting, and I was by no means sorry to get a ramble

in it. I therefore accepted the invitation to land. The skipper and his man rushed to the public-house, where there appeared to be already a considerable number of sea-faring people collected, as I could easily perceive from the hubbub within the house, and the number of boats at the staith in front of it. The evening had become hot and close, and the crowded 'True Blue' appeared to me to be a very disgusting object; I therefore sallied forth amidst fields and groves, greatly enjoying my adventure. But it had now become evident that we should not reach Woolwich till next morning, and I had made the disagreeable discovery that I had only sixpence in my pocket. In the meantime, the sky had suddenly darkened, a heavy tempest was evidently close at hand, which I ought to have been sooner aware of. I ran for it, but before I could reach that detestable public-house—the only building within sight—I was drenched to the skin.

‘Any port in a storm,’ I muttered, as I entered, and groping my way to an obscure corner, took some pains to escape observation, which, from the scarcity of light in the room, and the quantity of tobacco-smoke, was no difficult matter.

“Once only, I ventured seeing our skipper near me, to ask to be put on board, for my situation amidst such a scene of drunkenness, wrangling, and abusive language, had become extremely painful, though it had the salutary effect of destroying, for the moment, the appetite which had begun to become importunate whilst out in the pure air. I was also in continual dread of being called upon to order something. The master of the ‘Hoy’ was civil, though he showed no disposition to comply with my request, and a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a tremendous clap of thunder which shook the house, attended by a fresh deluge of rain, justified his refusal.

“‘Why, really Sir,’ he said, ‘I can’t do no

such thing, t'ant possible. Only hear the rain fall.'

"There was no remedy, and for two more long hours I remained imprisoned in this noisome, detestable hole."

"A sad scene for a mere boy to be exposed to," observed Mr. Brooks.

"Yes; but as in many other cases the excess of the evil was its most efficient remedy by creating a sensation of disgust. And yet, Mr. Brooks, there were many young fellows amongst those who seemed most to enjoy themselves there, who were of very decent appearance and abstained from intoxication."

Mr. Brooks shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. "Lord help us," he said, "we are poor weak creatures the best of us. Happy are they who are least exposed to contact with low and vicious companions."

"At length," resumed Ralph, "the returning flood summoned us on board. It

still rained, and I was once more wet through in getting on board. The cabin was about six feet square, its only communication with light and air was a companion hatch which was nearly closed to exclude the wet ; and as four people ate, drank and slept in this place, which was garnished with broad shelves partly enclosed by way of bed-places, there was no pretence made to cleanliness. I passed a wretched night, sitting on a stool in my wet clothes, resting my head upon the greasy table, and having exacted a promise that I should be called when we reached Woolwich, where they only proposed to stay a few minutes to deliver the boats, I soon forgot all my cares in a sound sleep, and was only awakened the next morning by the sun flashing into my eyes from the open companion. I started up and found we were abreast of Greenwich Hospital. On reproaching the skipper with having broken his word and brought me so far above

Woolwich : ‘ Why,’ he replied, ‘ it warn’t no use calling o’ you, it was as dark as pitch, and raining cats and dogs ; there warn’t no hole there for you to put your head in. I couldn’t ha’ turned a dog out, in such a night, so I let you sleep on ; no, says I, he’s fast asleep, he ’ent take no harm here.’

“ ’Twas a beautiful morning when I landed at Greenwich to walk back to Woolwich. I began to feel very hungry, and my walk made matters worse. As ill-luck would have it, a heavy thunder-shower gave me my third drenching, but the sun came out hot again, and by the time I had reached Woolwich Dock-Yard, I was almost dry. My uniform, of course, gave me free entrance. I cast a wistful look at the hotel opposite the gate, and visions of hot rolls, ham, and eggs and coffee, suggested themselves, but, alas ! six-pence could not face all that. The dock-yard was a desert. Everybody was gone home to breakfast. ’Twas very hard that I, who had

eaten nothing but a piece of coarse, mouldy biscuit since noon, the day before, should not know where to get a breakfast. I was taking the benefit of a sunny wall to dry myself more completely, when I saw a portly official-looking personage, in plain clothes, coming towards me. Hopes arose within me, when I looked upon that jolly, old, good-humoured face.

“ ‘What ship, young gentleman?’ he said.

“ I told him, as well as what had brought me there. I suppose I looked hungry, for with a queer but good humoured glance of his eye, he asked me if I had breakfasted, looking at his watch the while ; but before I could reply—

“ ‘Come along, we shall be just in time,’ he said.

“ He led the way, and I followed him, nothing loath, into one of the official mansions, having upon it *Master Attendant*, and we were soon seated before such a breakfast.

The table was laid for six, but no one else had appeared. Influenced I suppose, by my hungry looks, the old gentleman rang the bell sharply. 'I never wait breakfast for any one,' he said.

"A large cup of coffee, and a pile of muffins were placed before me, and my hospitable entertainer seemed more pleased than surprised, at the rapidity with which they disappeared. The fiery edge of my appetite being in some degree taken off, I began to consider how I was to get back to my ship, and had just made up my mind to state my dilemma to my host, and to ask him to supply me with the necessary cash, when the door opened, and the surgeon of the —— entered the room with his young wife, the daughter of our host. I was now quite at my ease, as I felt no difficulty in requesting a loan from the Doctor, about which I was in no haste. The old lady, soon after, came in, and a very merry, agreeable party it proved to

be. But whilst I was thinking of preferring my request to the Doctor, for after all I felt it very disagreeable to be borrowing money, he asked me when I should return to the ship.

“ ‘As soon as I can,’ I replied ; ‘ for I have completed my duty here ; but—’ and I hesitated.

“ ‘If that’s the case,’ said the Doctor, ‘ I am going to take a party of ladies down to see the ship ; why not go in the yacht with us ?’

“ I was but too happy to accept the offer, and a very agreeable excursion I found it, and a capital lunch we had, and thus did my sixpence—here it is—accomplish its first escape. The history of its second you know, and you have listened with exemplary patience to my long yarn.”

“ I have been much interested and amused by your narrative. ’Tis strange, Mr. Rutherford, but you, young as you are, have seen

much more of life than I have, long as I have lived. But your adventures are the more interesting to me, that I was very near being a midshipman myself. An old retired captain, who lived near my father, took a great fancy to me, and almost persuaded me to enter the navy. He had written to an old friend of his, who commanded a frigate, to take me, but he was a queer old man, and more than once, when he had been boasting to my poor mother what he would do for me, he put his hand upon my head as I stood swallowing it all with my mouth open, 'I'll insure him,' he said, 'from sharks and land-crabs; and if a shot should hit him, why, it's been the case with many a fine fellow before him.' This bravado frightened my mother, and she set herself violently against my going to sea. Now, Mr. Rutherford, I suppose it's a rare case, but my mother always had her own way in the house, and so I did not go to sea, but I have

often thought that a sea-life would have suited me. But, heaven bless me! here we are, and I did not think we had come half way.”

CHAPTER VII.

RALPH was now cordially welcomed to the neatest of bachelor's cottages, small indeed, and most simply furnished, but Mr. Brooks's little study, though fitted up with deal bookshelves, evidently the work of the village carpenter, contained so excellent a collection of books, and the table, by which stood a well-worn easy chair, was so laden with books and manuscripts in that peculiar state of regular disorder which speaks aloud of daily use, that you saw instantly that th

master of the house was a scholar and a gentleman, and a practical man, continually and importantly occupied. All that Ralph saw about Mr. Brooks, and all he heard from him, delighted him, though he could scarcely bring his mind to think seriously that the dear, quaint old man before him could ever have been a fit subject for a midshipman's berth. From the respectful confiding tone in which those of his flock who approached him made known their wants or wishes, it was evident that the good man was a zealous and efficient servant of his Master, and the deference with which he was treated was rendered more striking by his own manner towards the humblest of his parishioners, which was utterly void of assumption. But it was painfully evident that his health was giving way, and indeed it was not possible that a man of Mr. Brooks's age, of a frame and constitution naturally so delicate, should perform the arduous duties of so extensive a

parish, in such a climate, and with such roads, without ruinous consequences to himself; but he complained not.

“It is a rare thing for me, Mr. Rutherford,” he said, “to entertain guests, and my servants are not accustomed to it. My duties furnish me with constant occupation; my books are the companions of my leisure hours, and though I sometimes think I was better qualified for a more active profession, yours, for instance, I have too much to be thankful for, to have any temptation to repine.”

This conversation passed as his kind host led him through the cottage, and completed his courtesy by installing him in a small dressing-room.

When Ralph entered the parlour, Amy was laying the cloth, evidently in some disquietude.

“Amy,” said the Curate, “this is the gentleman who has been so kind to John

Brady, and has brought us such good news of him."

The poor girl rallied at the sound of her master's voice, and looked up at Ralph, with a sweet expression of countenance, in which heartfelt gratitude was blended with timid respect.

"I left him all well, Amy," said Ralph, "and you may soon expect him home."

"This is indeed good news, Sir," answered the poor girl; "but how can we ever repay the kindness you have shown him!"

She could no longer restrain her tears, but fortunately they were now joined by Mr. Lease, and soon the dinner was served. A pair of plump barn-door fowls, "a short-legged hen, Davy," with certain exquisite rashers of home-cured bacon, and sprouts fresh from the garden, formed a most luxurious repast. All smacked of the country—of home, and when the apple-dumplings appeared, Ralph quite rejoiced that

they had not assumed the more pretentious form of pie or pudding. Home-made bread, home-brewed beer too, what luxuries to a poor wandering sailor! All was so fresh, so neat, and the air from the garden gushing in fitfully through the open casement, perfumed the room, and the little attendant, Amy, "the neat-handed Phillis," was so admirably in keeping with all around her, whilst a sort of flutter, of which she could not divest herself, had restored to her fair cheek the roses which her worthy master had spoken of as having deserted their post, and they seemed to rejoice in their restoration, coming and going with restless joy. Nor were the thousand little *gaucheries* which the fluttered handmaid committed, at all unbecoming. She could scarcely withdraw her eyes from the gentleman who had seen Jack so lately, and was to see him again so soon, and whatever might be called for by any one, something instead of it was

pretty sure to be carried to the friend and patron of Jack, without reference to the real requisitioner. It was all very delightful, but Mr. Lease was a punctual man, and had a considerable distance to go : his gig was announced.

Rutherford, short as his acquaintance had been with his kind host, had conceived a great regard and respect for him, and quitted him with regret, assuring him most truly, that to have made his acquaintance had been one of the happiest results of his late adventure.

The old man's heart yearned towards the young sailor ; there was a frankness and a truthfulness about Ralph which delighted him.

Mr. Lease had seated himself in the gig, and Rutherford, after a cordial leave-taking, was about to follow him, when, as he placed his foot upon the step, he caught a glimpse of Amy's head protruding itself from the

open doorway. Those large, soft, dark eyes were fixed upon him with an indescribable expression, which almost seemed to say, "and you are about to see him!"

He stepped back into the little covered porch, and taking Amy's hand very gently :

"What shall I say from you, Amy, to my friend Brady?" he asked, in a mild, soothing tone, for the poor trembling girl had turned deadly pale.

Amy would have spoken ; her pale cheek became once more deeply flushed by the effort.

"I understand you, Amy," he said, "and will make a faithful report of what you would have said, and have no doubt of being fully understood."

Ralph sprang into the gig, and as they drove off, the villagers, who had collected in considerable numbers, raised a great cheering ; but Mr. Lease's horse being, like his master, rather a matter-of-fact personage, and wholly

unaccustomed to public laudations, took the thing in dudgeon, and began to rear and plunge awfully; in fact, he had very nearly deposited himself and the whole turn-out in a broad, deep ditch, most inconveniently close at hand, but the honest fellows who had so unintentionally caused the mischief, rushed in, stopped and soothed the frightened animal, and led him off gently some way up the road.

Mr. Lease proved to be a more agreeable companion than Ralph had expected to find him, for he related many anecdotes of their worthy host, all redounding highly to his credit. It seemed that, obscure as Mr. Brooks's position was in a place so desolate, and so rarely visited by strangers, his amiable and exemplary conduct had earned him no inconsiderable portion of fame throughout the neighbouring districts, in a continually extending circle. Such men, however apparently circumscribed may be their field

of action, are burning and shining lights, whose unrepining poverty, amidst unceasing labour, with their zealous and unostentatious example, will often, unconsciously to themselves, touch the hearts of worldly men when all else has failed to do so; for envy, jealousy or suspicion of interested motives, to which the shrewd, sagacious trader is but too prone, can find no resting-place here. Who that looked upon the pale, calm, benign and intellectual countenance of the gray-headed Curate of Seaham cum Lapwater, with his spare, over-wrought frame, and perfect expression of willing, almost joyful endurance, could fail to recognise the true and faithful servant of his Lord, employing, to the best of his judgment, the talents committed to his charge, and joyfully looking forward to his Lord's return?

Lease had long known and honoured the good man's character, and by expatiating upon it, raised himself vastly in the estimation

of his young companion. The time therefore passed rapidly and pleasantly till they pulled up at the small country inn of Strumpsham Fallgate, so called apparently from a large white gate, which extended across a road bordered on both sides by deep ditches. No toll was taken, but the gate was kept closed, to restrain the cattle on the neighbouring marshes from straying: a cord from the house would draw it open, and when let go it swung to rapidly, being hung with a fall, whence its name. The inn was a small brick built and blue tiled house, of very neat appearance, with outbuildings which denoted the possession of some acres of land. Order and arrangement were apparent throughout the whole concern.

“Well, Jones,” said Mr. Lease, “I have brought you a customer. The Norwich Blue, I think, pulls up here to-morrow morning. Thursday ain’t it?”

“All right, Mr. Lease,” said a fat pursy

dull-looking landlord, seated upon a bench outside the door, with a long pipe in his mouth, enjoying the last rays of the evening sunshine. But he did not rise from his seat, for though he knew Mr. Lease well, he had never found a customer in him, and there was nothing very promising in Ralph's crushed hat, and travel stained attire, to awaken a hope of much expenditure. Having satisfied himself, as he thought, upon this point with one landlordian glance, Ralph was permitted, seeing he had no baggage, to descend, and to enter the house, without receiving any sort of notice from the great man, whose calculating gaze had been directed entirely on his habiliments. Not so the brisk and bright-eyed little landlady, who with true feminine tact, perceived that though his attire was rough, and soiled, her new guest was a gentleman, and forthwith she made him ample amends for the rudeness of her lord and master. She ushered him courteously into her little

sanded parlour, which was scrupulously neat, replenished the fire, and set about preparing for him, with her own fair hands, toast of household bread. Delicious butter, and an ample supply of fresh eggs and rich cream for his tea, formed a rare treat to our storm-tossed mariner, much enhanced by his landlady's cheerful attendance, pouring out his tea for him, and then as she saw the pile of toast rapidly disappearing, she hastened out and soon returned with a fresh supply. Ralph did full justice to the hospitality of his pretty landlady, who he thought in his heart was very much too good for the sottish churl her husband.

The evening had now set in, and having declined the proffered lights, our traveller seated himself on one side of the fire in an old arm chair with a straight high back, the whole of no softer material than British oak, and having laid up his legs upon another chair, with a concave seat of the same

material, though of less dignified form, he was delighted to find himself at length in uninterrupted solitude, no remnant of a craving appetite disturbing him.

Having thus placed himself at his ease in what more fastidious people might have deemed a very uneasy seat, Ralph proceeded forthwith to mould and organize into something like form, the various subjects which presented themselves to his mind or memory, but with little success, for the 'Boadicea' the boat, the brig, the storm, and the wreck, old Joan, Reuben, even Mr. Brooks and Amy rose up in wild disorder before him. The past, the present, and the future jostled each other in his imagination, and pressed confusedly upon him. In vain did he endeavour to arrange his bewildered ideas, the various scenes and changes, and fatigues of body and mind which he had so recently undergone, would float confusedly before him.

The soothing warmth of a bright, clear

fire, and probably the good cheer in which he had so largely indulged, might also have had their effect, but certain it is, that a vision of old Joan startled him, but fled before a bright smile from the gentle Amy. In fact, he had fallen into a profound sleep, notwithstanding all the sharp edges and unyielding angles of his easy chair, and when he was gently awakened by his bright-eyed landlady at nine o'clock, after a sleep of some hours, he was somewhat at a loss as to where he was, until that insinuating voice begged to know what he would please to have for supper. This, at once, enlightened him as to his whereabouts, and although he felt certain aches and pains corresponding with certain sharp edges in his unaccommodating couch, his appetite revived, and he wisely as well as courteously left the selection of his fare to his attentive landlady who had hitherto catered so well for him.

Ralph was no unreasonable gourmand, but

a healthy, active young fellow, who has been badly fed, or rather half-starved, for ten or twelve days, will allow himself to be treated with a somewhat exuberant degree of hospitality by a coaxing, soft-spoken landlady, with great complacency, especially if the said landlady be a pretty good cook.

“ I hope this shabby-looking chap, as you are making such a fuss about, instead o’ getting my supper fit, will be able to pay,” said the landlord to his buxom partner. “ I wouldn’t give ten shillings for all that he have on, and he h’ant a toothful o’ luggage, and ony that Mr. Lease, who brought him here, is a sponsible man, though he never take not so much as a pint of ale here, I wouldn’t trust that chap for a groat. But I’ll make Lease sponsible for the reckoning.”

“ Leave that to me, Joe,” said his better half, in a much higher key than that in which she had addressed Ralph, for though a good little woman, she had, like many of the

sex, high and low, a company voice : “leave that to me, Joe: smoke yer pipe and drink yer ale, it’s all you are fit for, and be you thankful, old man, that you have a better head than yer own to look to the customers. I know a gentleman when I see one if—you don’t. I have had more to do with gentlemen in my time than—”

“ Well, well, Patty,” interrupted the husband, who apparently did not wish to hear the particulars upon which his wife founded her knowledge of a gentleman at first sight, most probably because he had often heard them before.

“ I tell you that his boots might ha’ bin black some time, but they are white enough now with salt water, and his clothes arnt nohow like a gentleman’s clothes, and sich a hat! I tell you, Patty, I don’t like the look on him.”

“ There’s your supper,” said Patty, not very respectfully ; “ eat it, and hold your

tongue. I tell you, I know a gentleman if you don't,—and if his handsome face warnt enough, his linen is as fine as fine, and no country cobbler made those boots, white as they are. Then he is so civil, takes whatever I put before him, and don't find no fault with nothing, and if that don't show him to be a gentleman, I don't know nothing about it."

"We-e-el, I spose you must ha yer own way; Patty, but make out his bill, and as you are so sure he is a gentleman, charge him accordingly, and I'll take it in to him, for the Norwich Blue will be here before daylight. Jem ont stop a minute arter he's got his dram. I'll make the gentleman pay his bill to-night: we'll soon see if he is a gentleman."

Patty made no reply, but quietly took her own way in the matter, after the most approved fashion of wives regnant, and even after having propitiated her good-humoured guest with an oblation of poached eggs and

broiled rashers exquisitely cooked and served, with a foaming jug of her best home-brewed; for Patty was a housewife of the highest grade, she gave him a full half hour in which to discuss these little matters at his ease, and then tripped lightly into the room with a chamber-candle in one hand, and a bill in the other.

“I beg pardon, Sir,” she said, in her most gracious tone, “but I hope you liked your supper. Is there anything else I could get you. We have excellent hollands and brandy.”

“Thank you,” said Ralph, sleepily, “I never drink spirits. Your home-brewed is excellent. Is my chamber ready?”

“Quite ready, Sir, and as the coach comes before it’s light, and I shan’t have the pleasure of seeing you in the morning, I’ve brought your little bill, and will show you your room.”

Ralph looked at the amount of the bill,

paid it, and gave the fair dame a half-crown.

“I have been much indebted to your kindness,” he said, “for certainly my exterior could scarcely have entitled me to the attention I have received from you. I was far from expecting anything of the kind, from appearances outside the house on my first arrival :” he laughed as he said this.

“Lawk, Sir !” replied the dame, simpering, “*I* know a gentleman, though he may please to disguise himself. Joe, he go altogether by a man’s dress ; and he’s had enough to rile him. We lost such a grey mare last Wednesday was a week, worth a sight of money ; but, arter all, Joe aint as bad as you’d think for. Ony give him his pipe and his ale, and you may do pretty much as you will, so you don’t trouble him.”

Thus laying open the domestic mysteries

of the 'Strumpsham Falgate' to her good-humoured and generous guest, Patty led the way to a small chamber, the extreme neatness of which did her great credit. She promised that he should be called in time, and in a few minutes Ralph was sleeping as soundly as if he had not taken a previous nap of some hours in the parlour, before the fire.

Ralph was duly summoned, and was quite ready when the coach drove up to the door. His half-crown and his civility had not been thrown away, for when he came down he had found, early as it was, that there was a cup of excellent coffee prepared for him, and his landlady was herself in attendance. Thus he was fortified and put into good-humour—for the sudden transition from a warm bed to a comfortless coach-top, on a raw cold winter's morning, much too scantily clad, amidst a huge display of overflowed marshes and deep ditches is not exhilarating to a breakfastless traveller. And dull work it was till they

entered the city of Norwich, which did not, however, appear to advantage, with its narrow, ill-paved, muddy streets, though it was really an important place, not only from its well-known manufactures, but also as standing high amongst our provincial capitals for the commercial and the literary talents of its citizens.

Few things are more disagreeable than being confined to a close dismal coffee-room looking into an inn yard, where waggons and coaches, almost as heavy as waggons (for it was fifty years ago) were continually arriving and departing, whilst the noise of their slow progress over the rough pavement of the yard shook the very walls of the house, rattled the windows, and deafened the unhappy wight, whose misfortune it was to be imprisoned therein for hours.

So completely was Ralph's outward man tarnished, and even torn, that he could not show himself in the streets without a thorough

refit, and though he made great exertions, it was late in the short winter's day, before he could sally forth, so that what he saw of the city was more calculated to excite than to allay his curiosity. It was a day of terrible length, and he was delighted to mount next morning upon the front of a vehicle which in these days would be followed by gaping crowds as a sort of Noah's Ark. It was drawn by four, and in the heavier parts of the road, by six rawboned and under-fed cart-horses.

“Halloo,” said a stout, red faced, stupid looking man enveloped in a huge drab great-coat garnished with capes innumerable, and so stiff that it could have stood alone. “Halloo, John, how's all this? Why aint I got the bay mare? I don't like that near leader a bit.” His short throat was enveloped in a coarse red worsted neck-kerchief, so bright that it somewhat paled the very suspicious rubicundity of his broad coarse nose.

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Ralph thought there was more noise and bustle in starting the coach, than would have got a line of battle ship under weigh ; but at length the vehicle being full inside and out, with trunks, bags, hat-boxes, and hampers, slung round it in all quarters, coachee, who had clambered up to his throne with a sort of clumsy bear-like agility, which his appearance had by no means promised, fixed his feet firmly on the foot-board, shook the reins, and after vainly trying to turn his head, which seemed to be immovably fixed in one position, he turned his body half round with an exertion that made him almost black in the face, and in a hoarse husky voice said : “ All right, gennelmen, sit fast, and mind yar heads o’ that gateway. Let go,” he added to the ostlers. And the old world vehicle staggered forth amidst a clatter of voices disjointed, and their import lost, by the rumble of the wheels upon the rough pavement. Chambermaids in curl-papers

thrust forth their heads from upper windows, slip-shod waiters thronged the doorway, whilst loitering idlers, and stable-boys, mixed with leave-taking friends, filled the narrow yard. A journey of twenty and odd miles was a formidable undertaking fifty years ago. Those on the top of the coach were fully occupied in ducking their heads under the low archway, for the warning was by no means superfluous. The near leader, who was new to his work, startled to find himself all at once in the midst of an incipient market, in a disorderly crowd, became unruly, but a clip on the flank and the example of his fellows, soon brought him into order, and after a few sharp turns into and out of narrow streets, they emerged upon the castle hill.

“ I say, Bill,” said a pale-faced, sharp featured, precocious youth, who was sitting by Ralph, evidently proud of being upon familiar terms with Bill, for such intimacy with stage-

coachmen was much courted by the soft-headed youths of the day, "I'll come on the box, Bill."

"You can't do no sich a thing, Squire. That there box is taken by a gennelman as I am to pick up on the road, one as can handle the ribbons."

"So can I, Bill," replied the boy sulkily. "I always drove Tom Sparke's team." Bill shook his head and thrust his tongue into his cheek.

The coach stopped in the suburbs, at almost every public house. The outside passengers appeared to be used to it; but on emerging from a public-house for the fourth or fifth time wiping his mouth with the sleeve of his coat, an action which was every time admirably mimicked by Ralph's scape-grace neighbour, calling forth a loud laugh from those near him, the coach window was heard to fall, and Mr. Bill was severely taken to task by a sharp, querulous, voice from

the inside. Bill shook his ears and touched his hat.

“On’y to deliver a parcel, Marm,” he croaked; but he soon repeated the offence, and now it appeared that young Hopeful’s mimicry was a standing joke against poor Bill, for as the morning had advanced, the concourse of idlers, whenever the coach pulled up, had become considerable, and Ralph observed that many of them also imitated poor Bill’s habitual mouth-wiping, amidst roars of laughter, to which Bill’s gravely important manner gave considerable point; and poor, indeed, must be the joke that would not relieve the tedium of such a journey.

Again, about half a mile farther on, Bill pulled up, and got off his box, though he did appear to have the fear of the old lady before his eyes, and not without reason, for her remarks upon this occasion became decidedly personal, and anything but civil.

“I ax your pardon, Marm,” said Bill, apologetically; “but ’tis a heavy load, and I must have some care for the poor cattle, and let ’em draw breath, arter that there last hill. I does love to take care of the poor hanimals.”

“At least of one of them,” retorted the old lady, in a tone which reached both passengers and bystanders as she drew up the window angrily.

It was no longer a mystery to Ralph, why Bill should mount his box so adroitly; practice makes perfect, even under considerable disadvantages.

On this occasion he was evidently crest-fallen, his red face was almost blue, for the giggle at his expense had been too loud and general to admit of a pretence of not hearing it.

But Bill was too hardened a sot to mind trifles, and he had a character to maintain much more important to him, than either punctuality or sobriety, for a stage-coachman

was always expected to be a wit, and however scanty his pretensions might be, he always held local rank as such amongst country bumpkins and schoolboys.

After settling himself in his seat with more than usual deliberation, Bill drew the apron over him and off they went once more. He then turned round, with a mighty effort, to his young friend, with a knowing wink, and thrusting his tongue into his cheek, which two manœuvres appeared to form the *matériel* of his pretensions to wit,

“I’m dashed, Squire,” he growled, “if ’at ’ere old ’oman o’ yourn beant a getting fractious. She don’t bite, do she, when she’s that way?”

The dutiful son seemed to think this a capital joke, and Bill brightened up again. He saw that he had re-established himself, and having accomplished about eleven miles in three hours and a half, they breakfasted and proceeded.

The conversation had turned chiefly upon

a narrow and steep bridge, which they were approaching, and it seemed to be a subject of considerable uneasiness to the passengers, aggravated as it was by the state of the roads, always bad, but just now much worse than usual, in consequence of a long series of stormy weather, during which, frost and snow had alternated with thawing rains, which had altogether operated most injuriously upon roads which had been badly constructed from materials unfit for the purpose.

An additional pair of post-horses had been put to, and for the first half mile they got on fairly enough, when Ralph was somewhat surprised to see before him a bridge, the approach to which, instead of having been gradually raised, so as to reduce the elevation of the structure itself, was sudden and steep, rendering the ascent cruel to horses with a heavy load, and to say the least of it, very disagreeable to passengers, even by daylight,

all which was rendered more objectionable by an abrupt curve of the road on the opposite side of the river.

A halt was made at the foot of the bridge, and some of the passengers who were used to the place began to alight.

“Sich ’o you gennelmen as will get down and give us a lift, I’ll be greatly obleeged to,” said Bill.

All responded to this courteous call, but one woman, who was short and stout, and as much enveloped in wraps as coachee himself. The vehicle thus lightened, the six horses were urged to exertion by whip and voice, and the passengers becoming interested, or perhaps not unwilling to warm themselves by exertion, began to push or drag on the vehicle, and after a heavy struggle, with much flogging and shouting, and some sharp critiques upon the few who stood looking on in idleness, the top of the bridge was attained. Stones were then placed under

the hind wheels and the drag fixed ; the extra post horses were taken off, the outside passengers having decided upon walking down the steep descent, ankle deep in mud though it was.

Bill, as he stood by the coach with a low-crowned hat drawn down to his eyes, his short, thick arms, standing out unnaturally in his stiff unyielding coat, looked more like a turtle standing on its hind flippers than a man, there was such a cased-up, helpless, dead and alive look about him ; but he mounted to his post more dexterously than could have been anticipated, and clutched his reins.

“Let go,” he said ; and the huge, unsightly machine was once more in movement.

Ralph stood on the summit of the bridge, and watched, with considerable interest, the gradually accelerated speed of the huge concern down the steep declivity. At length, the horses were galloping, in fact, running away, not with, but from the coach, which,

clattering at their heels, threatened to crush the wheelers. It soon became clear that Bill had lost all power of controlling his team, and Rutherford beheld the sudden bend of the road, which they were so rapidly approaching, with great apprehension. The feeling was general: all began to run, and the post-boy, with his horses, clattered off to give his aid. When they came up, the coach was lying on its side. The wheelers were down, and the terrified leaders were struggling violently to disengage themselves.

Of the only two persons outside, Bill first reached the ground, where the depth of the mud greatly broke his fall, protected as he moreover was, by so many wraps; but he was scarcely landed and fairly laid upon his back, when the sturdy old pilot's wife pitched plump upon him, and as he said, "almost squeezed the life out on 'im," whilst his fair assailant declared "that a cork fender warnt nothink to Mr. Bill to save damage in a crash."

The inside passengers were soon extricated, more frightened than hurt, though the old lady's tongue laid it on in a cut and thrust style, till poor Bill bore it in sullen silence, quite cowed. Assistance was at hand, and probably the people in the neighbourhood were used to such accidents, for all was righted and ready to proceed in a surprisingly short time.

Once more on his throne, Bill rallied wonderfully, "I say, Jack," he said to the postboy authoritatively, "put to your nags. I'll keep you till I'm over Billoughby bottom."

"And pray," said Ralph, "what may that be?"

"Why Sir," replied Bill, who was now himself again, "they calls it so because there's holes in it which ain't got no bottom at all."

Then turning to his young friend who had shown rather less anxiety about his amiable parent than might have been expected,

whilst the venom of her tongue seemed to rankle in Bill's mind,

“I tell you, Squire, the clapper o' that old un ain't no joke: t'would scald a cat.”

All were heartily tired of their tedious and disagreeable journey, now performed in an hour. A cold easterly wind and half frozen drizzle, as their tired cattle dragged them slowly over the last two miles of an execrable road, wholly unsheltered from that bitter blast, had reduced the whole party to a sullen silence, and Ralph who was not so well equipped for such work, in consequence of the very reduced state of his wardrobe, whilst those around him were protected by cloaks and coats, felt quite relieved at the sight of the quaint old gateway which admitted them into the town, and the very horses seemed to feel consolation in finding themselves near to rack and manger, as rattling past the fine old church, with renewed vigour, they pulled up at the Angel.

CHAPTER VIII.

RALPH had written to Bewdley Green immediately on his arrival in England, giving his mother a slight, but subdued sketch of his adventures. He had directed his letters to be forwarded to Yarmouth, and his first thought on reaching that town was to send to the post-office; but postal duties were not then performed with so much speed or regularity as they now are, and no letters had arrived for him. He had also written to Mr. Carteret, and to

Shuldham : to the latter he had offered no paltry, shuffling excuses for having neglected to answer his kind and important letters.

“My dear fellow,” he had said, “instead of acknowledging your friendly solicitude as it deserved, I was fool enough to give way to temper ; and, like a wayward spoiled child, I turned my idle wrath upon my best friend. I feel humiliated at my own folly, but I know that your warm heart will not resent it ; and little as I deserve such kindness at your hands, I look with confidence for a continuation of your interesting correspondence. Severely indeed should I be punished—though justly—should you have withheld it ; but my confidence in you, Shuldham, is unbounded.”

This confession had relieved Ralph’s conscience ; but unfortunately, as his hasty temper had more than once proved to him, it is easier to regret our follies than to repair the ill-consequences of them. He had little

doubt that the following post would bring him letters from home, with enclosures from Jamaica, but the doubt whether there would be letters from Shuldham, who alone could relieve the anxiety that tortured him, perplexed him fearfully.

Ralph dined, or rather went through the forms of dinner, in a private room, for he was in a very unsocial humour, fretting that so many hours must still elapse before he could hope to get his letters. The waiter brought him the newspaper ; he took it listlessly, and was just about to throw it down unexamined, when the words “ yellow fever” caught his eye. Alarming reports of the prevalence of that fatal complaint in the West Indies, and particularly in Jamaica, had been brought by a vessel recently arrived. There was no doubt of the fact, but the statement was considered to be exaggerated.

Ralph only read the first part of the paragraph, and threw the paper from him.

This was an unexpected blow, and bitterly he cursed his folly in having so ill-requited the generous, considerate kindness of his friend Shuldham, who had made so judicious an effort to save him from the effects of his own proud and hasty temperament, and whom he might never see again. But he shuddered when he thought of those still more dear to him, who were exposed to this fatal calamity, and whilst still writhing under the consequences of his former unreasonable ebullition of temper, he was again dragged by the self-same feeling into new follies. He cursed his unhappy fate, and gave way to something very like despair.

It was not thus that the calm and Christian spirit of Bewdley Green would have met the direst calamity, much less imaginary evils; but the wilful often pay the penalty of their folly, by self-inflicted torture; and Ralph, superior as he was in many respects, had now wantonly doomed himself

to hours of wretchedness, and restless, feverish impatience. A miserable night ensued, and if he closed his weary eyes for a moment, it was only to encounter ghastly and incongruous scenes, and groups in which those so dear to him ever assumed a painful pre-eminence of suffering. At length morning came, but hours must still elapse before his letters could relieve him from this dreadful state of uncertainty, harder to be endured by the hasty and impatient spirit than the most afflictive reality.

As the time for the delivery of letters approached, Ralph became still more painfully excited. The hour so long in coming, struck at last. He counted each stroke of the church clock, fortunately so near to him, then walked up and down the room, watch in hand. Repeatedly he raised it to his ear, thinking it must have stopped, but there was little punctuality in winter posts in those days, and another long, long hour was thus

wearily measured. The great question in Ralph's mind was, "would Shuldham have written or would he not?" for, from Shuldham alone could he hope to hear the particulars for which his soul longed, and West India mails had arrived. He trembled when he considered the wanton neglect with which he had treated Shuldham, but his heart told him that his friend would not fail him.

At length the door opened, and Ralph clutched a packet of letters. In an instant, he waved triumphantly a bulky epistle in the well-known hand of his faithful friend, and greedily did he devour its contents. It was not of a very recent date, but it was a complete supplement to Shuldham's last letter. There was the same spirit of friendship, the same attention to interesting minutiae, no allusion was made to Ralph's neglect: all was kind, affectionate, and deeply interesting. Julia and Laura were well, and in excellent spirits, at the thought of coming to England,

preparations for which event were in rapid progress. The establishment at Mount Cenis had been broken up; there had been much talk of yellow fever, and some few cases had occurred, both in the squadron and on shore, but appearances as yet were not seriously alarming.

Ralph was in extacies. "I knew it," he said, "I knew that Shuldham would not fail me. It's nobly done; for I was far from deserving this at his hands: I must curb this unruly temper of mine. It is a curse upon myself, and others. I must take a lesson once more from the gentle guide of my infancy. And did I presume to complain that my peerless Julia had not exercised the same calm and lofty self-command, which so ennoble my incomparable mother? But the beam was in mine own eye."

Some little time elapsed before he was sufficiently composed to attend to his other letters. He had still much to learn, in

the art of self-control, readily and judiciously as he could rule and control others, which is indeed for ordinary purposes, comparatively an easy task, though never thoroughly to be attained without self-command.

Mr. Carteret's letter was cordial. He expressed the great pleasure with which they all looked forward to meeting Ralph in England ; and especially their satisfaction at finding that Mrs. Rutherford was the neighbour and intimate friend of Lady Evandale. He added that, to her mother's cordial invitation to Bewdley Lodge, Edith had appended a postscript to her cousins, speaking of Mrs. Rutherford as her mamma's dearest friend, and as almost a second mother to herself. This was beyond Ralph's wildest dreams ; and whilst all this good news had been hastening to meet him, he had been tormenting himself so idly ! so weakly !

Ralph felt deeply mortified, to find himself thus continually the mere slave of a tempera-

ment so degrading to him, even in his own sight, and he earnestly resolved to correct this fruitful source of evil to himself and to those dearest to him. He could not doubt that Mrs. Rutherford, though she had never remonstrated, had seen and deeply lamented his rash and vehement conduct, under provocation real or imaginary. This unhappy failing had indeed its remote origin in qualities which were as obviously part of Mrs. Rutherford's character as of his own; yet how different was the effect produced? How all-important is the example of such a mother, loved and respected, not only during infancy, but through life! It forms a rallying point for self-correction. Ralph's resolutions were never lightly taken, still less were they lightly abandoned, and his determination of amendment formed, he was sure to abide by it.

When Shuldham had closed his letter at Kingston, some alarm of yellow fever had been spread amongst the slaves. Mrs.

Carteret, always intensely alive to the prospect of any evil which could by possibility reach her personally, had adopted such a host of ridiculous precautions, and prepared such an accumulation of remedies, and so continually bewailed her unhappy fate, that some of the domestic slaves became seriously alarmed. In fact, the old lady was one of those weak-minded foolish persons, who, to avoid an imaginary danger, frequently expose themselves and others to its reality.

Doctor Seacombe had told her that she was doing all she could to prepare the way for the fever, and that she must not be surprised if she should succeed; but talking reason to such persons as Mrs. Carteret, is but whistling to the winds, and the Doctor himself was far from suspecting that his words would prove prophetic.

Shuldham concluded his long letter by stating that a certain interesting personage had grown quite indifferent to society, and

spoke openly of the pleasure to be derived from seeing old friends in England ; which as the whole list of her personal friends there, might have been expressed in the singular number, Shuldham pronounced to be a happy omen, an idea which Ralph adopted without hesitation or delay. Shuldham added in a postscript, that their friend Lord George had been ordered home, and was to join the ship of the commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, where doubtless farther promotion awaited him.

Notwithstanding his new resolve to be calm and moderate, at all times, and under all circumstances, Ralph's spirits had risen rapidly.

This exuberance of his spirits absolutely demanded some vent, and as he was intent upon making amends for his past faults, he resolved upon writing a somewhat penitential letter to Bewdley Cottage. His conscience had long reproached him with having left

that devoted mother, when he had been summoned to join the 'Boadicea', without having relieved her anxiety, by confiding to her the cause of his altered tone and strangely troubled demeanour, which must have been so painfully obvious to her; but, indeed, it had then been almost impossible for him to do so. Now, therefore, when circumstances at length permitted it, he poured forth his whole heart to her with inexpressible satisfaction to himself. Well he knew how painfully she must have felt his apparent want of confidence then, and how gratified she would now be to find that it had only been momentary and really unavoidable, and that she was still the object of his unabated affection, his confidante, and his adviser. The perusal of that letter would be to her a return of the old happy days.

He was right, and floods of delicious tears did Mrs. Rutherford shed, in secret, over this new pledge of affection from her boy, for

such she still deemed and still called him in her own private thoughts. He had spoken without reserve of his hopes and fears, and of the contents of his letters from Jamaica; and had expressed his delight at the certainty of her meeting the Carterets on their arrival in England, and of his regret that he could not venture to come and talk over all these interesting matters with her. In short, he had so much to say, that he found he had filled his sheet without any allusion to his present situation, and his immediate views. His Jamaica tidings had driven all such thoughts out of consideration, and a happy man was Ralph, when he had finished and dispatched his letters.

He made up amply for his preceding restless night, and slept as he was wont to sleep. His cares and anxieties were at an end, and he rose early next morning, full of life and spirits, and well disposed to enjoy the novelty of the scene around him. His

bed-room window overlooked a large, open market-place. It was a bright, frosty winter's morning, and he sallied forth, happy to escape from the discomforts which await an early riser in a crowded inn, particularly in a bustling, thriving sea-port town, whilst the sharp, pure air, into which he emerged, formed a grateful contrast to the atmosphere from which he had escaped.

There was already much active business going on. The wives and daughters of the small farmers in the neighbourhood standing or sitting at their pads, in their sentry boxes, which often bore their name, and who, though well equipped to meet the cold, had not wholly neglected the becoming; and a most attractive race they seemed to be, as smiling upon their well-known customers, they displayed their poultry or their butter, unwrapping each article from the snow-white cloths in which it was enveloped, and displaying its beautiful condition.

It was the practice then for heads of houses, male or female, (as they expressed it) to do their own marketings, and they were frequently accompanied by some of the young girls of the family, whose rosy cheeks, waving locks, and bright eyes, in their simple morning attire, gave so much interest to the scene, that it was difficult to believe that it was merely a transfer of geese and turkeys, ducks and chickens, from the slaughterers to the devourers, as Ralph, not without indignation, heard a sour, cynical-looking man, limping with premature infirmity, proclaim it to be, whilst he was eating his breakfast in the coffee-room of the Angel.

Ralph had seen all this with very different eyes, and although he had no heart to bestow, and the prevailing style of beauty was not to his taste, he was fain to admit that he had never before seen so predominant a proportion of pretty faces ; and there was a general air of cheerful activity in the town which spoke of prosperity.

Having reported himself to the Port Admiral, he learned that his ship was daily expected, and that the North-Sea fleet was in the offing standing in for the roads, to pass the neap tides there, which neap tides fortunately, saved the trouble and expense of an unceasing blockade, for the Texel is far better secured against the egress or ingress of large ships during the neap tides than it could be by an enemy's fleet.

He soon followed the example of many well-dressed idlers, by entering a public room in the bath-house, on the beach, and was watching the advance of the leading ship, with a Vice-Admiral's flag, when he was tapped on the shoulder by an old school-fellow, now an under-graduate of Caius. It was a joyful meeting; and he now recollected that his old friend, Arthur Maresfield, was a native of this place. The young Cantab was delighted to hear the proceedings of the approaching ships explained and commented upon by Ralph, whose commendations were

here and there slightly tingured with blame.

“He’s a very strange old man that Admiral,” said Arthur to his friend, as they paced up and down the jetty. “He is said to be very clever, but he is certainly very eccentric.”

“How so?” asked his friend, “for I do not know much of his history, though I have heard that he is a humourist.”

“Why, he is a short, thick, red-faced man, with a queer, quaint expression of countenance and a marked brogue, though decidedly intelligent. He walks about in an old frieze cloak with a small and somewhat shabby cocked hat quite square upon his head, and pressed down almost to his eyebrows. He lives in a small, obscure lodging, entertains no one, and declines all invitations; but he is remarkably courteous, and good-humoured when spoken to, though he seldom addresses any one.”

“This is something quite new; but do you

mean to say that he never entertains the captains of his fleet?"

"I cannot go quite so far as that, but he rarely entertains even his captains, and when he does, it is still in a style peculiar to himself. His guests receive their invitation to dine with the Admiral upon a certain day; no place is fixed upon, but a notice is added, that a carriage will attend each guest at a certain hour. Meantime, a dinner is ordered some ten, twelve, or fourteen miles off, wherever a convenient inn may be found. Postchaises and gigs call for and take up the guests at their respective residences, and the whole cavalcade is drawn up at the Admiral's lodging, the front of which offers a site particularly ill-calculated for such a display, and is somewhat difficult of approach. As soon as the whole party is assembled, the chief steps into a chaise with his eternal frieze cloak and old cocked hat, accompanied generally by two of the younger captains,

and taking the lead of the squadron, his followers soon begin to surmise whither they may be bound, for there are but two roads out of the town, and not very many inns within the prescribed range. On these occasions, my friend Captain Garham, of the 'Mermaid,' assured me that the Admiral is the life of the party, making a surprising display of wit and humour, and relating incomparable anecdotes, which aided by the facetious expression of his countenance, and his slight brogue, are irresistibly ludicrous."

"Captain Garham did you say?" interposed Ralph, "I know him well, and a capital fellow he is, though I fear too much addicted to practical jokes, which I suppose he hardly ventures to practise upon his shrewd old chief, who would pay him off without mercy."

Maresfield introduced his friend to his family, with whom he became forthwith almost domesticated. The father, a worthy

old merchant, was one of those who, after having availed themselves of prosperity to give their children a good education, had indulged them in various domestic changes ; and the dinner hour, formerly half past one, had fallen back to the more aristocratic hour of five, with a proportionate advance in the variety of fare, and the mode of serving it, the parlour maid having given place to a clown in a smart livery, so that Arthur, an only son, could venture to bring home a friend, or one of the young officers of the militia regiment. The presence of gay regimentals had, of late, much enlivened their balls, no sort of military having been known here before the war, and the volunteers being completely eclipsed by these Scotch and Irish, as well as English regiments, which were not unfrequently accompanied, to the great delight of the towns-people, by a colonel, in the shape of a real live lord, with his family, and a handsome establishment,

whilst the familiarity of these grandees with their young officers, stamped these last with a sort of lunar, reflective importance, to which they could of themselves present no claim. Balls and parties abounded ; many of the young damsels were beautiful, and, as is always the case in a state of social transition, they were in manners, and appearance, far in advance of their brothers and cousins, save and except such of them, as had taken the degree of gentleman at the University.

Ralph had much enjoyed all this for a few days, when Maresfield proposed to him to spend a day with his friend Mr. Henslow who resided near a small town on the Suffolk side, upon a pretty estate. Henslow who was a remarkably agreeable, and well-informed young man, had dined more than once with Ralph at the Maresfields, and had accompanied them to the ball, paying a degree of attention to the fair Harriet, which though not unusual to the pretty sister of a college friend, led

Ralph to consider him as a favoured, perhaps an accepted lover.

Maresfield and Ralph drove over to Henslow's mansion, he himself having preceded them on horseback. The excursion had been hurried, as Ralph was liable to be called away suddenly. A few young friends of Henslow's, and an elderly clergyman, his near relative, who resided at Norwich, had been summoned to meet them, and rarely had Ralph found a bachelor's party so pleasant. Towards the close of the evening, the clergyman, who was a native of Norwich, and who fully participated in that amiable spirit of provincial patriotism with which her citizens, much to their credit, are richly endowed, asked Ralph his opinion of the city, as he understood he had passed through it.

“Unluckily,” replied Ralph, “I had no opportunity of judging; but I felt a considerable interest in the subject, having heard

an old and valued friend speak of Norwich as a place not only eminent for having produced men of great ability in art, science, and literature, and especially in mercantile pursuits, but remarkable also for the liberality with which her successful citizens ever support and encourage every youthful aspirant who seems to merit it."

"I am proud to say, Mr. Rutherford," replied the patriotic citizen, "that your friend's statement is no exaggeration. The liberality of our citizens has long been universally acknowledged."

Whilst chatting over a late breakfast next morning, Henslow's groom reported to his master, that the whole town was on the move, as the Dutch Admiral had been taken prisoner, and was breakfasting at the 'Queen's Head,' on his way to London, in charge of two officers.

"Nonsense," said Ralph, "the English fleet is lying quietly in Yarmouth Roads, and

the Dutch Admiral is hermetically sealed up in the Texel by the neap tides. It is not possible !”

“ I ask your pardon, Sir,” said the groom, “ but it must be true, for Mr. Feeks, the barber who ’tends at the ‘ Queen’s Head,’ is come to tell master all about it. Mr. Feeks had it from one of the officers, a gentleman with two epaulets ; and, what’s more, Feeks saw the Dutch Admiral eating his breakfast at the ‘ Queen’s Head,’ with his own eyes, as he peeped in when the officer opened the door. And, what’s more still, Sir, the officer told Feeks that the Dutch Admiral was going to take a look at the town after breakfast, before he started for London, but desired Mr. Feeks not to mention it.”

The barber was sent for.

“ Well, Mr. Feeks,” said the master of the house, “ where did you pick up this cock-and-a-bull story, so ’worthy of your calling ?”

“It’s as true, Sir,” replied Feeks, “as you sit there. The officer told me all about it, and John Ostler told me that post-horses were to be ready in an hour, for the gentlemen were going to look at the town afore they started.”

It was quite clear that something strange was going on at the ‘Queen’s Head,’ and that Mr. Feeks had kept the secret confided to him in the true spirit of his craft, for hair-dressers were much more numerous and indispensable fifty years ago than they now are, and were comparatively important, being the licensed newsmongers and scandalmongers of the day.

Feeks was dismissed, and the whole party sallied forth shortly after to see what was really going on. As they proceeded up the High Street, towards the inn, they soon became aware of a dense crowd before them, who proceeded very leisurely, and occasionally stopped altogether. It was evidently a sight-

seeing, deliberative sort of a crowd, which was continually increasing. Henslow's inquiries of some of the towns-people tended to confirm Mr. Feeks's statement. They pushed on till they came fairly in sight of the group which was attracting so much public attention in so strange a way.

"I see it all," said Ralph; "it's Sir Timothy Broderick, frieze cloak, cocked-hat and all, and I could almost venture to assert who the officer is that has thus hoaxed Feeks, and through him the whole town. But as I do not wish to be seen, lest I should be cited as a witness if the affair should end seriously, which is by no means improbable, let us get clear of it, Mr. Henslow. Maresfield knows the officer I allude to, as well as I do. He can, with safety, approach near enough to ascertain if my suspicions are correct."

"And pray," said Henslow, as they walked away, "what may all this be?"

“A practical joke, which will, I fear, hardly escape punishment,” replied Ralph. “The Admiral I have heard, has lately improved upon his eccentric dinner excursions, by occasionally inviting a couple of his younger captains to come to him at an inconveniently early hour, at this season of the year, and driving them twelve or fourteen miles to breakfast, which is not at all relished by the victims, who have probably been up all night, whilst the old chief, after an early and frugal dinner, had most probably gone to bed at nine o’clock. Garham, who is a great favourite, and a sort of privileged man, seeing Feeks peeping about him with that absurdly inquisitive look of his, has not been able to resist the temptation of hoaxing the barber; but I fear Garham has over-shot his mark, for Feeks has, with wonderful diligence, spread the tale over the whole town, and every *gobemouche* in it is now dogging the heels of Sir Timothy, to see what sort of a man a Dutch Admiral

may be. But the old man is sharp witted, and well knows the mischievous propensities of his companion, though he might think that he would not venture to play off his tricks upon him."

Maresfield soon returned. It was as Ralph had suspected, but their friend the Captain seemed to be rather perplexed with the extent of his success. The friends took some pains to undeceive the townspeople, and Garham was thus enabled to get the frieze cloak and cocked hat back to the inn with a less numerous escort, and soon after he left the town with his chief, on their return to Yarmouth, congratulating himself upon being well out of a great scrape.

Sir Timothy had at first expressed his surprise at the sensation his presence had created, gently enough :

"Confound the fools," he said ; "did they never see a man before ?" but he made no farther remark, and departed in apparent

good-humour with Garham and every body else.

Ralph and his friend started soon afterwards. Captain Garham, who was a general favourite, was to dine with the Maresfields that day, and to accompany them to the ball, which from the arrival of the fleet, and of a new regiment of militia was expected to be unusually gay.

Captain Garham having found the party in a stroll on the beach, had returned home with the Maresfields. He was in high spirits at having escaped so well, and they were laughing heartily over his humorous account of the whole affair, when his servant was announced with letters. Poor Garham coloured a little when he beheld a formidable looking official packet, for the secretary had told him that no orders had been received for the 'Mermaid' by that post, and he loved harbour dearly, dinner parties, and balls especially. He grew very pale as he read the

contents of the packet, but rallied and showed his friends a private note from the Admiral, which ran thus :

“ My dear Garham,

“ I grieve at parting with you, as I had promised myself many a little excursion with you, such as that we both enjoyed so much this morning ; but duty, as we all know, must be attended to. Your presence is required off the Texel, where I rely upon your vigilance. The signal has been made for the squadron to complete your water and provisions to four months ; and, as the wind is off the land, this will soon be accomplished. You must be under weigh before dark, and as you will have so much to do in so short a time, I enclose your orders, and dispense with personal leave-taking. When you have relieved the ‘ Brilliant,’ you will be senior officer off the Texel ; and I congratulate you

upon a command which, if somewhat onerous, is highly honourable.

“ My dear Garham,

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ TIMOTHY BRODERICK.”

The victim of his own practical joke made an abortive effort to be facetious upon the subject, but he felt his disappointment too keenly. Old Squaretoes, as he was wont to call the Admiral, had been too sharp for him, and to quit the gaiety he loved for a long winter's cruize off the Texel, which he flattered himself he had escaped, was no joke.

Poor Garham was obliged to leave his friends forthwith. All regretted it much, and thought the infliction was rather severe; but it is very doubtful whether any one of the party enjoyed himself at all the less, and quite certain that many who had been the objects of his ridicule, did enjoy his mishap,

and did laugh heartily at it. Your thorough joker is a common enemy in a small way, and meets with no commiseration under a successful retort, however severe.

Ralph had enjoyed this little spirit of gaiety, for his share of such scenes had been small, though perhaps he had rather too little than too much taste for what is called society, probably because such social scenes as had fallen to his lot had disappointed him. Be that as it may, he was awakened next morning at a much later hour than he was usually found to be in bed, by a report that the 'Boadicea' was in sight, her number having been repeated from the Port-Admiral's ship.

CHAPTER IX.

AT length, the 'Boadicea' had, with her comrades, accomplished her long and wearisome task, of conducting a large convoy across the North Sea, in the depth of winter, a duty, the fatigue and anxiety of which can scarcely be overrated; and having confided the ships for the river to a sloop of war and two gun-brigs, she stood in for Yarmouth roads. But the prospect of a visit to a place so much in favour with our officers and seamen, could not dissipate the gloom which

had hung over the ship since the mysterious disappearance of Ralph Rutherford. Merivale himself was more grave, more silent than ever, even the incorrigible joker Burchall was still dumb-founded. Either he had no longer his wonted jocular propensity, or what is more probable, he had ceased, because his jokes no longer set the table in a roar.

The 'Boadiceas' had been at length relieved from most harassing difficulties and responsibilities. Their port, a favourite port, was full in view; the day was yet young, the wind was fair, but there was no symptom of rejoicing. The duty went on steadily, admirably, but mechanically, and without the spirit which was wont to distinguish the 'Boadicea' upon similar occasions.

"A shore-boat steering this way, Sir," reported Tit Tandy, the signal midshipman.

Mc'Donald was standing close to the taffrail: his natural reserve had increased tenfold since that fatal night. Nothing

but his duty appeared to rouse him to exertion. He rarely spoke, but always carried in his hand a small telescope, the gift of his lamented friend, for even MacDonald had almost ceased to entertain a hope. It was not that he often used the glass, but he appeared to cling to it, as a memorial of his friend.

Nothing is more exciting than the slow approach of a ship to a new harbour; MacDonald had never seen this place before, and the bleak barren appearance of the land, as seen from the ship, was strangely at variance with all that he had heard of the cheerfulness and gaiety of Yarmouth, for he had often heard the place spoken of as one of the pleasantest ports visited by our ships of war.

It was precisely at that moment, when young Tit had reported the approach of the shore-boat. The anchor was down, the men were aloft furling sails; MacDonald's curiosity once awakened, he turned his glass

upon the approaching boat, and instantly became exceedingly excited and agitated. But MacDonald never drew important conclusions hastily, and now he hesitated to give credence to the evidence of his senses. He withdrew his telescope, wiped the field-glass, carefully performed the same office for his eyes, and once more gazed eagerly at the boat which was getting very near to the ship. He then leaped high into the air,

“ ’Tis he ! ” he cried aloud, “ ’tis he ! by heaven it is himself.”

“ Halloo, soldier, are you mad ? ” said Birchall whose attention had been drawn from the operations going on aloft by this incomprehensible outburst of his calm prudent friend.

But young Tit shouted out, “ ’Tis Mr. Rutherford himself in that boat, I’ll swear to him.”

These exclamations, so audible amidst the profound silence which always attends impor-

tant evolutions in a man-of-war, aroused Captain Merivale, who, seated at his desk, was arranging his papers for taking them on shore with him. The boat was now passing under the frigate's stern ; he recognised Ralph, who saw and bowed to him.

A murmur of joy ran along the yards as the men furled the sails ; and had Ralph risen from the dead, scarcely could the delight and astonishment which welcomed him have been more intense, and deeply he felt it.

Having given Captain Merivale an outline of his adventures, and received his warm congratulations, Ralph hastened to satisfy his eager friends in the gun-room upon the same interesting subject, and many of the midshipmen also listened to the tale, which, through the medium of the servants, was soon familiar to the whole crew, not without some wonderful additions.

MacDonald said little, but the grasp of his hand left marked testimonials of the strength

of his feelings on the joyful occasion, though it was not one Ralph complained of.

As soon as possible he sent for Brady, whose astonishment nearly equalled his joy when he found that Rutherford had been cast away amongst his friends and relatives, and had even seen Amy and Mr. Brooks.

“Nothing but good luck has come upon me,” he said, “since I saw you first on board this ship, Mr. Rutherford. Nobody grieved more for you, not even Mr. MacDonald himself. I’ll love a soldier as long as I live for his sake, though I ha’ant never yet been fond of ’em, and now when I see you here again, you’ve made me happier than ever I was in all my life.”

This long speech did not by any means come trippingly off Jack Brady’s tongue. It was delivered in broken pieces, for though Jack was not given to sighing or to weeping, the depth of his feelings was vouched for by certain internal convulsions, which forbade a ready utterance.

Ralph returned to the shore to take leave of his kind friends. The day after the next was fixed for the 'Boadicea's' departure for Portsmouth, where, as Merivale was informed by a friend at the Admiralty, he would receive orders to refit for a long cruize to the westward. This which had been his original destination, when he had been suddenly wanted on temporary service elsewhere, was the great object of ambition to all frigate captains, and was generally reserved for men of interest; and as it afforded the best chance for single frigate actions, or those of small squadrons, many of the favoured ones, who had moreover the best ships, officers, and crews, established a high professional reputation, and at the same time made their fortunes. The constant charge of convoys, and blockades were the portion of the less favoured or less fortunate.

It had also, from the same quarter, been intimated to Merivale that Brady's case should

have a full consideration, and on the arrival of the 'Boadicea' at Portsmouth, the 'Goelan' would be ordered thither from Guernsey as the junior lieutenant of that ship had been a mate of the 'Galatea' at the time of the imputed desertion of Brady from the pinnace at the sally-port. In fact, that a court of inquiry should be appointed to investigate the matter, of which Merivale himself would be appointed president, and that other evidence would probably be forthcoming. This was joyful news to Ralph, as well as to Jack Brady, who had now resumed his real name.

Fortunately, the last day of the 'Boadicea's' stay in Yarmouth roads was remarkably fine, with a light, westerly wind and smooth water. Ralph had invited Arthur Maresfield, with his family and friends, to visit the frigate, where a *dejeuné* and a dance on the quarter-deck filled up a few hours agreeably. It was the only return he could make for the hospi-

tality he had received, the only serious consequence being, that Birchall fell desperately in love with Eliza Maresfield, which had the curious effect of making him a grave, serious personage for some weeks, till the fit had worn itself out, when, like an overstrained bow that has broken its string, he suddenly returned to his natural condition. But although Birchall himself had been all that time without exhibiting the slightest tendency to mirth in his own person, never having even cut a joke, or perpetrated a pun, his gravity and constraint sat so ludicrously upon him, that he had never, in his happiest vein, elicited so much mirth from his associates.

The fair Eliza would have been equally surprised and amused had she known of this conquest, for she had only a very slight recollection of Birchall as a tall, gauky, awkward creature, strikingly plain, but with the queerest phiz she ever remembered to

have seen, who, far from endeavouring to play the agreeable to her, had never addressed her once.

Arrived at Portsmouth, Merivale received his instructions relative to the court of inquiry, which only awaited the arrival of the 'Goelan.'

Ralph having learned that Scraggs was then on his trial at Winchester, for the murder of which he had been accused, proposed that he should take Brady over to Winchester, as he might be able to identify the prisoner as the person who had enticed him into the house in which he had been drugged and kidnapped. Captain Merivale having approved of this step, they started the following morning. The trial had commenced, and they would have found some difficulty in getting into the crowded court, had not Ralph stated his object to the local authorities, who immediately admitted them.

They found the prisoner putting a bold face upon the matter, though it was quite clear that had his fate rested with the spectators, he would have had little chance of escape. The infamous character he had long borne, his rude and ferocious bearing, and his remarkable ugliness, had silenced all feelings of pity even in female hearts, the more readily so perhaps, that he was charged with the deliberate murder of a poor, helpless, and defenceless woman, with whom, whatever her failings might have been, he, the accused, had notoriously lived in great intimacy. There was little marked interest called forth by the evidence until the dress-maker's girl was summoned: it was, indeed, upon her evidence that the chief proof of his guilt rested.

When the young girl appeared in the witness-box, somewhat startled to find herself the object of all eyes, the deepest silence prevailed. The prisoner seemed, for one

moment, as if his confidence were shaken, but he soon rallied.

Ralph, who had received an intimation from Brady that the prisoner at the bar was not the man they sought, but a perfect stranger to him, felt too much interest in what was passing to quit the court as he had intended, although the heat was oppressive, and the pressure of the throng in many ways offensive.

The witness soon recovered from her flurry, and under the questioning of the counsel for the prosecution, stated, clearly, that on the afternoon of the day on which the crime had been committed, she had been sent by her mistress with a bonnet to the lodging of the murdered woman—that the door of the house, to which neither bar nor bolt were attached, was, as she had usually found it, standing ajar. She had frequently been at that house before, and knew the prisoner whom she had more than once seen

there, apparently upon intimate and familiar terms with the unhappy tenant, who had occupied but one room.

Upon being asked whether there was a closet in the room, she replied that there was ; she was then desired to state what followed after she had entered the house, particularly what she had seen and heard. -

She stated, that on mounting the stairs, she had heard a voice which she knew to be that of the prisoner at the bar. He was speaking loudly and angrily, but not very distinctly, but whether that indistinctness had proceeded from anger or from intoxication she could not say, for she had only seen him for a moment, during which time he sat still and held his tongue, but he was evidently much heated, and kept wiping his face with a silk handkerchief, which had made it more difficult for her to observe whether he was intoxicated or not.

The unhappy woman was at the time

sitting on a small couch. She appeared to be much alarmed, and had evidently been shedding tears. When the witness had tapped at the door, previous to entering, the prisoner's voice ceased, and the woman said, in a low tone, "Come in." She had been then desired to lay the box upon a small table, which stood between the door and the window, and having done so, she had left the room, neither surprised nor alarmed by what she had seen or heard. She had lingered one moment outside the door, during which the prisoner had resumed his loud and angry tone, and she heard him mention Balders. This was all she had to say.

"You have said that you saw the prisoner wiping his face with a silk handkerchief: was there anything remarkable about that handkerchief?" asked the counsel for the prosecution, and so much had been said by common rumour of the handkerchief which had been the instrument with which the

horrid crime had been committed, that this question agitated the whole audience, and they awaited the reply with breathless eagerness.

“It was a very remarkable handkerchief,” replied the witness, “being the brightest and gaudiest I ever saw.”

“Do you think you would recognise that handkerchief if you saw it?”

“I am certain I should,” replied the witness; but after a moment’s pause she added, “only there may be others like it.”

“Do you think this is it?” asked the counsel, displaying a silk handkerchief, which, as the witness had described it, was bright and gaudy in the extreme.

The witness, hitherto so calm and collected, started at the sight of the handkerchief, and a thrill of horror shot through the whole assemblage at its evident effect upon her. All eyes turned instantaneously upon the prisoner, who scowled defiance upon the throng, affect-

ing to stand firmly and confidently upon his alleged innocence; but a quiver of the lip showed how deeply he felt the evident and universal conviction of his guilt.

The interest of the trial, or rather of the evidence, had now greatly subsided. The handkerchief was clearly proved to have belonged to the prisoner, and moreover that it had been seen in his hands by many persons on that day. It was marked, not with the initials of his name, (generally supposed to be an assumed one) but D. D. S. by which initials, in his swaggering moods, he generally talked of himself. This and his bullying manner had acquired him the soubriquet of Dare Devil Scraggs, upon which he prided himself not a little.

A respectable draper from Queen Street Portsea, proved that he had sold his only handkerchief piece of that pattern to Scraggs, who always sought for the brightest and gaudiest patterns, and having asked permis-

sion to examine the handkerchief, offered to swear that he had sold it to the prisoner, for as it chanced to have been the outside of the set, it still bore his private mark.

As the proofs thickened upon the head of the unfortunate prisoner, a sort of gloomy satisfaction appeared in the countenances of most present, who had seemed to fear that the man, of whose guilt they were assured, would escape conviction.

Ralph had now seen and heard enough, and was moreover half suffocated by the detestable atmosphere of the crowded court. He with some difficulty got away, fully impressed with a conviction of the prisoner's guilt. Indeed, the infamous character Scraggs had long borne, his ruffianly appearance, and dogged manner at the bar, told heavily against him, and although Brady had not recognised in him the scoundrel who had kidnapped him, there was abundant proof that he had pursued that detestable traffic with great audacity, and success. This had

satisfied Rutherford, as well as every body else, that he was capable of committing such a crime as that with which he stood charged ; and a prisoner against whom such an opinion had become general, has little chance with the public, when circumstantial evidence bears hard upon him. And here, although the evidence for the prosecution was wholly circumstantial, it was connected and linked together by so many circumstances, each perhaps slender in itself, but dovetailing in with others so accurately, that to minds so prejudiced against him, his guilt appeared to be proved.

The prisoner's assertion in his defence, that Balders had been in the closet during the whole time that he was in the room, being wholly unsupported by evidence, gained no credence, and consequently none was given to the deduction he attempted to establish, that Balders must have returned to the house after he had quitted it ; and being irritated by the contemptuous manner in

which he had heard the unfortunate woman speak of him, had then committed the murder.

Scraggs thus made out altogether a very plausible tale, admitting without hesitation, all that had been really proved, especially that the handkerchief which had been made the instrument of the foul crime, did really belong to him, and alleging, that in the scuffle with Balders, when he had so unexpectedly emerged from the closet, he must have let it fall, and that Balders, who hated him, and had just been beaten by him, having found it, had probably made use of it in the murder, with the hope of fixing the crime upon him.

There are two circumstances particularly worthy of notice in this case; first, that Scraggs must have felt most bitterly his previous bad conduct, when he found that, in consequence of it, whilst pleading for his life,

under the imputation of a crime of which he was innocent, and of which he was probably incapable, it was in vain that he spoke the truth; for no one believed him, bad as was the reputation of the man he accused.

Who can imagine anything more terrible than must have been the state of the prisoner's mind when he found his past successful crimes fastened like a millstone round his neck, dragging him to destruction? The only part of his defence, which made any impression in his favour, was the evidence of several persons with whom he habitually associated, that so far from attempting to escape, he had joined them early in the evening at their usual place of resort. He was, they admitted, to a certain extent intoxicated, and certainly irritated, which last he had accounted for by making precisely the same statement he had made before the court, abusing the wretched woman, and only

adding that he wished he had broken Balders's neck, and that he would do that yet, some time or other.

It was justly considered that a man fresh from the murder of the woman could hardly have so conducted himself; but his associates, who had sworn to all this, were men whose oaths could not weigh much in a court of justice, especially when their object was to save a confederate.

Scraggs saw with terror that the evidence of his friends, though perfectly true, gained little more credence than his own assertions. He had felt the firmest reliance upon that evidence, yet it had made little impression upon the court, and had been listened to by the audience with impatient scorn. Then did he begin to feel in his inmost soul that the fiend whose tool and slave he had lived, now mocked and betrayed him in his hour of trial. Even truth itself availed him not.

Ralph returned to the ship, and made hi

report to Captain Merivale, and they afterwards heard without surprise that Scraggs had been found guilty by the jury and condemned ; but to the astonishment of every body, the judge had reprieved him.

After waiting some twelve or fourteen days, the 'Goelan' arrived from Guernsey, and the court of inquiry sat to investigate the case of Jack Brady, who, after a strict inquiry, was declared innocent of desertion, and was reinstated in his former position, recovering all his pay and prize money, and was forthwith made chief boatswain's mate of the 'Boadicea.'

Captain Bromhead and Captain Lodge of the 'Swift,' who had been members of the court of inquiry, and who had been directed to place themselves under the orders of Captain Merivale, dined with their Commodore after the investigation, as did Ralph, Birchall, and Mr. Griffiths, the surgeon.

Bromhead was a stranger to Merivale and

stood in some awe of him, in consequence of which he showed to great advantage, dropped his overbearing manner, and scarcely swearing a single oath, for those gentlemen who indulge in coarse habits and disgraceful language, when they can do so with impunity, and plead that they cannot help it, do contrive to abstain from it, where they know it will instantly receive reproof.

Ralph was rather curious to see how his old captain would get on with Merivale, a man who brooked no gross deviation from propriety ; or as Bromhead would have expressed it, 'stood no nonsense.' But the captain of the 'Goelan' though rough, especially when facetious, and rather loud, conducted himself with so much tact, and showed so much shrewdness, that Merivale, who had probably heard an unfavourable account of him, was evidently pleased, and relaxed from the cold politeness with which he had at first received his guest.

“Have you been long on the Guernsey station?” he asked. “I was at one time ordered thither myself, but the ‘Inconstant’ has taken my place.”

“And a lucky escape you have had, Sir,” replied Bromhead; “it is a station on which you are in constant expectation of losing your ship, without the slightest chance of getting into action, unless it is with the forts at Cherbourg. More than half the squadron were on shore last winter, and two of them were totally lost. I was running for St. Heliers in Jersey, with a fine seven-knot-breeze; we had made the land, when a fog came on suddenly. I was quite a stranger to the coast, and told the pilot I thought we had better haul off and get to sea. He replied “that it was not possible.”

“‘Keep the lead going,’ I said.

“‘It was no use, Sare,’ said he.

“‘Then let us anchor where we are, till it clears up a little.’

“ ‘ No Sare,’ quoth he, ‘ ground very bad here, cut your cables in no time.’

“ ‘ Confound it,’ said I.”

Ralph looked at him, and he could not but smile to be thus caught mincing his words.

“ ‘ Confound it, what must we do then ?’

“ ‘ We must run for de anchorage, Sare. I have seen de land. I can hit de anchorage.’

“ ‘ That’s boldly said,’ I replied ; ‘ but are there no sunken rocks between us and the anchorage ?’

“ ‘ Dere is but one, Sare. I hope we shall not hit him, and indeed I tink he will not take us up at this time of tide.’

“ There was no help for it, hit or miss, and I was thinking that the pilot was a brave fellow, when whir-r-r, we grated over a rock without stopping : I felt it all the way down my back.” And in his earnestness he

twisted himself uneasily, as if he had really felt it.

“Had it taken us amidships,” he continued, “we must have been smashed, and gone down in deep water; but fortunately it caught us well up on the larboard-side, only breaking the copper. It was a moment of awful suspense, but in one minute we were over it. ‘Well, old fellow,’ I said to the pilot, ‘you knew exactly where that rock was to be, but d—— your calculation of the tides; had we been three feet farther to the westward, we had been regularly dished. But are there any more of these fellows in the way?’

“‘No, Sare, we are all clear now, and the fog was clear away a leetle, I see my marks.’ And he took us into St. Heliers safe enough; and I’m uncommon glad to be clear of that station.”

Captain Merivale, who had looked very

grave at one point of this story, rang the bell and ordered coffee.

“It is, indeed, a disagreeable station,” he said, “for the constant apprehension of losing your ship, and however blameless, never getting another, wears a man’s heart out. Were you ever there, Captain Lodge?”

“No Sir, but I lost a brother there in the Boreas.”

“It’s a pity, too,” said Bromhead, ever ready to get the talk into his own hands; “for—”

But coffee was announced, and Merivale rose, seemingly apprehensive of another long yarn. They retired to the after-cabin, where Merivale took care to keep the conversation general till they broke up.

The ‘Goelan’ having been reported ready, the signal was made to prepare for sea the following morning, for we had now been some weeks at Spithead, and having dispatched a last boat for letters, the ships lay in imitation

of their Commodore, with top-sails and top gallant sails at the mast head, for there was a light north-west wind, waiting for her. At length, she was seen coming, but with a stranger in the stern sheets. In vain they sought with their glasses to see who it might be : some thought it must be a king's messenger ; Birchall, with some curiosity, advanced to receive the stranger.

He presented an official letter.

“ I am sent by the Ad-me-ral-ty to join de ship,” he said.

He was about four-and-twenty, a light but well-made man, buttoned up to the chin : his manner was gentlemanly and pleasing, but he seemed rather embarrassed, and perhaps he was more the object of general scrutiny than could have been agreeable.

“ Humph,” said Captain Merivale, after reading the letter, “ bring him down into the cabin, Mr. Birchall.”

Having done so, Birchall returned to the

deck, but not in a condition to satisfy the general curiosity.

“Signal to weigh, youngster,” he said to Mr. Tit, and in an instant the ‘Boadicea,’ under all plain sail, was running for St. Helen’s, followed by the ‘Goelan’ and ‘Swift.’

The Captain came up with the stranger, who now displayed a green uniform coat.

“Mr. Birchall,” said the Captain, “Lieutenant Shoporoff, a Russian officer, who is appointed to this ship. You will have a cabin and cot prepared for him: no duty will be required from him, and every attention will be paid to him. Pray introduce him to the gun-room.”

Shoporoff was a good-humoured man, of gentle manners, and soon found himself much at his ease. Ralph paid particular attention to him, both from courtesy and curiosity, and the Russian, who was of a very grateful disposition, fully appreciated Ralph’s kindness in all the trifling difficulties and

embarrassments which beset a stranger, alone amongst foreign associates, with habits and manners so different to those of his country; and having been once or twice misled by Birchall, who could not resist the temptation of raising a laugh at anybody's expense, he selected Ralph for all his little confidences and perplexities, which were sometimes amusing enough. But the last boat had also brought an important packet to Ralph.

“Your last letter,” said Shuldham, “has made us very happy here, though we have a strong suspicion that you have passed through scenes of difficulty, which, I trust, we shall soon hear described by yourself. We embark to-morrow in the ‘Trelawney’ for England, and if ladies must go to sea, she is the very ship for them, and as Dr. Seacombe and I go with them, and we have a good convoy, I hope we shall land them somewhere on the Hampshire coast safe and well. Upon comparing dates, we fear you will have sailed to

the westward before we can arrive, as the latest papers speak of the 'Boadicea' having to command a small squadron, after a certain Court of Inquiry has been held. We hope this will have detained you, and that we may have a quick passage. Should it prove so, we may yet find you at Spithead, but I hardly dare to flatter myself that this will be the case, although I do venture to sooth our dear friend, by assuring her that it is possible."

Dates were instantly examined and calculations made by the eager Ralph. 'Twas hard, 'twas very hard to leave England without having ascertained the arrival of the 'Trelawney.'

"Could I," said Ralph, "have known that Julia was safe and well at Bewdley Lodge, I should have been the happiest fellow living."

'Tis thus we delude ourselves with imagining that the thing we most wish would quite satisfy us—as when labouring through a mountainous district, we look up, and pant,

and toil, and think that if we could but attain the summit before us, we should have an easy down-hill walk to our journey's end: at length we reach the wished-for goal, only to find that there are other and more difficult mountains between us and our object.

The wind drew more to the west as they reached the open channel, and it became a dead beat.

"A regular westerly wind," said Captain Merivale. "Make Goelan's signal to take her station two miles upon our weather beam; Captain Bromhead says she is a fast vessel, and she has just been docked. We will try her."

They stood over to the French shore, and tacked; the weather was fine, and nothing material occurred till the second morning, when as they were nearly off the Lizard, a fog came on at daybreak.

Rutherford had the morning watch, and was cursing his hard fate, for having been

obliged to sail when it was highly probable that Julia was on the point of arriving, and months must elapse before he could hear of her safety.

“If,” said Ralph, “instead of breaking into a rage, I had listened to Shuldham, and calculated the probability of Julia’s coming to England, I might have remained at Bewdley Cottage, and been the first to receive her, and now I shall perhaps never see her again. Fool that I am, I have brought it all upon myself!”

“A gun, Sir, broad on the weather beam.”

Ralph had of course heard it, another and another followed.

“Take the compass bearing of the guns. They are minute guns, and signals of distress.”

He reported the guns to the Captain, who soon came on deck, though not till the guns had ceased.

“Set the royals and flying jib,” said the

captain. "Keep her close to the wind, and look well out."

"A large ship on the weather bow," reported the look-out man.

But no one else had seen or could see her, and he had only a momentary glimpse of the hull through the fog, but it was precisely in the direction from which the guns had been heard. Nearly half an hour had elapsed, when the fog rising a little in that direction, they saw distinctly a large merchant ship laying to, and a long, low brigantine close to her, but out of gun-shot.

The brigantine had also made out the frigate, for she made sail without picking up her boat.

"Keep your luff close," said Merivale. "Get the lee-quarter boat ready. We will fetch as near to her as we can, and drop the boat without shortening sail. Do you see anything of the 'Goelan' on the weather-beam or quarter," he added. "If he is in his

station, he will be to windward of the brigantine and save us a long chase. She's a smart craft that brigantine."

"Yes, Sir," replied Birchall, "and it was high time for the ship to squeak: his boat was on board her."

"Permit me, Sir, to go in the boat," said Rutherford, who hoped and feared he scarce knew what.

"Stand by, then, to jump in and shove off," said the Captain. "Luff, luff, now shake her in the wind," he added.

"I can make out the 'Goelan'" reported Mr. Tit, "broad on the weather-quarter. She's well to windward of the brigantine."

"Very good, youngster," said Birchall "lower away the boat."

Rutherford and his crew leaped into the boat, and the 'Boadicea' filled and stood on.

CHAPTER X.

BUT we must return to Jamaica, where important events await our attention. Soon after Shuldham had written his letters to Ralph, in which he had treated so lightly the apprehensions of yellow fever, the disease had assumed a much more formidable aspect.

The establishment at Mount Cenis had been broken up, the estate having been hastily sold, for it was Mrs. Carteret's property, and as it was her habit to oppose vehemently any proposition made by her

husband, he had lost no time in availing himself of her consent to sell it, induced by her anxiety to fly from the country to avoid the fever. To the last moment he had feared that she would refuse to sign the papers ; it had been therefore sold upon disadvantageous terms, in much more haste than was either judicious or convenient, for now that they would gladly have retired to the hills for safety, they found themselves obliged to remain at Kingston, where the fever raged terribly, and their best chance of escape was to hasten their embarkation. Nor is it a rare thing for domestic evils of great magnitude to flow from the absurd and capricious perverseness of an individual.

“ I fear,” said Dr. Seacombe one morning, to his friend Mr. Carteret, “ that unless we can prevail upon Mrs. Carteret to moderate her terrors, and to set some reasonable bounds to her precautionary measures, she will prepare both herself and her immediate at-

tendants for the fever, by which we are now almost surrounded.”

“It’s quite useless for me to interfere,” replied Mr. Carteret. “Mrs. Carteret is, as you know, wholly irrational in all that concerns herself personally, and would certainly oppose anything suggested by me.”

Dr. Seacombe shrugged his shoulders.

“It is but too true,” he said, “but as I am most decidedly of opinion that Mrs. Carteret’s proceedings are likely to be dangerous to herself, you would do wisely to remove, at least, your brother Peter, and your daughters to my house, with such of the servants as are not in immediate attendance upon their mistress, whilst she is still much as usual, only rather more excited, for should the fever attack her, which I fear must take place, her daughters, if here, must know it, and would insist on being with her. Now it will not appear extraordinary to them, that their mother should choose to remain alone.

Mr. Carteret was much pleased with this proposal, which was carried into effect forthwith, Mrs. Carteret having positively refused to see her daughters, as she was sure they were so thoughtless, that they must have taken the infection, and she should catch it from them, should she admit them to her apartment.

Scarcely had this judicious plan been executed, when Mrs. Carteret began to show evident symptoms of the fatal disease she had so diligently courted. The continued state of alarm and anxiety, to which she had condemned herself, whilst it invited the attack, deprived her constitution of the means of resistance, as a doomed state first disarms itself, and then wantonly provokes the attacks of its armed and powerful neighbours. She sank rapidly under the fever, and died on the third day.

The poor girls were greatly distressed, when they were, with proper precautions, told

that their mother was no more. They had already lost many dear friends, and were much alarmed for their father, who had remained at home, and had attended to the last upon his wife.

Mr. Carteret had never perfectly recovered from the consequences of that terrible abduction, which had inflicted upon him so much intense misery. The sudden manner in which his wife had died, and the mass of business which had fallen upon him, in the disposal of his property, with his anxiety to hasten away his daughters, from the Island, lest they too should fall victims to the fearful malady now raging around, had altogether been too much for him ; and he was himself attacked, and although the symptoms were not violent, Doctor Seacombe, who knew the infirm state of his friend's constitution, became alarmed for him.

“ What do you think of Andrew ? ” said uncle Peter to the Doctor, “ I feel very

uneasy about him, and so do the girls. We think he is very unwell, and are dreadfully alarmed for him."

"I hope and believe he will do well," replied the Doctor, "and he is not himself alarmed, which is much in his favour. But you must, my dear Sir, take all matters of business upon yourself; for he must be kept as quiet as possible. Any attempt to keep his daughters from him, would frighten them, and harass him, and now that they are on their guard, I know they will insist upon being with him, and their presence is perhaps the best thing I could prescribe for him."

The energy displayed by uncle Peter during this anxious period, was surprising. It arose from the hope of relieving his brother, but it was of permanent advantage to himself, for he concluded all the business which remained without difficulty, although had such a task been proposed to him a few

weeks earlier, he would have thought it quite preposterous.

The whole cabin accommodations of the 'Trelawney,' a large West Indiaman, were taken for the passage home. Captain Thompson was well known to Mr. Carteret, and under his superintendence, preparations for embarkation were proceeding rapidly, for every individual of the family was earnestly desirous to quit a country once so dear to them, but in which they had lately suffered so much.

Mr. Carteret was soon once more convalescent; indeed the deadly character of the disease had begun to abate in all quarters.

"Seacombe," he said one morning, "I have been thinking about young Shuldham. I hear that he is in the hospital at Port Royal, with the fever. I am much interested for him, and my poor girls have suffered more than enough. I should be sorry they heard of his illness, but I hate concealments; they

are always full of mischief. Old Jemima, and indeed all the household are fond of Shuldham : surely we might have him up here, if it is true that he is convalescent, for I have a horror of Port Royal.”

“ I quite agree with you about Port Royal itself,” replied the Doctor, “ but he will have been kindly and skilfully treated in the hospital there. My excellent friend, Doctor Shea, is a very able man, and he could not be in better hands ; but now that I can leave you, suppose I run down and see Shuldham, and if he is well enough, I can bring him back with me.”

“ Pray do, my dear friend. It will be an agreeable surprise to the girls to see him. Somehow, Seacombe, nothing has gone right with us since these youngsters left us. Is it not strange that Rutherford’s mother should be the intimate friend of our near connection Lady Evandale ? The gallant boy to whom we owe so much, spoke of his mother in terms

that made me wish to know her, and it turns out that my niece, Edith Evandale knows her well, and speaks of her, in her letters to Julia, as a second mother to her. When we reach England, our first visit will be to the Lodge, where we shall almost find ourselves at home with Rutherford's mother, in Bewdley Cottage. But to return to Shulldham, if you could bring him up with you, the girls and Peter will be as much gratified as I shall."

"I have little doubt of bringing him, and think I may consult Doctor Shea about his going home with you in the 'Trelawney.' He will be ordered to England certainly, and I dare say Shea can manage that for us."

"That is precisely what I was aiming at," said Mr. Carteret. "It will be a great comfort to us all, to have our gallant young sailor friend with us in such a voyage, and if it could be so, I should have, with respect to that, but one wish ungratified. But

that I cannot expect: I have no right to ask it."

"I will not pretend to misunderstand you, my dear friend," replied the Doctor. "I too, though hardly prepared for it, have felt a great desire to go home, ever since you had made up your mind to do so. There are considerable obstacles to my going just now, but I will not leave you, delicate as you still are, and those dear girls too, to take care of, on a long voyage. I will go with you."

Carteret was much affected by this proof of his friend's regard.

"I wish," he said, "you could feel what a relief this kind resolution is to me. I must hasten to gratify Julia and Laura with the first joyful intelligence they have received for ages."

"Well," resumed the Doctor, "as Shea sends me word that Shuldham is now convalescent, you may give them another piece of news, and say he will return with me.

Any change of air would in itself be beneficial to him, but to change his hospital for the society of your family, will at once re-establish his health and spirits. Your brother too will be delighted to see him."

"My dear father," said Julia starting forward to meet him, as he entered the room, where she was sitting with Laura, with an elasticity of step and a cheerful expression of countenance, which, though once habitual to him, had for some time past sadly failed him: "My dearest father, how delightful it is to see you thus once more."

"I have heard some good news, my darling," replied Mr Carteret, "and have hastened to bring it to you. Our friend Seacombe goes home with us; and he has now gone down to Port Royal to see Shuldham, who has been ill, but is recovering, and we shall soon see him here. Indeed it is possible that he may return with Seacombe this afternoon, and more than probable that

he too will embark for England with us in the 'Trelawney.'”

Uncle Peter was seen approaching, and Julia sprang to meet him, with her budget of good news. Laura seated herself on the couch: her cheek paled and flushed alternately, but she spoke not.

“That Seacombe should go with us, I have most ardently wished,” said uncle Peter, receiving Julia with a caress. Then turning to his brother, he added, “’tis strange, Andrew, but the ways of Providence are inscrutable. But for your illness, which roused me to exertions, of which I had foolishly deemed myself incapable, I should still have continued the feeble, helpless creature I have so long been. Nothing short of your illness at such a time, and the consequent difficulties of my dear girls, could have awakened me from my lethargic indolence. Come, come, girls, we shall have our friend the Doctor, and our young sailor with

us. A fig for fear, I'll be the most fearless of the party. I only wish we could have Rutherford with us. And yet, Julia, 'tis perhaps better as it is. He's a glorious fellow is Ralph, but rather celebrated for getting into difficulties."

"Say rather, my dear uncle, for getting his friends out of difficulties. We can answer for that, and Mr. Shuldham says that he rescued him from a danger, the thought of which always makes him shudder. But the mail is in, and I trust we shall hear of, or perhaps from him."

Mr. Carteret re-entered with letters in his hand.

"Here, Julia, is one for you, from Edith."

Julia took the letter joyfully, but instead of opening it, kept her eyes fixed upon the superscriptions of her father's numerous letters, as he inspected them one after another.

"There it is, I see it!" she exclaimed.

And all farther investigation of the packet was postponed till Ralph's letter should have been read.

It was dated from Lapwater, and contained a slight, but interesting sketch of Ralph's recent adventures, followed by a moving expression of his anxiety for them all, and his impatience for letters. He hoped to receive them in a few days, but days were ages in such a state of suspense.

"And now, my dear father," said Laura, who perceived that her sister, though dying to see that epistle, yet shrank from asking for it, "give the letter to me, and we won't interrupt your attention to your business letters; but as soon as you are at leisure, we will return, and give you the news from Bewdley Lodge." And receiving the coveted epistle, she and Julia withdrew.

"Andrew," said uncle Peter, "there is nothing in these letters that requires immediate attention. That Seacombe and our

young sailor friend should embark with us, takes away more than half my alarm about the voyage. I had been thinking how we might, with due consideration for the Doctor's feelings, make it worth his while to go with us, for he is not rich, and now that he has so generously proposed it, I am sure you will agree with me, that our friend must not be permitted to lose by his disinterestedness."

The proposition was very agreeable to Mr. Carteret, who at once assented to it. Soon afterwards Julia and Laura returned, and gave the substance of her cousin's letter. All at Bewdley were delighted at the hope of seeing them soon. The option of a very pretty place within a mile of the Lodge was secured to them, as they had required, but Lady Evandale was desirous that they should not merely see it before they should decide, but that they should also, especially the girls, have a little experience of domestic affairs in

England, before they should undertake the task of housekeeping. Edith added that "Dear Mrs. Rutherford would be invaluable to them."

Doctor Seacombe returned in the afternoon, bringing with him Shuldham, who was still pale and feeble, but uncle Peter declared that he only wanted a little good nursing, and placed him forthwith under the especial care of Jemima, with his two nieces to assist. This was quite a new tone in uncle Peter, and cheerfulness once more resumed her ancient reign in the family.

The kind and hearty welcome he had received, and the nursing of Jemima, who delighted in her task, with the change of air and scene, wrought a rapid, almost an instantaneous change in Shuldham's appearance, and next morning he received his English letters, including a long one from Ralph, of which he read some portions aloud, and of which he entrusted many more to

Laura. Julia therefore heard enough to set her heart at rest, for she had been very uneasy that preceding mails had merely brought the usual concise and friendly note to her father. That unhappy waltz had lain heavy upon her conscience as she feared its effect upon her fastidious lover; for, as Carleton, the hero of the tale, had gone to England, she felt sure he would see Ralph, and joke him upon the subject, which he would ill endure. But now she knew that he had heard of it, and though she shrewdly suspected that his long silence to Shuldham had proceeded from his displeasure, all was well now, and Ralph's devotion had been expressed, both directly and indirectly, in terms consistent with his lofty and generous spirit. Julia was once more the life and spirit of the little party; though their cheerfulness was tempered by the influence of recent melancholy events, for almost every family around them had suffered, but the malady

was fast abating. Once more friendly intercourse was renewed, but all were in mourning, and many had suffered most severely.

Preparations for embarkation were going on rapidly, and Shuldham was a diligent superintendent of them. Visits from their neighbours were frequent; condolence for lost friends, congratulations to those who had escaped, and regrets for the approaching departure of the Carterets, were inexhaustible topics for conversation, and all visitors were freely admitted.

“ Captain Lutkins,” said a servant, one morning, whilst Shuldham was consulting the young ladies upon some important point relative to their accommodation on board the ‘Trelawney,’ in which, during a whole hour’s conference, they had been making very little progress, having, in fact, entirely lost sight of the subject during the last half hour, and by some extraordinary accident, substituted Ralph’s adventures in the ‘Boadicea’ and in

the 'Eliza Ann.' So deeply were they absorbed in discussing this adventure, so interesting to them all, that they were quite startled when the name of Captain Lutkins was announced, the Captain being highly distasteful to them all, but especially abhorrent to poor Julia, who immediately disappeared through a side-door with a degree of precipitancy very unlike her usual deportment.

It is a curious fact, but it is unquestionable, that your very disagreeable people have a peculiar instinct for intruding at exceedingly inconvenient times. Lutkins was a remarkable instance of this, and was said to have prevented, by his inopportune intrusion, three different offers on the point of being tendered, and not one of which was eventually renewed. Lutkins was a shrewd, acute person, who, with respect to others, not only saw all they did, and heard all they said, but oftentimes a great deal more; yet could he never discover that his arrival was ill-timed, or himself *de trop*.

He now advanced with his habitual smile of self-satisfaction, was punctiliously polite to the young lady, and condescendingly familiar with the young officer, and not at all ill-pleased to have the conversation pretty much to himself. He made tender inquiries for Julia, and regretted exceedingly that the colony should be threatened with such a calamity as the loss of its brightest ornaments, deeming himself most unfortunate, since they were to go, that he had not been the happy man to escort them home, and having talked himself out, retired at length, consoling himself for the non-appearance of the fair Julia with the modest presumption that she did not feel equal to a parting scene.

“That conceited, tyrannical puppy,” said Shuldham, as soon as he was gone, “expressed his regret that he was not to be permitted to convey you home, when everybody knows that he is first on promotion here, through interest at home. If he was to

trust to his merits for promotion, it would be long before he got it. I can stand anything, Laura, but the condescension of a man I despise; but why did Julia fly as she did. I know she dislikes him, but I should have thought that his vanity and folly would have amused her."

"And so they might," replied Laura, "but there is a bitterness in that man's impertinence that is insupportable."

"I never heard you say a severe thing before, Laura. This man must have given some deep cause for offence to have excited the feeling so evident in both Julia and you. Do, I beseech you, tell me what it is."

Laura looked frightened, but she had gone too far to recede, so after having assured him it was a mere nothing, and in the same breath exacted a solemn promise that he would not even notice, much less resent it, she told her tale.

"You remember that unhappy ball, at

which poor Julia was persuaded to waltz with your friend, and you know how instantaneously she felt much more regret than the case required. You had just left us, and my sister was whispering her self-reproaches to me, when Captain Lutkins, who had been standing at no great distance from us, in conversation with a stranger (of which we were, or rather Julia was evidently the subject) suddenly stepped up to her in his self-confident way, and offering his arm, asked her to join the waltz with him, rather as if he were conferring a favour than soliciting one. It was an unpropitious moment for such a proposal had the proposer been agreeable, and the manner of it unobjectionable. Julia, slightly drawing herself up, declined the proffered honour. I was startled at the malignant scowl of the mortified beau, and caught the dialogue which ensued between him and his friend, who evidently enjoyed his discomfiture and jeered him about it; but the

Captain, in a voice which, though low, was intended to reach us, replied "Ki Massa," she said, "I neber dance now but wid de noblemaun," accompanied with a true Creolian toss of her head. Julia had heard this insolent attack, and her eyes flashed fire. We both looked anxiously for you, fearing lest you should have heard the unmanly insult and should resent it, for you had shortly before been standing near the Captain and his friend."

"I wish I had remained near them, Laura, for then he would not have dared to utter such impertinence, but I had heard him extolling the beauty of Julia to his friend, insinuating his intimacy with her, and adding, in his conceited tone, that he rarely danced, but that he would for once take the trouble to lead her out, just to show her paces. Well-knowing that his presumption would meet its due reward, I passed on to some distance, to enjoy his disappointment unobserved."

The entrance of Julia interrupted this conversation, but that which ensued might have been more serviceable than agreeable to the captain, could he have overheard it.

The following day the 'Trelawney' proceeded to Port Royal, and in the evening the family embarked.

It is a painful thing, under any circumstances, to quit for ever the country of our birth, and the scenes of our childhood. Many recollections of happy days spent there, and many old friends left behind and some late trials of great severity, were mingled together, producing a painful feeling. The voyage also was a subject of considerable alarm to our young friends, but in the company of their father and uncle, Dr. Seacombe and Shuldham, their fears on that head were considerably softened.

Mr. Carteret had been most liberal to his household slaves. Dear old Jemima was with them, for Julia and Laura were all the

world to her. She was likewise much attached to Shuldham, and was continually talking of Mr. Rutfut, and rejoicing in the prospect of seeing him again. Mark was also with them; and the cabins, under Shuldham's directions, had been most commodiously arranged. They were delighted with everything around them, but under so many conflicting emotions, the young girls felt bewildered. It had been wisely determined to embark a day before the convoy should sail, that, as Shuldham said, they might all shake into their places, and have time to remedy any unforeseen inconveniences, or to supply any forgotten article. The ship was large, and there were no passengers on board but their own party, and Captain Thompson was extremely considerate and obliging.

The 'Bourdelaïse,' Captain Dawson, had the signal flying for convoy, and about twenty vessels, of which the 'Trelawney' was the

largest, were preparing to sail with her. The ships of war lying at Port Royal, and the merchant ships collecting for convoy, amused Julia and Laura next morning, and Shuldham was in great request for information and explanations. He had related to them the tale of the gravel pit, and it is to be feared that though not accustomed to judge people harshly, they did not altogether acquit Captain Lutkins of evil intentions towards his unsuspecting companion, and certain it is that they took their little Commodore into especial favour, though it was not probable that they should ever see him. But about half-past eleven, that eminent personage unexpectedly appeared, approaching the 'Trelawney' in great state.

“Go down into the cabin,” said Shuldham to the ladies, “and prepare for this visit, and beg Mr. Carteret and your uncle to come on deck to receive the Commodore, and pray (yourselves unseen) watch the whole process.

Our short, fat friend is an excellent man, but he will omit no point of ceremony upon this occasion.”

The barge, as Shuldham expected, took a long circuitous sweep. The coxswain stood up in his box as they approached the ship, while the round, rosy, grey-haired Commodore most precisely dressed, reclined gracefully in the stern sheets upon a large handsome cloak. A good-looking and well-dressed young mid attended him.

At a slight signal from the coxswain, the two bowmen tossed their short oars, and spun them round in the air; the boatswain of the ship piped a long winded note upon his call; the side-boys descended with bright red ropes to present to the great man. A second slight intimation from the coxswain, and the oars were all thrown in simultaneously and noiselessly; the Commodore mounted the ship's side, and raising his cocked hat by the spout, bowed gracefully.

Captain Thompson, the Messrs. Carterets and Shuldham took off their hats, as did everybody else on deck. Again the boatswain's call sounded long and shrill, and heads were once more covered. Mr. Carteret and the Commodore had met before. He complimented Captain Thompson on the size and order of his ship, and inquired for the ladies, for he was decidedly a lady's man.

Julia and Laura rose to receive him. He was of the old school, and his politeness was genuine, but even in those days, somewhat antiquated.

Commodore Dawson entered the cabin with a jaunty *ci-devant jeune homme* air, but the skirts of his old-fashioned coat were extremely broad, and somewhat incommoded his regulation sword, which was inconveniently long, so that to hold his cocked hat in his hand, and to keep his sword from impeding his movements, leaving a hand at leisure to be offered to the ladies, required considerable management, and was only ac-

complished by a swinging movement of the body, which amused Julia, who had the wickedness to assert afterwards that it gave the little man's advance very much the gait of a water wagtail. She could not refrain from quizzing the little quaint Commodore, although he was in especial favour, for his politeness and his kindness were equally prepossessing, and the very qualities which had depreciated him in the eyes of Captain Lutkins had gained Julia's esteem.

“I rejoice, Miss Carteret,” he said, “that I am to have the honour of escorting you. The ‘Trelawney’ is a fine ship, and well conducted. I am come to pay my respects, and to offer my services during the voyage, and as you have Lieutenant Shulldham on board, I will venture to confide to him a telegraph signal-book, by which you may at any time convey your wishes to me, whilst I shall be able to make my inquiries respecting your health, from time to time.”

There was a frankness and earnestness

about the little Captain, which commanded respect and esteem. Julia and her father felt and expressed their sense of his kindness, and promised to avail themselves of it. A slight repast was served, and while it was being discussed, Julia privately expressed to Shuldham a great desire to hear the Commodore's own version of the gravel-pit adventure. The two principal actors therein now occupied such very prominent, though different places in her estimation, that she had become really interested about it. On this hint Shuldham addressed the Commodore.

“ I hope, Sir,” he said, “ you have never felt any inconvenience from that capsize down the gravel-pit, in Captain Lutkins's kitterine. I know the spot well, and consider your escape was wonderful.”

Julia expressed her concern at his having been exposed to such peril.

“ After all the dangers and hair-breadth escapes of a distinguished professional career,”

said the generous girl, warmly, "to be crushed in a gravel-pit would have been horrible. Pray how was it?"

Captain Dawson, the most chivalrous and obsequious admirer of youth and beauty, was delighted, and felt highly flattered by this interest in his adventures.

"'Twas a strange accident," said Laura, before he could speak.

"Accident, Miss Laura!" replied the Commodore; "you call it an accident! Well, let it pass for one; but there are many who know my companion in the carriage well, who do not scruple to insinuate that it was no accident, my dear young lady."

He then proceeded to relate the story in dainty terms, but in substance nearly as he had more concisely given it to Rutherford, protesting from time to time, that he himself had considered the capsizing to have been purely accidental, and was still determined to consider it so, whatever others might think.

But the effect of the tale thus circumstantially related, whilst it established the worthy Commodore in their good opinion, compelled the girls, at least, to conclude that Captain Lutkins must be a still more heartless and mischievous person than they had deemed him to be ; and as, although they were eminently amiable and kind-hearted girls, they were by no means angels, we are afraid that they felt some secret satisfaction in the assurance, that the object of their peculiar dislike was even worse than they had concluded him to be : but if it was so, they had at least the grace to be ashamed of it, for no such feeling was expressed by them, even to each other.

The Commodore took his leave with great kindness of manner, but with no abatement of the ceremonial. He told them that he should sail with the first possible opportunity, and at daybreak the following morning the convoy was running out to sea.

CHAPTER XI.

A CONVOY weighing and making sail out of Port Royal harbour with the land wind, at daybreak on a fine soft morning, is a beautiful sight. The frigate with signals flying leads the way through the deep narrow channel, and heaves to, at a convenient distance from the shore, to collect her charge, firing a gun from time to time to hasten the laggards, that they may make good a sufficient offing, before the sea breeze should set in, till, at length, all being collected, she bears

up, and adapts her rate of advance to the capabilities of the slow coaches, keeping them under a press of canvass.

Early rising is one of the virtues of tropical climates, and our whole party were on the 'Trelawney's' poop, questioning Shuldham, who, nothing loath, explained to them all they saw, as they followed the 'Bourdelaïse' in gallant style, rather impatient that some of their comrades should appear so dilatory, and as they sat down to a sumptuous breakfast, ever welcome to the early riser, our novices forgot their anticipated dangers, and began to think that going to sea was very pretty amusement. Their progress, though not rapid, was steady. Courteous inquiries arrived every morning by telegraph from the Commodore, and although there could be little variety in their intercourse, it was in their listless position looked forward to, and enjoyed, as an agreeable break. It was, moreover, a much envied distinction, this

privileged intercourse with the Commodore, whilst the rest of the convoy beheld a long interchange of signals, from the import of which they were wholly excluded, and to which they of course attributed undue importance. The 'Trelawney' had already been distinguished as the largest, the best ordered, and the fastest ship of the fleet. Captain Thompson and his officers were proud of their ship, and of their passengers, and were not slow to remark the dull sailing, or the inattention of others, and the passengers soon learned to listen to those remarks with interest, and readily began to identify themselves, so far with the honour of the 'Trelawney,' as to feel a pride in every little advantage, real or imaginary, which her officers might claim over their comrades of the convoy.

The beauty of the weather, the smoothness of the water, and their uninterrupted progress homeward, gave to the voyage the air of a

party of pleasure. Their walks on deck in the cool mornings and evenings, were delicious. Julia was sometimes a little abstracted, and thoughtful, but Shuldham and Laura seemed to be well content with the present, whilst the elders of the party lounged or sat upon the poop with their cigars; or when they were below in the cabin, Doctor Seacombe's violin, or Shuldham's flute, in addition to the piano, formed a great resource for all were musical. The gallant Commodore too, ever mindful of the ladies, would frequently on a fine evening, with a moderate breeze, call the 'Trelawney' within hail, and having most punctiliously paid his respects to the ladies, and chatted a little with the gentlemen of the party, would order his band to play up, for their amusement. As they could choose their distance, the music, whatever its defects might be, flowed sweetly over the intervening waters, particularly those airs connected with home,

and above all the National Anthem, which cheers the heart of a loyal Englishman in every quarter of the world.

Such were their amusements, varied occasionally by the gambols of a shoal of dolphin or bonetta, a straggling whale, or a strange sail, such objects breaking the monotony of the voyage, without disturbing its social pleasures.

About the mid passage, a suspicious looking brigantine was announced at daybreak one morning, on their weather quarter. She was bearing down upon an unfortunate bark, the plague of the convoy, which she had much delayed, by her disregard of signals, and this obstinate delinquent was at the moment, as usual, some miles astern of the fleet, in defiance of the repeated warnings, and reprimands of the Commodore, for she was by no means the dullest sailor in the convoy. The 'Bourdelaïse' hauled to the wind, and made all sail, in pursuit of the stranger, who

as well as the bark he was threatening, was some miles to windward of the fleet, which had been running before the wind.

The Commodore made the 'Trelawney's' signal to lead the convoy, and soon after to haul to the wind on the larboard tack, and to make all sail, signals which were obeyed with more than usual promptitude, for the consequence of negligence and disobedience was before them.

Shuldham summoned his friends to the poop, and explained to them how things stood. The brigantine was still steering directly down upon the unfortunate bark, and not far from her.

"Surely," said Julia, "that little vessel cannot hope to carry off one of the convoy, under the very eyes of the frigate? Why does she not make off to save herself?"

"She is directly to windward of us," replied Shuldham, "and she well knows that it will take the frigate a long time to beat up

to her. She has confidence too, in her fast sailing, and knows that the frigate will not venture to part company with us ; so she has no fear for herself, and will attempt to carry off the bark which has so shamefully exposed herself, and the whole convoy to an enemy.”

“ He is closing fast with her, but there’s a signal to us,” exclaimed Captain Thompson, “ to make all possible sail.”

“ A shot from the brigantine,” said Shuldham : “ the bark is brought to, and there goes a boat to her.”

All these incidents were watched with deep interest by our little party, who eyed the impudent marauder, much as they would have done a ferocious tiger. The frigate was of course closing fast with her, for she was lying-to for her boat ; but she was still far beyond the reach of shot.”

“ See,” observed Shuldham “ her boat has put a crew on board the bark, and is returning with prisoners. The bark is making sail

on the starboard tack, the brigantine will do so on the other tack, leaving the Commodore, who cannot move in two opposite directions, to chase which he pleases."

"He's a cool calculating sort of fellow, that Frenchman," observed Dr. Seacombe to his friends. "Up goes his boat, and as Shuldham said, he is making sail on the opposite tack from his prize."

"What a manœuvre," said uncle Peter. "He has placed the Commodore in an awkward dilemma, for he cannot possibly chase two vessels in opposite directions, and protect his convoy in a third."

"The breeze is freshening too," observed Shuldham, "which increases his chance of success materially, as he is a bold and a clever fellow. The frigate could certainly recapture the bark in three hours, but the chase would lead her a long way from us, and the Commodore will never risk leaving that privateer full of men, to windward of us."

The whole scene had now become one of thrilling interest, as deeply involving their own security, for the privateer, if opportunity should be given, would certainly select the 'Trelawney' as her first victim, being by far the largest ship of the convoy.

"Happen what may," said Julia, "I am certain that our kind-hearted Commodore will never desert us! I have implicit faith in him."

"I think with you, my love," said Mr. Carteret "but I fear that to save us, he must leave the unhappy bark to her fate. The Bardons are on board of her. You scarcely know them, Julia, but they are worthy people, and have recently endured much affliction. It is hard that they should suffer for the folly and obstinacy of their mulish captain."

"Is it that poor Mrs. Bardon, papa," said Laura, "who lost her three children in the fever?"

“Yes, the same.”

Laura's grief seemed to rouse Shuldham.

“It is not quite so bad yet, as it appeared to be,” he said, “for the breeze is dying away again, and that makes a wonderful difference.”

“How can that help the Commodore, and save the poor Bardons?” asked Julia anxiously.

“It seems difficult,” said Dr. Seacombe, who with the brothers, had been watching every movement of the vessels, whose relative position had become so interesting to them all, “but Shuldham sees reason to believe that the wind will become very light, in which I agree with him: the frigate's boats may in that case recapture the bark, and leave the Commodore free to capture, or drive away the privateer.”

“Exactly so, Doctor,” said Shuldham, “and that without separating too far from us, but I see you are an old sailor.”

“There go two boats from the frigate,” said Captain Thompson.

The interest of the scene had now become intense. The brigantine appeared to take alarm, and began to make more sail, leaving the captured bark to her fate. She was herself still far out of gun-shot of the frigate, who was in pursuit of her, but the wind becoming very light, she made little way.

“A signal is hoisted to close with the Commodore, Captain Thompson,” said Shuldham.

Royals and flying-jib were speedily set, and the other ships, now on the alert, immediately did the same.

“See,” observed Shuldham, “the boats are nearing the bark fast. She is almost becalmed.”

The girls turned sharply round, and put their hands up to their eyes. A firing of musketry had been opened upon the advancing boats from the bark.

“Pooh!” said Shuldham, “they won’t return it; they are going slap at her.”

Julia shuddered and turned pale; it reminded her fearfully of past scenes, she said. Mr. Carteret took his daughter’s hand, and endeavoured to tranquillize her. Laura bore it better, though she could not remain a spectator.

“Up go the English colours!” said Shuldham, anxious to allay the terrors of the girls. “All’s right; the bark is bearing up to regain the convoy.”

“The poor Bardons will be safe after all,” said Laura.

“Yes,” added Shuldham, “and that stupid, obstinate Captain of the bark is a prisoner on board the privateer, and a pretty life he’ll lead there: but he deserves it, and we are well rid of him.”

The brigantine evidently increased her distance from the frigate, who was under all sail, and the Commodore, perceiving the

chase to be hopeless in so light a wind, gave it up, closed with the bark, and ran down with her to rejoin his convoy, which once more resumed its course. The privateer stood on till they lost sight of her ; the ships would, after this, be too much on their guard to afford her a second such chance ; and she knew that, with a strong breeze, the frigate would be certain to out-carry, and come up with her.

Once more the convoy was in order, and the attention now paid to signals was edifying. The Master's mate, who had been put in charge of the recaptured bark, soon proved that she was one of the fastest vessels in the fleet, and it was clear that for once the punishment had fallen upon the real offenders—the captain and mate, who had been carried off by the privateer, and who, if she should escape capture, would undergo a severe imprisonment, of which they could see no end.

This last adventure made a serious impression upon all the party. They had seen distinctly one of the dangers of their situation, and the same degree of light-heartedness prevailed no longer. The sight of a strange sail alarmed them, and the weather, hitherto so warm and pleasant, was becoming chilly. Broken clouds, sometimes dark and threatening, had replaced the bright blue skies, which had hitherto attended them, and the stars no longer shone so brilliantly at night. Once or twice the sun had been so obscured, that the Captain could get no observation. But Shuldham did what he could to cheer his friends. He declared that the moon, now completing her first quarter, would in all probability see them safe on shore in England, and that, as the barometer had now recovered its activity, they would have a faithful indicator of approaching changes of wind or weather. Whilst within the tropics, it had been comparatively useless, only announcing

a hurricane, and giving but short notice of that.

Shuldham's experience, and his solicitude to answer their questions, and to alleviate their alarms, were no small comfort to the anxious girls, who placed implicit faith in him ; but they were becoming nervous and restless, looking forward to the end of the voyage as their only effective solace. The little civilities of the Commodore, though never intermitted, had lost their value, and they daily inquired about progress, and eagerly discussed it, their spirits rising or sinking in proportion to its extent.

"The barometer is falling," observed Mr. Carteret to Shuldham, for both he and Uncle Peter had become close observers of that instrument since the affair with the privateer, and change of climate.

"Yes," replied Shuldham, "it is slowly and steadily falling, from which I at present apprehend nothing more than a fresh westerly wind, which will suit us admirably."

In the afternoon the wind, which had been light and variable, settled into a fine strong westerly breeze, as Shuldham had foretold, and henceforth the girls, at least, deemed him infallible in all such matters.

Again their rapid progress raised the spirits of the inexperienced voyagers, notwithstanding the many inconveniences attending a strong wind, and an increasing sea, with a ship rolling before it.

“How many miles have we run to-day?” asked the impatient Julia of her young sailor-friend.

“One hundred and forty-five,” replied Shuldham.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Julia, in great glee; “how many days then will it take us to reach England? Twelve hundred and fifty miles, you say, is our distance, but this detestable rolling, and all these horrid noises, make it impossible to reckon, and, to say the truth, I was always dull at arithmetic.”

“The calculation might easily be made,” replied Shuldham, laughing; “but unluckily we cannot be sure that the wind will stand, and so it would be labour in vain, for, notwithstanding the multiplicity of questions I am rash enough to answer, I cannot answer for the wind.”

Poor Julia’s hasty conclusion, that they should run the twelve hundred and fifty miles at the rate of one hundred and fifty miles a day, now fell to the ground. The wind, however, continued to increase, and our fair travellers were soon obliged to confine themselves to their cots. When they had first embarked, they would have greatly preferred standing bed-places, admiring their stability, and shrinking from the difficulty of getting into, or out of, so movable a thing as a swinging cot; but the persuasions of Shuldham had prevailed, and now they felt how admirably the yielding of the cot to every movement of the ship preserved them from

being tossed about with violence. But the barometer continued to fall, the wind to increase, and the sea to rise. Still the thought of their rapid progress—for the wind was still favourable, though not quite steady—gave them patience and courage.

“What do you think of that sky?” said the Doctor to his young friend.

Seacombe had crossed the Atlantic more than once, and though by no means timid, he well knew the climate into which they were entering, and the extreme uncertainty of the duration of a westerly wind, however strong, so early in the year, when it was more than probable, that easterly gales would be found to prevail, as they approached the Chops of the Channel. Still the wind appeared to be so strong, and there were such evident appearances of its continuance in the clouds astern, on the western horizon, that although the barometer began to fall alarmingly, both Captain Thomson and

Shuldham were too happy to conclude that it was merely an indication that the westerly gale would continue with increased violence. The Commodore's lights were distinctly visible, and these two gentleman had been induced to remain on deck till midnight, by the wind veering first upon one quarter of the ship, and then upon the other, so much as to require the yards to be braced forward either way to meet it. But a little after midnight it appeared to settle broad on the starboard quarter, and the chief mate, an experienced seaman, having taken charge of the deck for the middle watch, Shuldham retired to rest, as did Dr. Seacombe, whose movements at night were generally guided by those of Shuldham, who felt confident that the gale would at least continue till after daylight. But about two hours after midnight, they were awoke by the roar of a furious storm, when they found the 'Trelawney' nearly on her beam ends, though

after an awful crash she righted to a considerable extent.

The alarm and confusion of the passengers may be imagined, for they still heard the howling of the wind, and the roaring of thunder, accompanied by the splashing of water around and beneath them. Doctor Seacombe was a heavy man, and was somewhat alarmed as well as astonished to find himself precipitated from his cot with considerable violence, much as a load of rubbish is shot from a cart, and he was all at once splashing about in a flooded cabin, in company with his clothes, which were scattered about the wet deck. He had of course fallen on the windward side of the deck where there was least water, for in the lee scuppers it was very much deeper; so that as the ship righted, the returning wave deepened his water, and increased his perplexity considerably. Somewhat stunned and bewildered by his fall, though not seriously hurt, he stretched out his hand to seize hold of his cot, but it

was no where to be found, although his bedding was floating around him, and the whole affair puzzled the doctor not a little, until at length he was enabled to procure a light, when behold! the cot was found sticking against the ceiling, being firmly wedged in between two beams. The doctor's great weight it appeared, had given so much impetus to the cot, when thus suddenly raised, almost to a right angle with the deck, by the unusually heavy lurch of the ship, that happening to fit the space between two beams, it had become firmly wedged up there, launching the doctor with his garments and bedding into the puddle below, to his very great surprise and discomfort.

Happily the other passengers being light weights, and having also more roomy cabins, had escaped personal inconvenience, though thoroughly frightened, until Shuldham, consoler general to the party, raised his welcome voice.

“There is no danger,” he exclaimed, “though much trouble on deck. It is only

that the ship has been taken aback, with a heavy squall, and has suffered in her sails and rigging. I will go up and see all put to rights: rely upon my assurance that there is no danger."

Mr. Carteret soon confirmed all that Shuldham had told them, and such was their faith in their young friend, that the girls became quite composed.

The fact was that Mr. Purdy, the chief mate, though an excellent seaman of the old school, had no faith in a barometer, but held all such gimcracks (as he called them) in profound contempt. Had he consulted that invaluable indicator, he would have had ample warning that he was running with a westerly gale to meet a much more violent easterly gale. Nothing short of a hurricane depresses the barometer so much, as the approach of two opposing gales, which is a state of things to which ships are not unfrequently exposed, and which on a dark night is fraught with danger.

The west wind had become once more wavering and unsteady, and as it drew to the north, he had drawn in his starboard braces, still steering his course after the Commodore, and apprehending no danger, when a momentary calm was suddenly succeeded by a furious gust of wind from south-east, which, taking the ship aback, threw her nearly upon her beam ends, upon that which had, until then, been the weather side, when, perhaps fortunately, the fore and maintopmasts being unsupported by their back-stays, went over the starboard side with a terrific crash, both topsails split to ribbands. The easterly and westerly gales had met and clashed with awful thunder-claps immediately over the staggering 'Trelawney,' so that with the roaring of the prevailing easterly storm, the bellowing of the thunder, the flapping of the torn canvas, and the crash of the masts, the poor girls had been awakened under circumstances sufficiently alarming, aggravated as it was by the rushing and gurgling of the

waters in the cabin floor beneath them. For a moment they thought the ship was foundering, but then had come that voice so fraught with comfort and encouragement, to tell them they were safe.

Soon after, Shuldham once more came to explain to them the real state of things upon deck. The whole crew were employed in repairing damages, the ship was under storm-sails, and there was no longer, he assured them, the slightest danger. The discomforts of an adverse gale, and the detention arising from it, were real but not alarming evils, and Julia agreed with her sister, that they were very fortunate in having their young friend with them.

When daylight came, the ship was once more in order, excepting the want of her top-masts, which it took them the whole day to replace, but no Commodore was to be seen, nor any of the convoy, but three scattered vessels far to leeward, one of which was almost wholly dismasted. An anxious look-

out was kept for the brigantine, for the gale soon moderated, and the ship was once more all ataut, but they had a most tedious and trying week to endure before they were enabled, by a favourable change of wind, to steer their course once more for old England under all sail.

The ladies emerged from their cabins, delighted to enjoy sun and air again, and watch their progress towards home. They had so long expected for the reappearance of the brigantine, that they had begun to think themselves wholly rid of her.

“Why do you look so grave, now that we have a fair wind and fine weather?” asked Laura.

Shuldham did his best to assume an air of gaiety, but he was bad at feigning, and Laura saw that he was anxious and uneasy. But she forbore to press him on the subject, and as the wind proved steady, and they were rapidly approaching the end of their voyage, a certain degree of cheerfulness began to prevail once more.

“Julia,” said Shuldham, divining the cause of a deep fit of abstraction; “I have been calculating, and I greatly fear the ‘Boadicea’ will have sailed upon her proposed cruize before we can reach England, but we have a chance, for the wind, which is fair for us, will retard her.”

“You are our oracle,” replied Julia, raising her soft eyes, “and you have hitherto prophesied truly. Do you really think there is a chance? I had feared it was hopeless.”

“Far from hopeless,” returned Shuldham, “but we are about to bring to, expecting to get soundings. I will soon show you a specimen of British sand.”

Sail was shortened, and the ship was hove to, for evening was approaching, and the deep sea-lead was cast. Captain Thompson congratulated his passengers upon having struck soundings in the British Channel—a joyous event, which led to preparations being made to select what they would take on shore with them, for they now considered their troubles

at an end, though Shuldham was evidently grave and uneasy, which was attributed by those who observed it, to the breaking up of the party, and Laura had her own peculiar opinion on the subject.

They had now light and variable winds, but generally laid their course, and their progress was favorable during the night. On the following morning, nothing was to be seen, and they continued to progress satisfactorily, till, in the afternoon, a strange sail was reported from the mast-head, a large rakish-looking schooner. She was running, and evidently steered to pass very near them; there were various opinions about her as she approached, exciting considerable uneasiness.

Captain Thompson and his chief mate looked at each other with alarm: she was certainly a clipper, and as certainly she was coming down upon them.

Shuldham, to whom the Carterets looked with considerable anxiety, declared, after much hesitation, "She must be an American,

the French do not rig their privateers as schooners. Her sails are very white, and as for her coming directly down upon us, any ship bound to America must do so." Still this was merely an opinion, encouraged, perhaps, if not suggested, by a wish to tranquillize his friends who were getting very nervous.

At last they came within hail, and there was breathless silence and attention.

"Will you report that you spoke the 'Franklin' of New York, all well at this date?"

"I will," replied Captain Thompson, much relieved. "Will you give me the bearings of the Lizard?"

"The Lizard, eh! thirty leagues!" He added something more, but it was lost in the increasing distance.

"With this breeze," said the Captain, "we shall see the Lizard light before daylight," for it began to blow fresh from the westward. The course was fixed upon, and

they retired to the cabin to take their tea in great spirits.

“ Well, Captain Thompson;” said Mr. Carteret, “ we have much to thank you for.”

The Captain bowed, and made his acknowledgments.

“ It remains,” resumed Mr. Carteret, “ that we request you to give us an opportunity of landing as soon as you can. We shall be ready, and our heavy luggage may go round to the river with you. I will leave my friend Shuldham and you to arrange this matter, but as we wish to land upon the south coast of England, the sooner we do so the better.”

This discussion as to how and when and where they were to land appeared to remove the last trace of doubt and fear from the countenances of the girls.

Captain Thompson and Shuldham went upon deck, to settle the particulars of the disembarkation. Julia and Laura retired to dream of old England, cousin Edith, and

whoever else they might hope to meet there. Uncle Peter, who had taken some liberties with his gouty foot during the anxiety caused them by the 'Franklin,' was obliged to do penance.

Mr. Carteret walked the poop alone till a late hour. The prospect of immediate arrival gave him much to think about, and the voyage had restored him to perfect health.

The night passed quietly and pleasantly: the lights were reported long before daylight, but the wind became light, and before the day broke they were enveloped in a thick fog.

The whole party rose to see the Lizard. It was impossible to sleep under so much joyful excitement, and they were never weary of gazing at the lights which marked the proximity of Old England, itself unseen.

"We have now had a good sight of the lights," said Captain Thompson, "and can shape our course. We have nothing to fear from a few hours fog."

“It is not the fog that I fear,” said Shuldham, “but what it may conceal from us. I dread being cut off here as it were on our very threshold. What’s that!” he added, “looming through the fog?”

Captain Thompson turned to look in the direction indicated by Shuldham. A long, black brigantine gradually emerged from the fog.

“By heaven!” exclaimed the Captain, “’tis she!”

“The black, prowling beast,” said Shuldham, “is stealing upon us cat-like. ’Tis certainly she, and we must convey the unwelcome intelligence to our friends.”

END OF VOL. II.

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