James Fenimore Cooper

The Two Admirals

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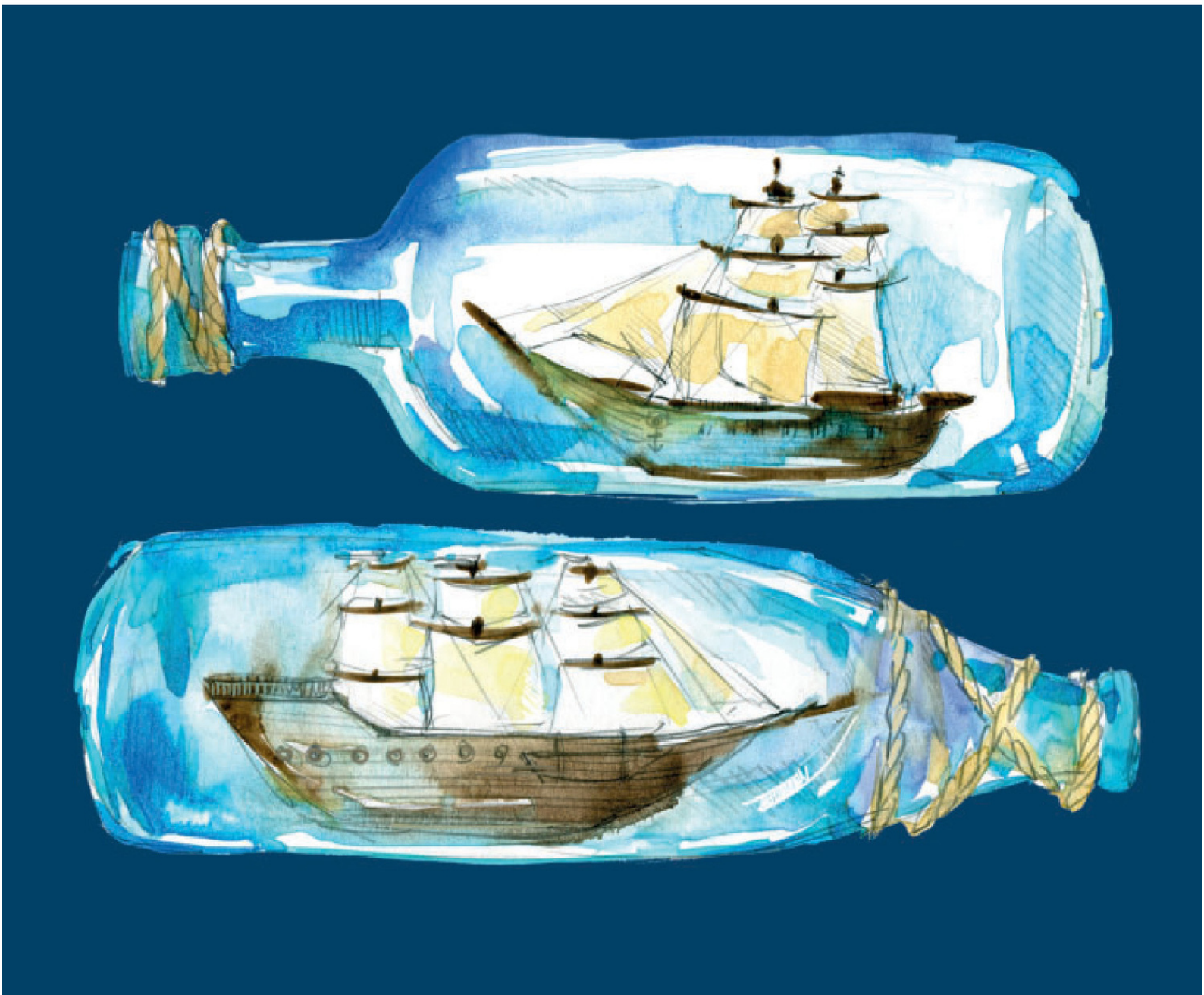

Джеймс Фенимор Купер

The Two Admirals

«РИПОЛ Классик»

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The Two Admirals is an 1842 nautical fiction novel by James Fenimore Cooper. The novel was written after the Leatherstocking Tales novel The Deerslayer. Set during the 18th century and exploring the British Royal Navy, Cooper wrote the novel out of encouragement of his English publisher, who recommended writing another sea novel. Cooper had originally intended to write a novel where ships were the main characters, though eventually decided not to.

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Содержание

James Fenimore Cooper
The Two Admirals

* * *

Come, all ye kindred chieftains of the deep,
In mighty phalanx round your brother bend;
Hush every murmur that invades his sleep,
And guard the laurel that o'ershades your friend.

Lines on Trippe.

Preface

It is a strong proof of the diffusive tendency of every thing in this country, that America never yet collected a fleet. Nothing is wanting to this display of power but the will. But a fleet requires only one commander, and a feeling is fast spreading in the country that we ought to be all commanders; unless the spirit of unconstitutional innovation, and usurpation, that is now so prevalent, at Washington, be controlled, we may expect to hear of proposals to send a committee of Congress to sea, in command of a squadron. We sincerely hope that their first experiment may be made on the coast of Africa.

It has been said of Napoleon that he never could be made to understand why his fleets did not obey his orders with the same accuracy, as to time and place, as his *corps d'armée*. He made no allowances for the winds and currents, and least of all, did he comprehend that all important circumstance, that the efficiency of a fleet is necessarily confined to the rate of sailing of the dullest of its ships. More may be expected from a squadron of ten sail, all of which shall be average vessels, in this respect, than from the same number of vessels, of which one half are fast and the remainder dull. One brigade can march as fast as another, but it is not so with vessels. The efficiency of a marine, therefore, depends rather on its working qualities, than on its number of ships.

Perhaps the best fleet that ever sailed under the English flag, was that with which Nelson fought the battle of the Nile. It consisted of twelve or thirteen small seventy-fours, each of approved qualities, and commanded by an officer of known merit. In all respects it was efficient and reliable. With such men as Hallowell, Hood, Trowbridge, Foley, Ball, and others, and with such ships, the great spirit of Nelson was satisfied. He knew that whatever seamen could do, his comparatively little force could achieve. When his enemy was discovered at anchor, though night was approaching and his vessels were a good deal scattered, he at once determined to put the qualities we have mentioned to the highest proof, and to attack. This was done without any other order of battle than that which directed each commander to get as close alongside of an enemy as possible, the best proof of the high confidence he had in his ships and in their commanders.

It is now known that all the early accounts of the man[oe] uvring at the Nile, and of Nelson's reasoning on the subject of anchoring inside and of doubling on his enemies, is pure fiction. The "Life" by Southey, in all that relates to this feature of the day, is pure fiction, as, indeed, are other portions of the work of scarcely less importance. This fact came to the writer, through the late Commodore (Charles Valentine) Morris, from Sir Alexander Ball, in the early part of the century. In that day it would not have done to proclaim it, so tenacious is public opinion of its errors; but since that time, naval officers of rank have written on the subject, and stripped the Nile, Trafalgar, &c., of their poetry, to give the world plain, nautical, and probable accounts of both those great achievements. The truth, as relates to both battles, was just as little like the previously published accounts, as well could be.

Nelson knew the great superiority of the English seamen, their facility in repairing damages, and most of all the high advantage possessed by the fleets of his country, in the exercise of the assumed right to impress, a practice that put not only the best seamen of his own country, but those of the whole world, more or less, at his mercy. His great merit, at the Nile, was in the just appreciation of these advantages, and in the extraordinary decision which led him to go into action just at nightfall, rather than give his enemy time to prepare to meet the shock.

It is now known that the French were taken, in a great measure, by surprise. A large portion of their crews were on shore, and did not get off to their ships at all, and there was scarce a vessel that did not clear the decks, by tumbling the mess-chests, bags, &c., into the inside batteries, rendering them, in a measure, useless, when the English doubled on their line.

It was this doubling on the French line, by anchoring inside, and putting two ships upon one, that gave Nelson so high a reputation as a tactician. The merit of this man[oe]uvre belongs exclusively to one of his captains. As the fleet went in, without any order, keeping as much to windward as the shoals would permit, Nelson ordered the Vanguard hove-to, to take a pilot out of a fisherman. This enabled Foley, Hood, and one or two more to pass that fast ship. It was at this critical moment that the thought occurred to Foley (we think this was the officer) to pass the head of the French line, keep dead away, and anchor inside. Others followed, completely placing their enemies between two fires. Sir Samuel Hood anchored his ship (the Zealous) on the inner bow of the most weatherly French ship, where he poured his fire into, virtually; an unresisting enemy. Notwithstanding the great skill manifested by the English in their mode of attack, this was the only two-decked ship in the English fleet that was able to make sail on the following morning.

Had Nelson led in upon an American fleet, as he did upon the French at the Nile, he would have seen reason to repent the boldness of the experiment. Something like it *was* attempted on Lake Champlain, though on a greatly diminished scale, and the English were virtually defeated before they anchored.

The reader who feels an interest in such subjects, will probably detect the secret process of the mind, by which some of the foregoing facts have insinuated themselves into this fiction.

Chapter I

"Then, if he were my brother's.
My brother might not claim him; nor your father,
Being none of his, refuse him: This concludes —
My mother's son did get your father's heir;
Your father's heir must have your father's land."

King John.

The events we are about to relate, occurred near the middle of the last century, previously even to that struggle, which it is the fashion of America to call "the old French War." The opening scene of our tale, however, must be sought in the other hemisphere, and on the coast of the mother country. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the American colonies were models of loyalty; the very war, to which there has just been allusion, causing the great expenditure that induced the ministry to have recourse to the system of taxation, which terminated in the revolution. The family quarrel had not yet commenced. Intensely occupied with the conflict, which terminated not more gloriously for the British arms, than advantageously for the British American possessions, the inhabitants of the provinces were perhaps never better disposed to the metropolitan state, than at the very period of which we are about to write. All their early predilections seemed to be gaining strength, instead of becoming weaker; and, as in nature, the calm is known to succeed the tempest, the blind attachment of the colony to the parent country, was but a precursor of the alienation and violent disunion that were so soon to follow.

Although the superiority of the English seamen was well established, in the conflicts that took place between the years 1740, and that of 1763, the naval warfare of the period by no means possessed the very decided character with which it became stamped, a quarter of a century later. In our own times, the British marine appears to have improved in quality, as its enemies, deteriorated. In the year 1812, however, "Greek met Greek," when, of a verity, came "the tug of war." The great change that came over the other navies of Europe, was merely a consequence of the revolutions, which drove experienced men into exile, and which, by rendering armies all-important even to the existence of the different states, threw nautical enterprises into the shade, and gave an engrossing direction to courage and talent, in another quarter. While France was struggling, first for independence, and next for the mastery of the continent, a marine was a secondary object; for Vienna, Berlin, and Moscow, were as easily entered without, as with its aid. To these, and other similar causes, must be referred the explanation of the seeming invincibility of the English arms at sea, during the late great conflicts of Europe; an invincibility that was more apparent than real, however, as many well-established defeats were, even then, intermingled with her thousand victories.

From the time when her numbers could furnish succour of this nature, down to the day of separation, America had her full share in the exploits of the English marine. The gentry of the colonies willingly placed their sons in the royal navy, and many a bit of square bunting has been flying at the royal mastheads of King's ships, in the nineteenth century, as the distinguishing symbols of flag-officers, who had to look for their birth-places among ourselves. In the course of a chequered life, in which we have been brought in collision with as great a diversity of rank, professions, and characters, as often falls to the lot of any one individual, we have been thrown into contact with no less than eight English admirals, of American birth; while, it has never yet been our good fortune to meet with a countryman, who has had this rank bestowed on him by his own government. On one occasion, an Englishman, who had filled the highest civil office connected with the marine of his nation, observed to us, that the only man he then knew, in the British navy, in whom he should feel

an entire confidence in entrusting an important command, was one of these translated admirals; and the thought unavoidably passed through our mind, that this favourite commander had done well in adhering to the conventional, instead of clinging to his natural allegiance, inasmuch as he might have toiled for half a century, in the service of his native land, and been rewarded with a rank that would merely put him on a level with a colonel in the army! How much longer this short-sighted policy, and grievous injustice, are to continue, no man can say; but it is safe to believe, that it is to last until some legislator of influence learns the simple truth, that the fancied reluctance of popular constituencies to do right, oftener exists in the apprehensions of their representatives, than in reality. – But to our tale.

England enjoys a wide-spread reputation for her fogs; but little do they know how much a fog may add to natural scenery, who never witnessed its magical effects, as it has caused a beautiful landscape to coquette with the eye, in playful and capricious changes. Our opening scene is in one of these much derided fogs; though, let it always be remembered, it was a fog of June, and not of November. On a high head-land of the coast of Devonshire, stood a little station-house, which had been erected with a view to communicate by signals, with the shipping, that sometimes lay at anchor in an adjacent roadstead. A little inland, was a village, or hamlet, that it suits our purposes to call Wychecombe; and at no great distance from the hamlet itself, surrounded by a small park, stood a house of the age of Henry VII., which was the abode of Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, a baronet of the creation of King James I., and the possessor of an improveable estate of some three or four thousand a year, which had been transmitted to him, through a line of ancestors, that ascended as far back as the times of the Plantagenets. Neither Wychecombe, nor the head-land, nor the anchorage, was a place of note; for much larger and more favoured hamlets, villages, and towns, lay scattered about that fine portion of England; much better roadsteads and bays could generally be used by the coming or the parting vessel; and far more important signal-stations were to be met with, all along that coast. Nevertheless, the roadstead was entered when calms or adverse winds rendered it expedient; the hamlet had its conveniences, and, like most English hamlets, its beauties; and the hall and park were not without their claims to state and rural magnificence. A century since, whatever the table of precedency or Blackstone may say, an English baronet, particularly one of the date of 1611, was a much greater personage than he is to-day; and an estate of £4000 a year, more especially if not rack-rented, was of an extent, and necessarily of a local consequence, equal to one of near, or quite three times the same amount, in our own day. Sir Wycherly, however, enjoyed an advantage that was of still greater importance, and which was more common in 1745, than at the present moment. He had no rival within fifteen miles of him, and the nearest potentate was a nobleman of a rank and fortune that put all competition out of the question; one who dwelt in courts, the favourite of kings; leaving the baronet, as it might be, in undisturbed enjoyment of all the local homage. Sir Wycherly had once been a member of Parliament, and only once. In his youth, he had been a fox-hunter; and a small property in Yorkshire had long been in the family, as a sort of foothold on such enjoyments; but having broken a leg, in one of his leaps, he had taken refuge against *ennui*, by sitting a single session in the House of Commons, as the member of a borough that lay adjacent to his hunting-box. This session sufficed for his whole life; the good baronet having taken the matter so literally, as to make it a point to be present at all the sittings; a sort of tax on his time, which, as it came wholly unaccompanied by profit, was very likely soon to tire out the patience of an old fox-hunter. After resigning his seat, he retired altogether to Wychecombe, where he passed the last fifty years, extolling England, and most especially that part of it in which his own estates lay; in abusing the French, with occasional inuendoes against Spain and Holland; and in eating and drinking. He had never travelled; for, though Englishmen of his station often did visit the continent, a century ago, they oftener did not. It was the courtly and the noble, who then chiefly took this means of improving their minds and manners; a class, to which a baronet by no means necessarily belonged. To conclude, Sir Wycherly was now eighty-four; hale, hearty, and a bachelor. He had been born the oldest of five brothers; the cadets taking refuge, as usual, in the inns of court, the church, the army, and the navy; and precisely in the order named. The lawyer had

actually risen to be a judge, by the style and appellation of Baron Wychecombe; had three illegitimate children by his housekeeper, and died, leaving to the eldest thereof, all his professional earnings, after buying commissions for the two younger in the army. The divine broke his neck, while yet a curate, in a fox-hunt; dying unmarried, and so far as is generally known, childless. This was Sir Wycherly's favourite brother; who, he was accustomed to say, "lost his life, in setting an example of field-sports to his parishioners." The soldier was fairly killed in battle, before he was twenty; and the name of the sailor suddenly disappeared from the list of His Majesty's lieutenants, about half a century before the time when our tale opens, by shipwreck. Between the sailor and the head of the family, however, there had been no great sympathy; in consequence, as it was rumoured, of a certain beauty's preference for the latter, though this preference produced no *suites*, inasmuch as the lady died a maid. Mr. Gregory Wychecombe, the lieutenant in question, was what is termed a "wild boy;" and it was the general impression, when his parents sent him to sea, that the ocean would now meet with its match. The hopes of the family centred in the judge, after the death of the curate, and it was a great cause of regret, to those who took an interest in its perpetuity and renown, that this dignitary did not marry; since the premature death of all the other sons had left the hall, park, and goodly farms, without any known legal heir. In a word, this branch of the family of Wychecombe would be extinct, when Sir Wycherly died, and the entail become useless. Not a female inheritor, even, or a male inheritor through females, could be traced; and it had become imperative on Sir Wycherly to make a will, lest the property should go off, the Lord knew where; or, what was worse, it should escheat. It is true, Tom Wychecombe, the judge's eldest son, often gave dark hints about a secret, and a timely marriage between his parents, a fact that would have superseded the necessity for all devises, as the property was strictly tied up, so far as the lineal descendants of a certain *old* Sir Wycherly were concerned; but the present Sir Wycherly had seen his brother, in his last illness, on which occasion, the following conversation had taken place.

"And now, brother Thomas," said the baronet, in a friendly and consoling manner; "having, as one may say, prepared your soul for heaven, by these prayers and admissions of your sins, a word may be prudently said, concerning the affairs of this world. You know I am childless – that is to say, – "

"I understand you, Wycherly," interrupted the dying man, "you're a *bachelor*."

"That's it, Thomas; and bachelors *ought* not to have children. Had our poor brother James escaped that mishap, he might have been sitting at your bed-side at this moment, and *he* could have told us all about it. St. James I used to call him; and well did he deserve the name!"

"St. James the Least, then, it must have been, Wycherly."

"It's a dreadful thing to have no heir, Thomas! Did you ever know a case in your practice, in which another estate was left so completely without an heir, as this of ours?"

"It does not often happen, brother; heirs are usually more abundant than estates."

"So I thought. Will the king get the title as well as the estate, brother, if it should escheat, as you call it?"

"Being the fountain of honour, he will be rather indifferent about the baronetcy."

"I should care less if it went to the next sovereign, who is English born. Wychecombe has always belonged to Englishmen."

"That it has; and ever will, I trust. You have only to select an heir, when I am gone, and by making a will, with proper devises, the property will not escheat. Be careful to use the full terms of perpetuity."

"Every thing was so comfortable, brother, while you were in health," said Sir Wycherly, fidgeting; "you were my natural heir – "

"Heir of entail," interrupted the judge.

"Well, well, *heir*, at all events; and *that* was a prodigious comfort to a man like myself, who has a sort of religious scruples about making a will. I have heard it whispered that you were actually

married to Martha; in which case, Tom might drop into our shoes, so readily, without any more signing and sealing."

"A *filius nullius*," returned the other, too conscientious to lend himself to a deception of that nature.

"Why, brother, Tom often seems to me to favour such an idea, himself."

"No wonder, Wycherly, for the idea would greatly favour him. Tom and his brothers are all *filii nullorum*, God forgive me for that same wrong."

"I wonder neither Charles nor Gregory thought of marrying before they lost their lives for their king and country," put in Sir Wycherly, in an upbraiding tone, as if he thought his penniless brethren had done him an injury in neglecting to supply him with an heir, though he had been so forgetful himself of the same great duty. "I did think of bringing in a bill for providing heirs for unmarried persons, without the trouble and responsibility of making wills."

"That would have been a great improvement on the law of descents – I hope you wouldn't have overlooked the ancestors."

"Not I – everybody would have got his rights. They tell me poor Charles never spoke after he was shot; but I dare say, did we know the truth, he regretted sincerely that he never married."

"There, for once, Wycherly, I think you are likely to be wrong. A *femme sole* without food, is rather a helpless sort of a person."

"Well, well, I wish he had married. What would it have been to me, had he left a dozen widows?"

"It might have raised some awkward questions as to dowry; and if each left a son, the title and estates would have been worse off than they are at present, without widows or legitimate children."

"Any thing would be better than having no heir. I believe I'm the first baronet of Wychecombe who has been obliged to make a will!"

"Quite likely," returned the brother, drily; "I remember to have got nothing from the last one, in that way. Charles and Gregory fared no better. Never mind, Wycherly, you behaved like a father to us all."

"I don't mind signing cheques, in the least; but wills have an irreligious appearance, in my eyes. There are a good many Wychecombes, in England; I wonder some of them are not of our family! They tell me a hundredth cousin is just as good an heir, as a first-born son."

"Failing nearer of kin. But we have no hundredth cousins of the *whole blood*."

"There are the Wychecombes of Surrey, brother Thomas – ?"

"Descended from a bastard of the second baronet, and out of the line of descent, altogether."

"But the Wychecombes of Hertfordshire, I have always heard were of our family, and legitimate."

"True, as regards matrimony – rather too much of it, by the way. They branched off in 1487, long before the creation, and have nothing to do with the entail; the first of their line coming from old Sir Michael Wychecombe, Kt. and Sheriff of Devonshire, by his second wife Margery; while we are derived from the same male ancestor, through Wycherly, the only son by Joan, the first wife. Wycherly, and Michael, the son of Michael and Margery, were of the half-blood, as respects each other, and could not be heirs of blood. What was true of the ancestors is true of the descendants."

"But we came of the same ancestor, and the estate is far older than 1487."

"Quite true, brother; nevertheless, the half-blood can't take; so says the perfection of human reason."

"I never could understand these niceties of the law," said Sir Wycherly, sighing; "but I suppose they are all right. There are so many Wychecombes scattered about England, that I should think some one among them all might be my heir!"

"Every man of them bears a bar in his arms, or is of the half-blood."

"You are quite sure, brother, that Tom is a *filius nullus*?" for the baronet had forgotten most of the little Latin he ever knew, and translated this legal phrase into "no son."

"*Filius nullius*, Sir Wycherly, the son of nobody; your reading would literally make Tom nobody; whereas, he is only the son of nobody."

"But, brother, he is your son, and as like you, as two hounds of the same litter."

"I am *nullus*, in the eye of the law, as regards poor Tom; who, until he marries, and has children of his own, is altogether without legal kindred. Nor do I know that legitimacy would make Tom any better; for he is presuming and confident enough for the heir apparent to the throne, as it is."

"Well, there's this young sailor, who has been so much at the station lately, since he was left ashore for the cure of his wounds. 'Tis a most gallant lad; and the First Lord has sent him a commission, as a reward for his good conduct, in cutting out the Frenchman. I look upon him as a credit to the name; and I make no question, he is, some way or other, of our family."

"Does he claim to be so?" asked the judge, a little quickly, for he distrusted men in general, and thought, from all he had heard, that some attempt might have been made to practise on his brother's simplicity. "I thought you told me that he came from the American colonies?"

"So he does; he's a native of Virginia, as was his father before him."

"A convict, perhaps; or a servant, quite likely, who has found the name of his former master, more to his liking than his own. Such things are common, they tell me, beyond seas."

"Yes, if he were anything but an American, I might wish he were my heir," returned Sir Wycherly, in a melancholy tone; "but it would be worse than to let the lands escheat, as you call it, to place an American in possession of Wychecombe. The manors have always had English owners, down to the present moment, thank God!"

"Should they have any other, it will be your own fault, Wycherly. When I am dead, and that will happen ere many weeks, the human being will not be living, who can take that property, after your demise, in any other manner than by escheat, or by devise. There will then be neither heir of entail, nor heir at law; and you may make whom you please, master of Wychecombe, provided he be not an alien."

"Not an American, I suppose, brother; an American is an alien, of course."

"Humph! – why, not in law, whatever he may be according to our English notions. Harkee, brother Wycherly; I've never asked you, or wished you to leave the estate to Tom, or his younger brothers; for one, and all, are *filii nullorum* – as I term 'em, though my brother Record will have it, it ought to be *filii nullius*, as well as *filius nullius*. Let that be as it may; no bastard should lord it at Wychecombe; and rather than the king; should get the lands, to bestow on some favourite, I would give it to the half-blood."

"Can that be done without making a will, brother Thomas?"

"It cannot, Sir Wycherly; nor with a will, so long as an heir of entail can be found."

"Is there no way of making Tom a *filius somebody*, so that *he* can succeed?"

"Not under our laws. By the civil law, such a thing might have been done, and by the Scotch law; but not under the perfection of reason."

"I wish you knew this young Virginian! The lad bears both of my names, Wycherly Wychecombe."

"He is not a *filius Wycherly* – is he, baronet?"

"Fie upon thee, brother Thomas! Do you think I have less candour than thyself, that I would not acknowledge my own flesh and blood. I never saw the youngster, until within the last six months, when he was landed from the roadstead, and brought to Wychecombe, to be cured of his wounds; nor ever heard of him before. When they told me his name was Wycherly Wychecombe, I could do no less than call and see him. The poor fellow lay at death's door for a fortnight; and it was while we had little or no hope of saving him, that I got the few family anecdotes from him. Now, that would be good evidence in law, I believe, Thomas."

"For certain things, had the lad really died. Surviving, he must be heard on his *voire dire*, and under oath. But what was his tale?"

"A very short one. He told me his father was a Wycherly Wychecombe, and that his grandfather had been a Virginia planter. This was all he seemed to know of his ancestry."

"And probably all there was of them. My Tom is not the only *filius nullius* that has been among us, and this grandfather, if he has not actually stolen the name, has got it by these doubtful means. As for the Wycherly, it should pass for nothing. Learning that there is a line of baronets of this name, every pretender to the family would be apt to call a son Wycherly."

"The line will shortly be ended, brother," returned Sir Wycherly, sighing. "I wish you might be mistaken; and, after all, Tom shouldn't prove to be that *filius* you call him."

Mr. Baron Wychecombe, as much from *esprit de corps* as from moral principle, was a man of strict integrity, in all things that related to *meum* and *tuum*. He was particularly rigid in his notions concerning the transmission of real estate, and the rights of primogeniture. The world had taken little interest in the private history of a lawyer, and his sons having been born before his elevation to the bench, he passed with the public for a widower, with a family of promising boys. Not one in a hundred of his acquaintances even, suspected the fact; and nothing would have been easier for him, than to have imposed on his brother, by inducing him to make a will under some legal mystification or other, and to have caused Tom Wychecombe to succeed to the property in question, by an indisputable title. There would have been no great difficulty even, in his son's assuming and maintaining his right to the baronetcy, inasmuch as there would be no competitor, and the crown officers were not particularly rigid in inquiring into the claims of those who assumed a title that brought with it no political privileges. Still, he was far from indulging in any such project. To him it appeared that the Wychecombe estate ought to go with the principles that usually governed such matters; and, although he submitted to the dictum of the common law, as regarded the provision which excluded the half-blood from inheriting, with the deference of an English common-law lawyer, he saw and felt, that, failing the direct line, Wychecombe ought to revert to the descendants of Sir Michael by his second son, for the plain reason that they were just as much derived from the person who had acquired the estate, as his brother Wycherly and himself. Had there been descendants of females, even, to interfere, no such opinion would have existed; but, as between an escheat, or a devise in favour of a *filius nillius*, or of the descendant of a *filius nullius*, the half-blood possessed every possible advantage. In his legal eyes, legitimacy was everything, although he had not hesitated to be the means of bringing into the world seven illegitimate children, that being the precise number Martha had the credit of having borne him, though three only survived. After reflecting a moment, therefore, he turned to the baronet, and addressed him more seriously than he had yet done, in the present dialogue; first taking a draught of cordial to give him strength for the occasion.

"Listen to me, brother Wycherly," said the judge, with a gravity that at once caught the attention of the other. "You know something of the family history, and I need do no more than allude to it. Our ancestors were the knightly possessors of Wychecombe, centuries before King James established the rank of baronet. When our great-grandfather, Sir Wycherly, accepted the patent of 1611, he scarcely did himself honour; for, by aspiring higher, he might have got a peerage. However, a baronet he became, and for the first time since Wychecombe was Wychecombe, the estate was entailed, to do credit to the new rank. Now, the first Sir Wycherly had three sons, and no daughter. Each of these sons succeeded; the two eldest as bachelors, and the youngest was our grandfather. Sir Thomas, the fourth baronet, left an only child, Wycherly, our father. Sir Wycherly, our father, had five sons, Wycherly his successor, yourself, and the sixth baronet; myself; James; Charles; and Gregory. James broke his neck at your side. The two last lost their lives in the king's service, unmarried; and neither you, nor I, have entered into the holy state of matrimony. I cannot survive a month, and the hopes of perpetuating the direct line of the family, rests with yourself. This accounts for all the descendants of Sir Wycherly, the first baronet; and it also settles the question of heirs of entail, of whom there are none after myself. To go back beyond the time of King James I.: Twice did the elder lines of the Wychecombes fail, between the reign of King Richard II. and King Henry VII., when Sir Michael

succeeded. Now, in each of these cases, the law disposed of the succession; the youngest branches of the family, in both instances, getting the estate. It follows that agreeably to legal decisions had at the time, when the facts must have been known, that the Wychecombes were reduced to these younger lines. Sir Michael had two wives. From the first *we* are derived – from the last, the Wychecombes of Hertfordshire – since known as baronets of that county, by the style and title of Sir Reginald Wychecombe of Wychecombe-Regis, Herts."

"The present Sir Reginald can have no claim, being of the half-blood," put in Sir Wycherly, with a brevity of manner that denoted feeling. "The half-blood is as bad as a *nullius*, as you call Tom."

"Not quite. A person of the half-blood may be as legitimate as the king's majesty; whereas, a nullius is of *no* blood. Now, suppose for a moment, Sir Wycherly, that you had been a son by a first wife, and I had been a son by a second – would there have been no relationship between us?"

"What a question, Tom, to put to your own brother!"

"But I should not be your *own* brother, my good sir; only your *half* brother; of the *half*, and not of the *whole* blood."

"What of that – what of that? – your father would have been my father – we would have had the same name – the same family history – the same family *feelings* – poh! poh! – we should have been both Wychecombes, exactly as we are to-day."

"Quite true, and yet I could not have been your heir, nor you mine. The estate would escheat to the king, Hanoverian or Scotchman, before it came to me. Indeed, to *me* it could never come."

"Thomas, you are trifling with my ignorance, and making matters worse than they really are. Certainly, as long as you lived, you would be *my* heir!"

"Very true, as to the £20,000 in the funds, but not as to the baronetcy and Wychecombe. So far as the two last are concerned, I am heir of blood, and of entail, of the body of Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, the first baronet, and the maker of the entail."

"Had there been no entail, and had I died a child, who would have succeeded our father, supposing there had been two mothers?"

"I, as the next surviving son."

"There! – I knew it must be so!" exclaimed Sir Wycherly, in triumph; "and all this time you have been joking with me!"

"Not so fast, brother of mine – not so fast. I should be of the *whole* blood, as respected our father, and all the Wychecombes that have gone before him; but of the *half*-blood, as respected *you*. From our father I might have taken, as his heir-at-law: but from *you*, never, having been of the *half*-blood."

"I would have made a will, in that case, Thomas, and left you every farthing," said Sir Wycherly, with feeling.

"That is just what I wish you to do with Sir Reginald Wychecombe. You must take him; a *filius nullius*, in the person of my son Tom; a stranger; or let the property escheat; for, we are so peculiarly placed as not to have a known relative, by either the male or female lines; the maternal ancestors being just as barren of heirs as the paternal. Our good mother was the natural daughter of the third Earl of Prolific; our grandmother was the last of her race, so far as human ken can discover; our great-grandmother is said to have had semi-royal blood in her veins, without the aid of the church, and beyond that it would be hopeless to attempt tracing consanguinity on that side of the house. No, Wycherly; it is Sir Reginald who has the best right to the land; Tom, or one of his brothers, an utter stranger, or His Majesty, follow. Remember that estates of £4000 a year, don't often escheat, now-a-days."

"If you'll draw up a will, brother, I'll leave it all to Tom," cried the baronet, with sudden energy. "Nothing need be said about the *nullius*; and when I'm gone, he'll step quietly into my place."

Nature triumphed a moment in the bosom of the father; but habit, and the stern sense of right, soon overcame the feeling. Perhaps certain doubts, and a knowledge of his son's real character, contributed their share towards the reply.

"It ought not to be, Sir Wycherly," returned the judge, musing, "Tom has no right to Wychecombe, and Sir Reginald has the best moral right possible, though the law cuts him off. Had Sir Michael made the entail, instead of our great-grandfather, he would have come in, as a matter of course."

"I never liked Sir Reginald Wychecombe," said the baronet, stubbornly.

"What of that? – He will not trouble you while living, and when dead it will be all the same. Come – come – I will draw the will myself, leaving blanks for the name; and when it is once done, you will sign it, cheerfully. It is the last legal act I shall ever perform, and it will be a suitable one, death being constantly before me."

This ended the dialogue. The will was drawn according to promise; Sir Wycherly took it to his room to read, carefully inserted the name of Tom Wychecombe in all the blank spaces, brought it back, duly executed the instrument in his brother's presence, and then gave the paper to his nephew to preserve, with a strong injunction on him to keep the secret, until the instrument should have force by his own death. Mr. Baron Wychecombe died in six weeks, and the baronet returned to his residence, a sincere mourner for the loss of an only brother. A more unfortunate selection of an heir could not have been made, as Tom Wychecombe was, in reality, the son of a barrister in the Temple; the fancied likeness to the reputed father existing only in the imagination of his credulous uncle.

Chapter II

"How fearful
And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows, and choughs, that wing the midway air,
Show scarce so gross as beetles! Half-way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire! dreadful trade!"

King Lear.

This digression on the family of Wychecombe has led us far from the signal-station, the head-land, and the fog, with which the tale opened. The little dwelling connected with the station stood at a short distance from the staff, sheltered, by the formation of the ground, from the bleak winds of the channel, and fairly embowered in shrubs and flowers. It was a humble cottage, that had been ornamented with more taste than was usual in England at that day. Its whitened walls, thatched roof, picketed garden, and trellised porch, bespoke care, and a mental improvement in the inmates, that were scarcely to be expected in persons so humbly employed as the keeper of the signal-staff, and his family. All near the house, too, was in the same excellent condition; for while the head-land itself lay in common, this portion of it was enclosed in two or three pretty little fields, that were grazed by a single horse, and a couple of cows. There were no hedges, however, the thorn not growing willingly in a situation so exposed; but the fields were divided by fences, neatly enough made of wood, that declared its own origin, having in fact been part of the timbers and planks of a wreck. As the whole was whitewashed, it had a rustic, and in a climate where the sun is seldom oppressive, by no means a disagreeable appearance.

The scene with which we desire to commence the tale, opens about seven o'clock on a July morning. On a bench at the foot of the signal-staff, was seated one of a frame that was naturally large and robust, but which was sensibly beginning to give way, either by age or disease. A glance at the red, bloated face, would suffice to tell a medical man, that the habits had more to do with the growing failure of the system, than any natural derangement of the physical organs. The face, too, was singularly manly, and had once been handsome, even; nay, it was not altogether without claims to be so considered still; though intemperance was making sad inroads on its comeliness. This person was about fifty years old, and his air, as well as his attire, denoted a mariner; not a common seaman, nor yet altogether an officer; but one of those of a middle station, who in navies used to form a class by themselves; being of a rank that entitled them to the honours of the quarter-deck, though out of the regular line of promotion. In a word, he wore the unpretending uniform of a master. A century ago, the dress of the English naval officer was exceedingly simple, though more appropriate to the profession perhaps, than the more showy attire that has since been introduced. Epaulettes were not used by any, and the anchor button, with the tint that is called navy blue, and which is meant to represent the deep hue of the ocean, with white facings, composed the principal peculiarities of the dress. The person introduced to the reader, whose name was Dutton, and who was simply the officer in charge of the signal-station, had a certain neatness about his well-worn uniform, his linen, and all of his attire, which showed that some person more interested in such matters than one of his habits was likely to be, had the care of his wardrobe. In this respect, indeed, his appearance was unexceptionable; and there was an air about the whole man which showed that nature, if not education, had intended him for something far better than the being he actually was.

Dutton was waiting, at that early hour, to ascertain, as the veil of mist was raised from the face of the sea, whether a sail might be in sight, that required of him the execution of any of his simple functions. That some one was near by, on the headland, too, was quite evident, by the occasional

interchange of speech; though no person but himself was visible. The direction of the sounds would seem to indicate that a man was actually over the brow of the cliff, perhaps a hundred feet removed from the seat occupied by the master.

"Recollect the sailor's maxim, Mr. Wychecombe," called out Dutton, in a warning voice; "one hand for the king, and the other for self! Those cliffs are ticklish places; and really it does seem a little unnatural that a sea-faring person like yourself, should have so great a passion for flowers, as to risk his neck in order to make a posy!"

"Never fear for me, Mr. Dutton," answered a full, manly voice, that one could have sworn issued from the chest of youth; "never fear for me; we sailors are used to hanging in the air."

"Ay, with good three-stranded ropes to hold on by, young gentleman. Now His Majesty's government has just made you an officer, there is a sort of obligation to take care of your life, in order that it may be used, and, at need, given away, in his service."

"Quite true – quite true, Mr. Dutton – so true, I wonder you think it necessary to remind me of it. I am very grateful to His Majesty's government, and – "

While speaking, the voice seemed to descend, getting at each instant less and less distinct, until, in the end, it became quite inaudible. Dutton looked uneasy, for at that instant a noise was heard, and then it was quite clear some heavy object was falling down the face of the cliff. Now it was that the mariner felt the want of good nerves, and experienced the sense of humiliation which accompanied the consciousness of having destroyed them by his excesses. He trembled in every limb, and, for the moment, was actually unable to rise. A light step at his side, however, drew a glance in that direction, and his eye fell on the form of a lovely girl of nineteen, his own daughter, Mildred.

"I heard you calling to some one, father," said the latter, looking wistfully, but distrustfully at her parent, as if wondering at his yielding to his infirmity so early in the day; "can I be of service to you?"

"Poor Wychecombe!" exclaimed Dutton. "He went over the cliff in search of a nosegay to offer to yourself, and – and – I fear – greatly fear – "

"What, father?" demanded Mildred, in a voice of horror, the rich color disappearing from a face which it left of the hue of death. "No – no – no – he *cannot* have fallen."

Dutton bent his head down, drew a long breath, and then seemed to gain more command of his nerves. He was about to rise, when the sound of a horse's feet was heard, and then Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, mounted on a quiet pony, rode slowly up to the signal-staff. It was a common thing for the baronet to appear on the cliffs early in the morning, but it was not usual for him to come unattended. The instant her eyes fell on the fine form of the venerable old man, Mildred, who seemed to know him well, and to use the familiarity of one confident of being a favourite, exclaimed –

"Oh! Sir Wycherly, how fortunate – where is Richard?"

"Good morrow, my pretty Milly," answered the baronet, cheerfully; "fortunate or not, here I am, and not a bit flattered that your first question should be after the groom, instead of his master. I have sent Dick on a message to the vicar's. Now my poor brother, the judge, is dead and gone, I find Mr. Rotherham more and more necessary to me."

"Oh! dear Sir Wycherly – Mr. Wychecombe – Lieutenant Wychecombe, I mean – the young officer from Virginia – he who was so desperately wounded – in whose recovery we all took so deep an interest – "

"Well – what of him, child? – you surely do not mean to put him on a level with Mr. Rotherham, in the way of religious consolation – and, as for anything else, there is no consanguinity between the Wychecombes of Virginia and my family. He may be a *filius nullius* of the Wychecombes of Wychecombe-Regis, Herts, but has no connection with those of Wychecombe-Hall, Devonshire."

"There – there – the cliff! – the cliff!" added Mildred, unable, for the moment, to be more explicit.

As the girl pointed towards the precipice, and looked the very image of horror, the good-hearted old baronet began to get some glimpses of the truth; and, by means of a few words with Dutton, soon knew quite as much as his two companions. Descending from his pony with surprising activity for one of his years, Sir Wycherly was soon on his feet, and a sort of confused consultation between the three succeeded. Neither liked to approach the cliff, which was nearly perpendicular at the extremity of the head-land, and was always a trial to the nerves of those who shrunk from standing on the verge of precipices. They stood like persons paralyzed, until Dutton, ashamed of his weakness, and recalling the thousand lessons in coolness and courage he had received in his own manly profession, made a movement towards advancing to the edge of the cliff, in order to ascertain the real state of the case. The blood returned to the cheeks of Mildred, too, and she again found a portion of her natural spirit raising her courage.

"Stop, father," she said, hastily; "you are infirm, and are in a tremour at this moment. My head is steadier – let me go to the verge of the hill, and learn what has happened."

This was uttered with a forced calmness that deceived her auditors, both of whom, the one from age, and the other from shattered nerves, were certainly in no condition to assume the same office. It required the all-seeing eye, which alone can scan the heart, to read all the agonized suspense with which that young and beautiful creature approached the spot, where she might command a view of the whole of the side of the fearful declivity, from its giddy summit to the base, where it was washed by the sea. The latter, indeed, could not literally be seen from above, the waves having so far undermined the cliff, as to leave a projection that concealed the point where the rocks and the water came absolutely in contact; the upper portion of the weather-worn rocks falling a little inwards, so as to leave a ragged surface that was sufficiently broken to contain patches of earth, and verdure, sprinkled with the flowers peculiar to such an exposure. The fog, also, intercepted the sight, giving to the descent the appearance of a fathomless abyss. Had the life of the most indifferent person been in jeopardy, under the circumstances named, Mildred would have been filled with deep awe; but a gush of tender sensations, which had hitherto been pent up in the sacred privacy of her virgin affections, struggled with natural horror, as she trod lightly on the very verge of the declivity, and cast a timid but eager glance beneath. Then she recoiled a step, raised her hands in alarm, and hid her face, as if to shut out some frightful spectacle.

By this time, Dutton's practical knowledge and recollection had returned. As is common with seamen, whose minds contain vivid pictures of the intricate tracery of their vessel's rigging in the darkest nights, his thoughts had flashed athwart all the probable circumstances, and presented a just image of the facts.

"The boy could not be seen had he absolutely fallen, and were there no fog; for the cliff tumbles home, Sir Wycherly," he said, eagerly, unconsciously using a familiar nautical phrase to express his meaning. "He must be clinging to the side of the precipice, and that, too, above the swell of the rocks."

Stimulated by a common feeling, the two men now advanced hastily to the brow of the hill, and there, indeed, as with Mildred herself, a single look sufficed to tell them the whole truth. Young Wychecombe, in leaning forward to pluck a flower, had pressed so hard upon the bit of rock on which a foot rested, as to cause it to break, thereby losing his balance. A presence of mind that amounted almost to inspiration, and a high resolution, alone saved him from being dashed to pieces. Perceiving the rock to give way, he threw himself forward, and alighted on a narrow shelf, a few feet beneath the place where he had just stood, and at least ten feet removed from it, laterally. The shelf on which he alighted was ragged, and but two or three feet wide. It would have afforded only a check to his fall, had there not fortunately been some shrubs among the rocks above it. By these shrubs the young man caught, actually swinging off in the air, under the impetus of his leap. Happily, the shrubs were too well rooted to give way; and, swinging himself round, with the address of a sailor, the youthful lieutenant was immediately on his feet, in comparative safety. The silence that succeeded was the consequence of the shock he felt, in finding him so suddenly thrown into this

perilous situation. The summit of the cliff was now about six fathoms above his head, and the shelf on which he stood, impended over a portion of the cliff that was absolutely perpendicular, and which might be said to be out of the line of those projections along which he had so lately been idly gathering flowers. It was physically impossible for any human being to extricate himself from such a situation, without assistance. This Wychecombe understood at a glance, and he had passed the few minutes that intervened between his fall and the appearance of the party above him, in devising the means necessary to his liberation. As it was, few men, unaccustomed to the giddy elevations of the mast, could have mustered a sufficient command of nerve to maintain a position on the ledge where he stood. Even he could not have continued there, without steadying his form by the aid of the bushes.

As soon as the baronet and Dutton got a glimpse of the perilous position of young Wychecombe, each recoiled in horror from the sight, as if fearful of being precipitated on top of him. Both, then, actually lay down on the grass, and approached the edge of the cliff again, in that humble attitude, even trembling as they lay at length, with their chins projecting over the rocks, staring downwards at the victim. The young man could see nothing of all this; for, as he stood with his back against the cliff, he had not room to turn, with safety, or even to look upwards. Mildred, however, seemed to lose all sense of self and of danger, in view of the extremity in which the youth beneath was placed. She stood on the very verge of the precipice, and looked down with steadiness and impunity that would have been utterly impossible for her to attain under less exciting circumstances; even allowing the young man to catch a glimpse of her rich locks, as they hung about her beautiful face.

“For God’s sake, Mildred,” called out the youth, “keep further from the cliff – I see you, and we can now hear each other without so much risk.”

“What can we do to rescue you, Wychecombe?” eagerly asked the girl. “Tell me, I entreat you; for Sir Wycherly and my father are both unnerved!”

“Blessed creature! and *you* are mindful of my danger! But, be not uneasy, Mildred; do as I tell you, and all will yet be well. I hope you hear and understand what I say, dearest girl?”

“Perfectly,” returned Mildred, nearly choked by the effort to be calm. “I hear every syllable – speak on.”

“Go you then to the signal-halyards – let one end fly loose, and pull upon the other, until the whole line has come down – when that is done, return here, and I will tell you more – but, for heaven’s sake, keep farther from the cliff.”

The thought that the rope, small and frail as it seemed, might be of use, flashed on the brain of the girl; and in a moment she was at the staff. Time and again, when liquor incapacitated her father to perform his duty, had Mildred benton, and hoisted the signals for him; and thus, happily, she was expert in the use of the halyards. In a minute she had unrove them, and the long line lay in a little pile at her feet.

“’Tis done, Wycherly,” she said, again looking over the cliff; “shall I throw you down one end of the rope? – but, alas! I have not strength to raise you; and Sir Wycherly and father seem unable to assist me!”

“Do not hurry yourself, Mildred, and all will be well. Go, and put one end of the line around the signal-staff, then put the two ends together, tie them in a knot, and drop them down over my head. Be careful not to come too near the cliff, for – “

The last injunction was useless, Mildred having flown to execute her commission. Her quick mind readily comprehended what was expected of her, and her nimble fingers soon performed their task. Tying a knot in the ends of the line, she did as desired, and the small rope was soon dangling within reach of Wychecombe’s arm. It is not easy to make a landsman understand the confidence which a sailor feels in a rope. Place but a frail and rotten piece of twisted hemp in his hand, and he will risk his person in situations from which he would otherwise recoil in dread. Accustomed to hang suspended in the air, with ropes only for his foothold, or with ropes to grasp with his hand, his eye gets an intuitive knowledge of what will sustain him, and he unhesitatingly trusts his person to a few

seemingly slight strands, that, to one unpractised, appear wholly unworthy of his confidence. Signal-halyards are ropes smaller than the little finger of a man of any size; but they are usually made with care, and every rope-yarn tells. Wychecombe, too, was aware that these particular halyards were new, for he had assisted in reeving them himself, only the week before. It was owing to this circumstance that they were long enough to reach him; a large allowance for wear and tear having been made in cutting them from the coil. As it was, the ends dropped some twenty feet below the ledge on which he stood.

"All safe, now, Mildred!" cried the young man, in a voice of exultation the moment his hand caught the two ends of the line, which he immediately passed around his body, beneath the arms, as a precaution against accidents. "All safe, now, dearest girl; have no further concern about me."

Mildred drew back, for worlds could not have tempted her to witness the desperate effort that she knew must follow. By this time, Sir Wycherly, who had been an interested witness of all that passed, found his voice, and assumed the office of director.

"Stop, my young namesake," he eagerly cried, when he found that the sailor was about to make an effort to drag his own body up the cliff; "stop; that will never do; let Dutton and me do that much for you, at least. We have seen all that has passed, and are now able to do something."

"No – no, Sir Wycherly – on no account touch the halyards. By hauling them over the top of the rocks you will probably cut them, or part them, and then I'm lost, without hope!"

"Oh! Sir Wycherly," said Mildred, earnestly, clasping her hands together, as if to enforce the request with prayer; "do not – do not touch the line."

"We had better let the lad manage the matter in his own way," put in Dutton; "he is active, resolute, and a seaman, and will do better for himself than I fear we can do for him. He has got a turn round his body, and is tolerably safe against any slip, or mishap."

As the words were uttered, the whole three drew back a short distance and watched the result, in intense anxiety. Dutton, however, so far recollected himself, as to take an end of the old halyards, which were kept in a chest at the foot of the staff, and to make, an attempt to stopper together the two parts of the little rope on which the youth depended, for should one of the parts of it break, without this precaution, there was nothing to prevent the halyards from running round the staff, and destroying the hold. The size of the halyards rendered this expedient very difficult of attainment, but enough was done to give the arrangement a little more of the air of security. All this time young Wychecombe was making his own preparations on the ledge, and quite out of view; but the tension on the halyards soon announced that his weight was now pendent from them. Mildred's heart seemed ready to leap from her mouth, as she noted each jerk on the lines; and her father watched every new pull, as if he expected the next moment would produce the final catastrophe. It required a prodigious effort in the young man to raise his own weight for such a distance, by lines so small. Had the rope been of any size, the achievement would have been trifling for one of the frame and habits of the sailor, more especially as he could slightly avail himself of his feet, by pressing them against the rocks; but, as it was, he felt as if he were dragging the mountain up after him. At length, his head appeared a few inches above the rocks, but with his feet pressed against the cliff, and his body inclining outward, at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Help him – help him, father!" exclaimed Mildred, covering her face with her hands, to exclude the sight of Wychecombe's desperate struggles. "If he fall now, he will be destroyed. Oh! save him, save him, Sir Wycherly!"

But neither of those to whom she appealed, could be of any use. The nervous trembling again came over the father; and as for the baronet, age and inexperience rendered him helpless.

"Have you no rope, Mr. Dutton, to throw over my shoulders," cried Wychecombe, suspending his exertions in pure exhaustion, still keeping all he had gained, with his head projecting outward, over the abyss beneath, and his face turned towards heaven. "Throw a rope over my shoulders, and drag my body in to the cliff."

Dutton showed an eager desire to comply, but his nerves had not yet been excited by the usual potations, and his hands shook in a way to render it questionable whether he could perform even this simple service. But for his daughter, indeed, he would hardly have set about it intelligently. Mildred, accustomed to using the signal-halyards, procured the old line, and handed it to her father, who discovered some of his professional knowledge in his manner of using it. Doubling the halyards twice, he threw the bight over Wychecombe's shoulders, and aided by Mildred, endeavoured to draw the body of the young man upwards and towards the cliff. But their united strength was unequal to the task, and wearied with holding on, and, indeed, unable to support his own weight any longer by so small a rope, Wychecombe felt compelled to suffer his feet to drop beneath him, and slid down again upon the ledge. Here, even his vigorous frame shook with its prodigious exertions; and he was compelled to seat himself on the shelf, and rest with his back against the cliff, to recover his self-command and strength. Mildred uttered a faint shriek as he disappeared, but was too much horror-stricken to approach the verge of the precipice to ascertain his fate.

"Be composed, Milly," said her father, "he is safe, as you may see by the halyards; and to say the truth, the stuff holds on well. So long as the line proves true, the boy can't fall; he has taken a double turn with the end of it round his body. Make your mind easy, girl, for I feel better now, and see my way clear. Don't be uneasy, Sir Wycherly; we'll have the lad safe on *terra firma* again, in ten minutes. I scarce know what has come over me, this morning; but I've not had the command of my limbs as in common. It cannot be fright, for I've seen too many men in danger to be disabled by *that*; and I think, Milly, it must be the rheumatism, of which I've so often spoken, and which I've inherited from my poor mother, dear old soul. Do you know, Sir Wycherly, that rheumatism can be inherited like gout?"

"I dare say it may – I dare say it may, Dutton – but never mind the disease, now; get my young namesake back here on the grass, and I will hear all about it. I would give the world that I had not sent Dick to Mr. Rotherham's this morning. Can't we contrive to make the pony pull the boy up?"

"The traces are hardly strong enough for such work, Sir Wycherly. Have a little patience, and I will manage the whole thing, 'ship-shape, and Brister fashion,' as we say at sea. Halloo there, Master Wychecombe – answer my hail, and I will soon get you into deep water."

"I'm safe on the ledge," returned the voice of Wychecombe, from below; "I wish you would look to the signal-halyards, and see they do not chafe against the rocks, Mr. Dutton."

"All right, sir; all right. Slack up, if you please, and let me have all the line you can, without casting off from your body. Keep fast the end for fear of accidents."

In an instant the halyards slackened, and Dutton, who by this time had gained his self-command, though still weak and unnerved by the habits of the last fifteen years, forced the bight along the edge of the cliff, until he had brought it over a projection of the rocks, where it fastened itself. This arrangement caused the line to lead down to the part of the cliffs from which the young man had fallen, and where it was by no means difficult for a steady head and active limbs to move about and pluck flowers. It consequently remained for Wychecombe merely to regain a footing on that part of the hill-side, to ascend to the summit without difficulty. It is true he was now below the point from which he had fallen, but by swinging himself off laterally, or even by springing, aided by the line, it was not a difficult achievement to reach it, and he no sooner understood the nature of the change that had been made, than he set about attempting it. The confident manner of Dutton encouraged both the baronet and Mildred, and they drew to the cliff, again; standing near the verge, though on the part where the rocks might be descended, with less apprehension of consequences.

As soon as Wychecombe had made all his preparations, he stood on the end of the ledge, tightened the line, looked carefully for a foothold on the other side of the chasm, and made his leap. As a matter of course, the body of the young man swung readily across the space, until the line became perpendicular, and then he found a surface so broken, as to render his ascent by no means difficult, aided as he was by the halyards. Scrambling upwards, he soon rejected the aid of the line, and sprang upon the head-land. At the same instant, Mildred fell senseless on the grass.

Chapter III

"I want a hero: – an uncommon want,
When every year and month send forth a new one;
'Till, after cloying the gazelles with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;"

Byron.

In consequence of the unsteadiness of the father's nerves, the duty of raising Mildred in his arms, and of carrying her to the cottage, devolved on the young man. This he did with a readiness and concern which proved how deep an interest he took in her situation, and with a power of arm which showed that his strength was increased rather than lessened by the condition into which she had fallen. So rapid was his movement, that no one saw the kiss he impressed on the palid cheek of the sweet girl, or the tender pressure with which he grasped the lifeless form. By the time he reached the door, the motion and air had begun to revive her, and Wychecombe committed her to the care of her alarmed mother, with a few hurried words of explanation. He did not leave the house, however, for a quarter of an hour, except to call out to Dutton that Mildred was reviving, and that he need be under no uneasiness on her account. Why he remained so long, we leave the reader to imagine, for the girl had been immediately taken to her own little chamber, and he saw her no more for several hours.

When our young sailor came out upon the head-land again, he found the party near the flag-staff increased to four. Dick, the groom, had returned from his errand, and Tom Wychecombe, the intended heir of the baronet, was also there, in mourning for his reputed father, the judge. This young man had become a frequent visiter to the station, of late, affecting to imbibe his uncle's taste for sea air, and a view of the ocean. There had been several meetings between himself and his namesake, and each interview was becoming less amicable than the preceding, for a reason that was sufficiently known to the parties. When they met on the present occasion, therefore, the bows they exchanged were haughty and distant, and the glances cast at each other might have been termed hostile, were it not that a sinister irony was blended with that of Tom Wychecombe. Still, the feelings that were uppermost did not prevent the latter from speaking in an apparently friendly manner.

"They tell me, Mr. Wychecombe," observed the judge's heir, (for this Tom Wychecombe might legally claim to be;) "they tell me, Mr. Wychecombe, that you have been taking a lesson in your trade this morning, by swinging over the cliffs at the end of a rope? Now, that is an exploit, more to the taste of an American than to that of an Englishman, I should think. But, I dare say one is compelled to do many things in the colonies, that we never dream of at home."

This was said with seeming indifference, though with great art. Sir Wycherly's principal weakness was an overweening and an ignorant admiration of his own country, and all it contained. He was also strongly addicted to that feeling of contempt for the dependencies of the empire, which seems to be inseparable from the political connection between the people of the metropolitan country and their colonies. There must be entire equality, for perfect respect, in any situation in life; and, as a rule, men always appropriate to their own shares, any admitted superiority that may happen to exist on the part of the communities to which they belong. It is on this principle, that the tenant of a cock-loft in Paris or London, is so apt to feel a high claim to superiority over the occupant of a comfortable abode in a village. As between England and her North American colonies in particular, this feeling was stronger than is the case usually, on account of the early democratical tendencies of the latter; not, that these tendencies had already become the subject of political jealousies, but that they left social impressions, which were singularly adapted to bringing the colonists into contempt

among a people predominant for their own factitious habits, and who are so strongly inclined to view everything, even to principles, through the medium of arbitrary, conventional customs. It must be confessed that the Americans, in the middle of the eighteenth century, were an exceedingly provincial, and in many particulars a narrow-minded people, as well in their opinions as in their habits; nor is the reproach altogether removed at the present day; but the country from which they are derived had not then made the vast strides in civilization, for which it has latterly become so distinguished. The indifference, too, with which all Europe regarded the whole American continent, and to which England, herself, though she possessed so large a stake on this side of the Atlantic, formed no material exception, constantly led that quarter of the world into profound mistakes in all its reasoning that was connected with this quarter of the world, and aided in producing the state of feeling to which we have alluded. Sir Wycherly felt and reasoned on the subject of America much as the great bulk of his countrymen felt and reasoned in 1745; the exceptions existing only among the enlightened, and those whose particular duties rendered more correct knowledge necessary, and not always among them. It is said that the English minister conceived the idea of taxing America, from the circumstance of seeing a wealthy Virginian lose a large sum at play, a sort of *argumentum ad hominem* that brought with it a very dangerous conclusion to apply to the sort of people with whom he had to deal. Let this be as it might, there is no more question, that at the period of our tale, the profoundest ignorance concerning America existed generally in the mother country, than there is that the profoundest respect existed in America for nearly every thing English. Truth compels us to add, that in despite of all that has passed, the cis-atlantic portion of the weakness has longest endured the assaults of time and of an increased intercourse.

Young Wycherly, as is ever the case, was keenly alive to any insinuations that might be supposed to reflect on the portion of the empire of which he was a native. He considered himself an Englishman, it is true; was thoroughly loyal; and was every way disposed to sustain the honour and interests of the seat of authority; but when questions were raised between Europe and America, he was an American; as, in America itself, he regarded himself as purely a Virginian, in contradistinction to all the other colonies. He understood the intended sarcasm of Tom Wychecombe, but smothered his resentment, out of respect to the baronet, and perhaps a little influenced by the feelings in which he had been so lately indulging.

“Those gentlemen who are disposed to fancy such things of the colonies, would do well to visit that part of the world,” he answered, calmly, “before they express their opinions too loudly, lest they should say something that future observation might make them wish to recall.”

“True, my young friend – quite true,” put in the baronet, with the kindest possible intentions. “True as gospel. We never know any thing of matters about which we know nothing; that we old men must admit, Master Dutton; and I should think Tom must see its force. It would be unreasonable to expect to find every thing as comfortable in America as we have it here, in England; nor do I suppose the Americans, in general, would be as likely to get over a cliff as an Englishman. However, there are exceptions to all general rules, as my poor brother James used to say, when he saw occasion to find fault with the sermon of a prelate. I believe you did not know my poor brother, Dutton; he must have been killed about the time you were born – St. James, I used to call him, although my brother Thomas, the judge that was Tom’s father, there – said he was St. James the Less.”

“I believe the Rev. Mr. Wychecombe was dead before I was of an age to remember his virtues, Sir Wycherly,” said Dutton, respectfully; “though I have often heard my own father speak of all your honoured family.”

“Yes, your father, Dutton, was the attorney of the next town, and we all knew him well. You have done quite right to come back among us to spend the close of your own days. A man is never as well off as when he is thriving in his native soil; more especially when that soil is old England, and Devonshire. You are not one of us, young gentleman, though your name happens to be Wychecombe; but, then we are none of us accountable for our own births, or birth-places.”

This truism, which is in the mouths of thousands while it is in the hearts of scarcely any, was well meant by Sir Wycherly, however plainly expressed. It merely drew from the youth the simple answer that – "he was born in the colonies, and had colonists for his parents;" a fact that the others had heard already, some ten or a dozen times.

"It is a little singular, Mr. Wychecombe, that you should bear both of my names, and yet be no relative," continued the baronet. "Now, Wycherly came into our family from old Sir Hildebrand Wycherly, who was slain at Bosworth Field, and whose only daughter, my ancestor, and Tom's ancestor, there, married. Since that day, Wycherly has been a favourite name among us. I do not think that the Wychecombes of Herts, ever thought of calling a son Wycherly, although, as my poor brother the judge used to say, *they* were related, but of the half-blood, only. I suppose your father taught you what is meant by being of the half-blood, Thomas?"

Tom Wychecombe's face became the colour of scarlet, and he cast an uneasy glance at all present; expecting in particular, to meet with a look of exultation in the eyes of the lieutenant. He was greatly relieved, however, at finding that neither of the three meant or understood more than was simply expressed. As for his uncle, he had not the smallest intention of making any allusion to the peculiarity of his nephew's birth; and the other two, in common with the world, supposed the reputed heir to be legitimate. Gathering courage from the looks of those around him, Tom answered with a steadiness that prevented his agitation from being detected:

"Certainly, my dear sir; my excellent parent forgot nothing that he thought might be useful to me, in maintaining my rights, and the honour of the family, hereafter. I very well understand that the Wychecombes of Hertfordshire have no claims on us; nor, indeed, any Wychecombe who is not descended from my respectable grandfather, the late Sir Wycherly."

"He must have been an *early*, instead of a *late* Sir Wycherly, rather, Mr. Thomas," put in Dutton, laughing at his own conceit; "for I can remember no other than the honourable baronet before us, in the last fifty years."

"Quite true, Dutton – very true," rejoined the person last alluded to. "As true as that 'time and tide wait for no man.' We understand the meaning of such things on the coast here. It was half a century, last October, since I succeeded my respected parent; but, it will not be another half century before some one will succeed me!"

Sir Wycherly was a hale, hearty man for his years, but he had no unmanly dread of his end. Still he felt it could not be very distant, having already numbered fourscore and four years. Nevertheless, there were certain phrases of usage, that Dutton did not see fit to forget on such an occasion, and he answered accordingly, turning to look at and admire the still ruddy countenance of the baronet, by way of giving emphasis to his words.

"You will yet see half of us into our graves, Sir Wycherly," he said, "and still remain an active man. Though I dare say another half century will bring most of us up. Even Mr. Thomas, here, and your young namesake can hardly hope to run out more line than that. Well, as for myself, I only desire to live through this war, that I may again see His Majesty's arms triumphant; though they do tell me that we are in for a good thirty years' struggle. Wars *have* lasted as long as *that*, Sir Wycherly, and I don't see why this may not, as well as another."

"Very true, Dutton; it is not only possible, but probable; and I trust both you and I may live to see our flower-hunter here, a post-captain, at least – though it would be wishing almost too much to expect to see him an admiral. There has been *one* admiral of the name, and I confess I should like to see another!"

"Has not Mr. Thomas a brother in the service?" demanded the master; "I had thought that my lord, the judge, had given us one of his young gentlemen."

"He thought of it; but the army got both of the boys, as it turned out. Gregory was to be the midshipman; my poor brother intending him for a sailor from the first, and so giving him the name that was once borne by the unfortunate relative we lost by shipwreck. I wished him to call one of the

lads James, after St. James; but, somehow, I never could persuade Thomas to see all the excellence of that pious young man."

Dutton was a little embarrassed, for St. James had left any thing but a godly savour behind him; and he was about to fabricate a tolerably bold assertion to the contrary, rather than incur the risk of offending the lord of the manor, when, luckily, a change in the state of the fog afforded him a favourable opportunity of bringing about an apposite change in the subject. During the whole of the morning the sea had been invisible from the head-land, a dense body of vapour resting on it, far as eye could reach; veiling the whole expanse with a single white cloud. The lighter portions of the vapour had at first floated around the head-land, which could not have been seen at any material distance; but all had been gradually settling down into a single mass, that now rose within twenty feet of the summit of the cliffs. The hour was still quite early, but the sun was gaining force, and it speedily drank up all the lighter particles of the mist, leaving a clear, bright atmosphere above the feathery bank, through which objects might be seen for miles. There was what seamen call a "fanning breeze," or just wind enough to cause the light sails of a ship to swell and collapse, under the double influence of the air and the motion of the hull, imitating in a slight degree the vibrations of that familiar appliance of the female toilet. Dutton's eye had caught a glance of the loftiest sail of a vessel, above the fog, going through this very movement; and it afforded him the release he desired, by enabling him to draw the attention of his companions to the same object.

"See, Sir Wycherly – see, Mr. Wychecombe," he cried, eagerly, pointing in the direction of the sail; "yonder is some of the king's canvass coming into our roadstead, or I am no judge of the set of a man-of-war's royal. It is a large bit of cloth, too, Mr. Lieutenant, for a sail so lofty!"

"It is a two-decker's royal, Master Dutton," returned the young sailor; "and now you see the fore and main, separately, as the ship keeps away."

"Well," put in Sir Wycherly, in a resigned manner; "here have I lived fourscore years on this coast, and, for the life of me, I have never been able to tell a fore-royal from a back-royal; or a mizzen head-stay from a head mizzen-stay. They are the most puzzling things imaginable; and now I cannot discover how you know that yonder sail, which I see plain enough, is a royal, any more than that it is a jib!"

Dutton and the lieutenant smiled, but Sir Wycherly's simplicity had a cast of truth and nature about it, that deterred most people from wishing to ridicule him. Then, the rank, fortune, and local interest of the baronet, counted for a good deal on all such occasions.

"Here is another fellow, farther east," cried Dutton, still pointing with a finger; "and every inch as big as his consort! Ah! it does my eyes good to see our roadstead come into notice, in this manner, after all I have said and done in its behalf – But, who have we here – a brother chip, by his appearance; I dare say some idler who has been sent ashore with despatches."

"There is another fellow further east, and every inch as big as his consort," said Wychecombe, as we shall call our lieutenant, in order to distinguish him from Tom of the same name, repeating the very words of Dutton, with an application and readiness that almost amounted to wit, pointing, in his turn, at two strangers who were ascending to the station by a path that led from the beach. "Certainly both these gentlemen are in His Majesty's service, and they have probably just landed from the ships in the offing."

The truth of this conjecture was apparent to Dutton at a glance. As the strangers joined each other, the one last seen proceeded in advance; and there was something in his years, the confident manner in which he approached, and his general appearance, that induced both the sailors to believe he might be the commander of one of the ships that had just come in view.

"Good-morrow, gentlemen," commenced this person, as soon as near enough to salute the party at the foot of the flagstaff; "good-morrow to ye all. I'm glad to meet you, for it's but a Jacob's ladder, this path of yours, through the ravine in the cliffs. Hey! why Atwood," looking around him at the sea of vapour, in surprise, "what the devil has become of the fleet?"

"It is lost in the fog, sir; we are above it, here; when more on a level with the ships, we could see, or fancy we saw, more of them than we do now."

"Here are the upper sails of two heavy ships, sir," observed Wychecombe, pointing in the direction of the vessels already seen; "ay, and yonder are two more – nothing but the royals are visible."

"Two more! – I left eleven two-deckers, three frigates, a sloop, and a cutter in sight, when I got into the boat. You might have covered 'em all with a pocket-handkerchief, hey! Atwood!"

"They were certainly in close order, sir, but I'll not take it on myself to say quite as near together as that."

"Ay, you're a dissenter by trade, and never will believe in a miracle. Sharp work, gentlemen, to get up such a hill as this, after fifty."

"It is, indeed, sir," answered Sir Wycherly, kindly. "Will you do us the favour to take a seat among us, and rest yourself after so violent an exertion? The cliff is hard enough to ascend, even when one keeps the path; though here is a young gentleman who had a fancy just now to go down it, without a path; and that, too, merely that a pretty girl might have a nosegay on her breakfast-table."

The stranger looked intently at Sir Wycherly for a moment, then glanced his eye at the groom and the pony, after which he took a survey of Tom Wychecombe, the lieutenant, and the master. He was a man accustomed to look about him, and he understood, by that rapid glance, the characters of all he surveyed, with perhaps the exception of that of Tom Wychecombe; and even of that he formed a tolerably shrewd conjecture. Sir Wycherly he immediately set down as the squire of the adjacent estate; Dutton's situation he hit exactly, conceiving him to be a worn-out master, who was employed to keep the signal-station; while he understood Wychecombe, by his undress, and air, to be a sea-lieutenant in the king's service. Tom Wychecombe he thought it quite likely might be the son, and heir of the lord of the manor, both being in mourning; though he decided in his own mind that there was not the smallest family likeness between them. Bowing with the courtesy of a man who knew how to acknowledge a civility, he took the proffered seat at Sir Wycherly's side without farther ceremony.

"We must carry the young fellow to sea with us, sir," rejoined the stranger, "and that will cure him of looking for flowers in such ticklish places. His Majesty has need of us all, in this war; and I trust, young gentleman, you have not been long ashore, among the girls."

"Only long enough to make a cure of a pretty smart hurt, received in cutting out a lugger from the opposite coast," answered Wychecombe, with sufficient modesty, and yet with sufficient spirit.

"Lugger! – ha! what Atwood? You surely do not mean, young gentleman, la Voltigeuse?"

"That was the name of the craft, sir – we found her in the roads of Groix."

"And then I've the pleasure of seeing Mr. Wychecombe, the young officer who led in that gallant attack?"

This was said with a most flattering warmth of manner, the stranger even rising and removing his hat, as he uttered the words with a heartiness that showed how much his feelings were in unison with what he said.

"I am Mr. Wychecombe, sir," answered the other, blushing to the temples, and returning the salute; "though I had not the honour of leading; one of the lieutenants of our ship being in another boat."

"Yes – I know all that – but he was beaten off, while you boarded and did the work. What have my lords commissioners done in the matter?"

"All that is necessary, so far as I am concerned, sir, I do assure you; having sent me a commission the very next week. I only wish they had been equally generous to Mr. Walton, who received a severe wound also, and behaved as well as man could behave."

"That would not be so wise, Mr. Wychecombe, since it would be rewarding a failure," returned the stranger, coldly. "Success is all in all, in war. Ah! there the fellows begin to show themselves, Atwood."

This remark drew all eyes, again, towards the sea, where a sight now presented itself that was really worthy of a passing notice. The vapour appeared to have become packed into a mass of some eighty or a hundred feet in height, leaving a perfectly clear atmosphere above it. In the clear air, were visible the upper spars and canvass of the entire fleet mentioned by the stranger; sixteen sail in all. There were the eleven two-deckers, and the three frigates, rising in pyramids of canvass, still fanning in towards the anchorage, which in that roadstead was within pistol-shot of the shore; while the royals and upper part of the topgallant sails of the sloop seemed to stand on the surface of the fog, like a monument. After a moment's pause, Wychecombe discovered even the head of the cutter's royal-mast, with the pennant lazily fluttering ahead of it, partly concealed in vapour. The fog seemed to settle, instead of rising, though it evidently rolled along the face of the waters, putting the whole scene in motion. It was not long ere the tops of the ships of the line became visible, and then living beings were for the first time seen in the moving masses.

"I suppose we offer just such a sight to the top-men of the ships, as they offer to us," observed the stranger. "They *must* see this head-land and flag-staff, Mr. Wychecombe; and there can be no danger of their standing in too far!"

"I should think not, sir; certainly the men aloft can see the cliffs above the fog, as we see the vessels' spars. Ha! Mr. Dutton, there is a rear-admiral's flag flying on board the ship farthest to the eastward."

"So I see, sir; and by looking at the third vessel on the western side of the line, you will find a bit of square bunting at the fore, which will tell you there is a vice-admiral beneath it."

"Quite true!" exclaimed Wychecombe, who was ever enthusiastic on matters relating to his profession; "a vice-admiral of the red, too; which is the next step to being a full admiral. This must be the fleet of Sir Digby Downes!"

"No, young gentleman," returned the stranger, who perceived by the glance of the other's eye, that a question was indirectly put to himself; "it is the southern squadron; and the vice-admiral's flag you see, belongs to Sir Gervaise Oakes. Admiral Bluewater is on board the ship that carries a flag at the mizzen."

"Those two officers always go together, Sir Wycherly," added the young man. "Whenever we hear the name of Sir Gervaise, that of Bluewater is certain to accompany it. Such a union in service is delightful to witness."

"Well may they go in company, Mr. Wychecombe," returned the stranger, betraying a little emotion. "Oakes and Bluewater were reefers together, under old Breasthook, in the Mermaid; and when the first was made a lieutenant into the Squid, the last followed as a mate. Oakes was first of the Briton, in her action with the Spanish frigates, and Bluewater third. For that affair Oakes got a sloop, and his friend went with him as his first. The next year they had the luck to capture a heavier ship than their own, when, for the first time in their service, the two young men were separated; Oakes getting a frigate, and Bluewater getting the Squid. Still they cruised in company, until the senior was sent in command of a flying squadron, with a broad pennant, when the junior, who by this time was post, received his old messmate on board his own frigate. In that manner they served together, down to the hour when the first hoisted his flag. From that time, the two old seamen have never been parted; Bluewater acting as the admiral's captain, until he got the square bunting himself. The vice-admiral has never led the van of a fleet, that the rear-admiral did not lead the rear-division; and, now that Sir Gervaise is a commander-in-chief, you see his friend, Dick Bluewater, is cruising in his company."

While the stranger was giving this account of the Two Admirals, in a half-serious, half-jocular manner, the eyes of his companions were on him. He was a middle-sized, red-faced man, with an aquiline nose, a light-blue animated eye, and a mouth, which denoted more of the habits and care of refinement than either his dress or his ordinary careless mien. A great deal is said about the aristocracy of the ears, and the hands, and the feet; but of all the features, or other appliances of the human frame, the mouth and the nose have the greatest influence in producing an impression of gentility. This was

peculiarly the case with the stranger, whose beak, like that of an ancient galley, gave the promise of a stately movement, and whose beautiful teeth and winning smile, often relieved the expression of a countenance that was not unfrequently stern. As he ceased speaking, Dutton rose, in a studied manner, raised his hat entirely from his head, bowed his body nearly to a right angle, and said,

"Unless my memory is treacherous, I believe I have the honor to see Rear-Admiral Bluewater, himself; I was a mate in the Medway, when he commanded the Chloe; and, unless five-and-twenty years have made more changes than I think probable, he is now on this hill."

"Your memory is a bad one, Mr. Dutton, and your hill has on it a much worse man, in all respects, than Admiral Blue-water. They say that man and wife, from living together, and thinking alike, having the same affections, loving the same objects, or sometimes hating them, get in time to look alike; hey! Atwood? It may be that I am growing like Bluewater, on the same principle; but this is the first time I ever heard the thing suggested. I am Sir Gervaise Oakes, at your service, sir."

The bow of Dutton was now much lower than before, while young Wychecombe uncovered himself, and Sir Wycherly arose and paid his compliments cordially, introducing himself, and offering the admiral and all his officers the hospitality of the Hall.

"Ay, this is straight-forward and hearty, and in the good old English manner!" exclaimed the admiral, when he had returned the salutes, and cordially thanked the baronet. "One might land in Scotland, now, anywhere between the Tweed and John a'Groat's house, and not be asked so much as to eat an oaten cake; hey! Atwood? – always excepting the mountain dew."

"You will have your fling at my poor countrymen, Sir Gervaise, and so there is no more to be said on the subject," returned the secretary, for such was the rank of the admiral's companion. "I might feel hurt at times, did I not know that you get as many Scotsmen about you, in your own ship, as you can; and that a fleet is all the better in your judgment, for having every other captain from the land o' cakes."

"Did you ever hear the like of that, Sir Wycherly? Because I stick to a man I like, he accuses me of having a predilection for his whole country. Here's Atwood, now; he was my clerk, when in a sloop; and he has followed me to the Plantagenet, and because I do not throw him overboard, he wishes to make it appear half Scotland is in her hold."

"Well, there are the surgeon, the purser, one of the mates, one of the marine officers, and the fourth lieutenant, to keep me company, Sir Gervaise," answered the secretary, smiling like one accustomed to his superior's jokes, and who cared very little about them. "When you send us all back to Scotland, I'm thinking there will be many a good vacancy to fill."

"The Scotch make themselves very useful, Sir Gervaise," put in Sir Wycherly, by way of smoothing the matter over; "and now we have a Brunswick prince on the throne, we Englishmen have less jealousy of them than formerly. I am sure I should be happy to see all the gentlemen mentioned by Mr. Atwood, at Wychecombe Hall."

"There, you're all well berthed while the fleet lies in these roads. Sir Wycherly, in the name of Scotland, I thank you. But what an extr'ornary (for so admirals pronounced the word a hundred years ago) scene this is, hey! Atwood? Many a time have I seen the hulls of ships when their spars were hid in the fog; but I do not remember ever to have seen before, sixteen sets of masts and sails moving about on vapour, without a single hull to uphold them. The tops of all the two-decked ships are as plainly to be seen, as if the air were without a particle of vapour, while all below the cat-harpings is hid in a cloud as thick as the smoke of battle. I do not half like Bluewater's standing in so far; perhaps, Mr. Dutton, they cannot see the cliffs, for I assure you we did not, until quite close under them. We went altogether by the lead, the masters feeling their way like so many blind beggars!"

"We always keep that nine-pounder loaded, Sir Gervaise," returned the master, "in order to warn vessels when they are getting near enough in; and if Mr. Wychecombe, who is younger than I, will run to the house and light this match, I will prime, and we may give 'em warning where they are, in less than a minute."

The admiral gave a ready assent to this proposition, and the respective parties immediately set about putting it in execution. Wychecombe hastened to the house to light the match, glad of an opportunity to inquire after Mildred; while Dutton produced a priming-horn from a sort of arm-chest that stood near the gun, and put the latter in a condition to be discharged. The young man was absent but a minute, and when all was ready, he turned towards the admiral, in order to get the signal to proceed.

"Let 'em have it, Mr. Wychecombe," cried Sir Gervaise, smiling; "it will wake Bluewater up; perhaps he may favour us with a broadside, by way of retort."

The match was applied, and the report of the gun succeeded. Then followed a pause of more than a minute; when the fog lifted around the Cæsar, the ship that wore a rear-admiral's flag, a flash like lightning was seen glancing in the mist, and then came the bellowing of a piece of heavy ordnance. Almost at the same instant, three little flags appeared at the mast-head of the Cæsar, for previously to quitting his own ship, Sir Gervaise had sent a message to his friend, requesting him to take care of the fleet. This was the signal to anchor. The effect of all this, as seen from the height, was exceedingly striking. As yet not a single hull had become visible, the fog remaining packed upon the water, in a way to conceal even the lower yards of the two-deckers. All above was bright, distinct, and so near, as almost to render it possible to distinguish persons. There every thing was vivid, while a sort of supernatural mystery veiled all beneath. Each ship had an officer aloft to look out for signals, and no sooner had the Cæsar opened her three little flags, which had long been suspended in black balls, in readiness for this service, than the answers were seen floating at the masthead of each of the vessels. Then commenced a spectacle still more curious than that which those on the cliff had so long been regarding with interest. Ropes began to move, and the sails were drawn up in festoons, apparently without the agency of hands. Cut off from a seeming communication with the ocean, or the hulls, the spars of the different ships appeared to be instinct with life; each machine playing its own part independently of the others, but all having the same object in view. In a very few minutes the canvass was hauled up, and the whole fleet was swinging to the anchors. Presently head after head was thrown out of the fog, the upper yards were alive with men, and the sails were handed. Next came the squaring of the yards, though this was imperfectly done, and a good deal by guess-work. The men came down, and there lay a noble fleet at anchor, with nothing visible to those on the cliffs, but their top-hamper and upper spars.

Sir Gervaise Oakes had been so much struck and amused with a sight that to him happened to be entirely novel, that he did not speak during the whole process of anchoring. Indeed, many a man might pass his life at sea, and never witness such a scene; but those who have, know that it is one of the most beautiful and striking spectacles connected with the wonders of the great deep.

By this time the sun had got so high, as to begin to stir the fog, and streams of vapour were shooting up from the beach, like smoke rising from coal-pits. The wind increased, too, and rolled the vapour before it, and in less than ten minutes, the veil was removed; ship after ship coming out in plain view, until the entire fleet was seen riding in the roadstead, in its naked and distinct proportions.

"Now, Bluewater is a happy fellow," exclaimed Sir Gervaise. "He sees his great enemy, the land, and knows how to deal with it."

"I thought the French were the great and natural enemies of every British sailor," observed Sir Wycherly, simply, but quite to the point.

"Hum – there's truth in that, too. But the land is an enemy to be feared, while the Frenchman is not – hey! Atwood?"

It was, indeed, a goodly sight to view the fine fleet that now lay anchored beneath the cliffs of Wychecombe. Sir Gervaise Oakes was, in that period, considered a successful naval commander, and was a favourite, both at the admiralty and with the nation. His popularity extended to the most distant colonies of England, in nearly all of which he had served with zeal and credit. But we are not writing of an age of nautical wonders, like that which succeeded at the close of the century. The

French and Dutch, and even the Spaniards, were then all formidable as naval powers; for revolutions and changes had not destroyed their maritime corps, nor had the consequent naval ascendency of England annihilated their navigation; the two great causes of the subsequent apparent invincibility of the latter power. Battles at sea, in that day, were warmly contested, and were frequently fruitless; more especially when fleets were brought in opposition. The single combats were usually more decisive, though the absolute success of the British flag, was far from being as much a matter of course as it subsequently became. In a word, the science of naval warfare had not made those great strides, which marked the career of England in the end, nor had it retrograded among her enemies, to the point which appears to have rendered their defeat nearly certain. Still Sir Gervaise was a successful officer; having captured several single ships, in bloody encounters, and having actually led fleets with credit, in four or five of the great battles of the times; besides being second and third in command, on various similar occasions. His own ship was certain to be engaged, let what would happen to the others. Equally as captains and as flag-officers, the nation had become familiar with the names of Oakes and Bluewater, as men ever to be found sustaining each other in the thickest of the fight. It may be well to add here, that both these favourite seamen were men of family, or at least what was considered men of family among the mere gentry of England; Sir Gervaise being a baronet by inheritance, while his friend actually belonged to one of those naval lines which furnishes admirals for generations; his father having worn a white flag at the main; and his grandfather having been actually ennobled for his services, dying vice-admiral of England. These fortuitous circumstances perhaps rendered both so much the greater favourites at court.

Chapter IV

"All with you; except three
On duty, and our leader Israel,
Who is expected momently."

Marino Faliero.

As his fleet was safely anchored, and that too, in beautiful order, in spite of the fog, Sir Gervaise Oakes showed a disposition to pursue what are termed ulterior views.

"This has been a fine sight – certainly a very fine sight; such as an old seaman loves; but there must be an end to it," he said. "You will excuse me, Sir Wycherly, but the movements of a fleet always have interest in my eyes, and it is seldom that I get such a bird's-eye view of those of my own; no wonder it has made me a somewhat unreflecting intruder."

"Make no apologies, Sir Gervaise, I beg of you; for none are needed, on any account. Though this head-land does belong to the Wychecombe property, it is fairly leased to the crown, and none have a better right to occupy it than His Majesty's servants. The Hall is a little more private, it is true, but even that has no door that will close upon our gallant naval defenders. It is but a short walk, and nothing will make me happier than to show you the way to my poor dwelling, and to see you as much at home under its roof, as you could be in the cabin of the Plantagenet."

"If any thing could make me as much at home in a house as in a ship, it would be so hearty a welcome; and I intend to accept your hospitality in the very spirit in which it is offered. Atwood and I have landed to send off some important despatches to the First Lord, and we will thank you for putting us in the way of doing it, in the safest and most expeditious manner. Curiosity and surprise have already occasioned the loss of half an hour; while a soldier, or a sailor, should never lose half a minute."

"Is a courier who knows the country well, needed, Sir Gervaise?" the lieutenant demanded, modestly, though with an interest that showed he was influenced only by zeal for the service.

The admiral looked at him, intently, for a moment, and seemed pleased with the hint implied in the question.

"Can you ride?" asked Sir Gervaise, smiling. "I could have brought half-a-dozen youngsters ashore with me; but, besides the doubts about getting a horse – a chaise I take it is out of the question here – I was afraid the lads might disgrace themselves on horseback."

"This must be said in pleasantry, Sir Gervaise," returned Wychecombe; "he would be a strange Virginian at least, who does not know how to ride!"

"And a strange Englishman, too, Bluewater would say; and yet I never see the fellow straddle a horse that I do not wish it were a studding-sail-boom run out to leeward! We sailors *fancy* we ride, Mr. Wychecombe, but it is some such fancy as a marine has for the fore-topmast-cross-trees. Can a horse be had, to go as far as the nearest post-office that sends off a daily mail?"

"That can it, Sir Gervaise," put in Sir Wycherly. "Here is Dick mounted on as good a hunter as is to be found in England; and I'll answer for my young namesake's willingness to put the animal's mettle to the proof. Our little mail has just left Wychecombe for the next twenty-four hours, but by pushing the beast, there will be time to reach the high road in season for the great London mail, which passes the nearest market-town at noon. It is but a gallop of ten miles and back, and that I'll answer for Mr. Wychecombe's ability to do, and to join us at dinner by four."

Young Wychecombe expressing his readiness to perform all this, and even more at need, the arrangement was soon made. Dick was dismounted, the lieutenant got his despatches and his

instructions, took his leave, and had galloped out of sight, in the next five minutes. The admiral then declared himself at liberty for the day, accepting the invitation of Sir Wycherly to breakfast and dine at the Hall, in the same spirit of frankness as that in which it had been given. Sir Wycherly was so spirited as to refuse the aid of his pony, but insisted on walking through the village and park to his dwelling, though the distance was more than a mile. Just as they were quitting the signal-station, the old man took the admiral aside, and in an earnest, but respectful manner, disburthened his mind to the following effect.

"Sir Gervaise," he said, "I am no sailor, as you know, and least of all do I bear His Majesty's commission in the navy, though I am in the county commission as a justice of the peace; so, if I make any little mistake you will have the goodness to overlook it, for I know that the etiquette of the quarter-deck is a very serious matter, and is not to be trifled with; – but here is Dutton, as good a fellow in his way as lives – his father was a sort of a gentleman too, having been the attorney of the neighbourhood, and the old man was accustomed to dine with me forty years ago – "

"I believe I understand you, Sir Wycherly," interrupted the admiral; "and I thank you for the attention you wish to pay my prejudices; but, you are master of Wychecombe, and I should feel myself a troublesome intruder, indeed, did you not ask whom you please to dine at your own table."

"That's not quite it, Sir Gervaise, though you have not gone far wide of the mark. Dutton is only a master, you know; and it seems that a master on board ship is a very different thing from a master on shore; so Dutton, himself, has often told me."

"Ay, Dutton is right enough as regards a king's ship, though the two offices are pretty much the same, when other craft are alluded to. But, my dear Sir Wycherly, an admiral is not disgraced by keeping company with a boatswain, if the latter is an honest man. It is true we have our customs, and what we call our quarter-deck and forward officers; which is court end and city, on board ship; but a master belongs to the first, and the master of the Plantagenet, Sandy Mc Yarn, dines with me once a month, as regularly as he enters a new word at the top of his log-book. I beg, therefore, you will extend your hospitality to whom you please – or – " the admiral hesitated, as he cast a good-natured glance at the master, who stood still uncovered, waiting for his superior to move away; "or, perhaps, Sir Wycherly, you would permit *me* to ask a friend to make one of our party."

"That's just it, Sir Gervaise," returned the kind-hearted baronet; "and Dutton will be one of the happiest fellows in Devonshire. I wish we could have Mrs. Dutton and Milly, and then the table would look what my poor brother James – St. James I used to call him – what the Rev. James Wychecombe was accustomed to term, mathematical. He said a table should have all its sides and angles duly filled. James was a most agreeable companion, Sir Gervaise, and, in divinity, he would not have turned his back on one of the apostles, I do verily believe!"

The admiral bowed, and turning to the master, he invited him to be of the party at the Hall, in the manner which one long accustomed to render his civilities agreeable by a sort of professional off-handed way, well knew how to assume.

"Sir Wycherly has insisted that I shall consider his table as set in my own cabin," he continued; "and I know of no better manner of proving my gratitude, than by taking him at his word, and filling it with guests that will be agreeable to us both. I believe there is a Mrs. Dutton, and a Miss – a – a – a – "

"Milly," put in the baronet, eagerly; "Miss Mildred Dutton – the daughter of our good friend Dutton, here, and a young lady who would do credit to the gayest drawing-room in London."

"You perceive, sir, that our kind host anticipates the wishes of an old bachelor, as it might be by instinct, and desires the company of the ladies, also. Miss Mildred will, at least, have two young men to do homage to her beauty, and *three* old ones to sigh in the distance – hey! Atwood?"

"Mildred, as Sir Wycherly knows, sir, has been a little disturbed this morning," returned Dutton, putting on his best manner for the occasion; "but, I feel no doubt, will be too grateful for this honour, not to exert herself to make a suitable return. As for my wife, gentlemen – "

"And what is to prevent Mrs. Dutton from being one of the party," interrupted Sir Wycherly, as he observed the husband to hesitate; "she sometimes favours me with her company."

"I rather think she will to-day, Sir Wycherly, if Mildred is well enough to go; the good woman seldom lets her daughter stray far from her apron-strings. She keeps her, as I tell her, within the sweep of her own hawse, Sir Gervaise."

"So much the wiser she, Master Dutton," returned the admiral, pointedly. "The best pilot for a young woman is a good mother; and now you have a fleet in your roadstead, I need not tell a seaman of your experience that you are on pilot-ground; – hey! Atwood?"

Here the parties separated, Dutton remaining uncovered until his superior had turned the corner of his little cottage, and was fairly out of sight. Then the master entered his dwelling to prepare his wife and daughter for the honours they had in perspective. Before he executed this duty, however, the unfortunate man opened what he called a locker – what a housewife would term a cupboard – and fortified his nerves with a strong draught of pure Nantes; a liquor that no hostilities, custom-house duties, or national antipathies, has ever been able to bring into general disrepute in the British Islands. In the mean time the party of the two baronets pursued its way towards the Hall.

The village, or hamlet of Wychecombe, lay about halfway between the station and the residence of the lord of the manor. It was an exceedingly rural and retired collection of mean houses, possessing neither physician, apothecary, nor attorney, to give it importance. A small inn, two or three shops of the humblest kind, and some twenty cottages of labourers and mechanics, composed the place, which, at that early day, had not even a chapel, or a conventicle; dissent not having made much progress then in England. The parish church, one of the old edifices of the time of the Henrys, stood quite alone, in a field, more than a mile from the place; and the vicarage, a respectable abode, was just on the edge of the park, fully half a mile more distant. In short, Wychecombe was one of those places which was so far on the decline, that few or no traces of any little importance it may have once possessed, were any longer to be discovered; and it had sunk entirely into a hamlet that owed its allowed claims to be marked on the maps, and to be noted in the gazetteers, altogether to its antiquity, and the name it had given to one of the oldest knightly families in England.

No wonder then, that the arrival of a fleet under the head, produced a great excitement in the little village. The anchorage was excellent, so far as the bottom was concerned, but it could scarcely be called a roadstead in any other point of view, since there was shelter against no wind but that which blew directly off shore, which happened to be a wind that did not prevail in that part of the island. Occasionally, a small cruiser would come-to, in the offing, and a few frigates had lain at single anchors in the roads, for a tide or so, in waiting for a change of weather; but this was the first fleet that had been known to moor under the cliffs within the memory of man. The fog had prevented the honest villagers from ascertaining the unexpected honour that had been done them, until the reports of the two guns reached their ears, when the important intelligence spread with due rapidity over the entire adjacent country. Although Wychecombe did not lie in actual view of the sea, by the time the party of Sir Wycherly entered the hamlet, its little street was already crowded with visiters from the fleet; every vessel having sent at least one boat ashore, and many of them some three or four. Captain's and gun-room stewards, midshipmen's foragers, loblolly boys, and other similar harpies, were out in scores; for this was a part of the world in which bum-boats were unknown; and if the mountain would not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must fain go to the mountain. Half an hour had sufficed to exhaust all the unsophisticated simplicity of the hamlet; and milk, eggs, fresh butter, soft-tommy, vegetables, and such fruits as were ripe, had already risen quite one hundred per cent. in the market.

Sir Gervaise had called his force the southern squadron, from the circumstance of its having been cruising in the Bay of Biscay, for the last six months. This was a wild winter-station, the danger from the elements greatly surpassing any that could well be anticipated from the enemy. The duty notwithstanding had been well and closely performed; several West India, and one valuable East India convoy having been effectually protected, as well as a few straggling frigates of the enemy picked up;

but the service had been excessively laborious to all engaged in it, and replete with privations. Most of those who now landed, had not trod terra firma for half a year, and it was not wonderful that all the officers whose duties did not confine them to the vessels, gladly seized the occasion to feast their senses with the verdure and odours of their native island. Quite a hundred guests of this character were also pouring into the street of Wychecombe, or spreading themselves among the surrounding farm-houses; flirting with the awkward and blushing girls, and keeping an eye at the same time to the main chance of the mess-table.

"Our boys have already found out your village, Sir Wycherly, in spite of the fog," the vice-admiral remarked, good-humouredly, as he cast his eyes around at the movement of the street; "and the locusts of Egypt will not come nearer to breeding a famine. One would think there was a great dinner *in petto*, in every cabin of the fleet, by the number of the captain's stewards that are ashore, hey! Atwood? I have seen nine of the harpies, myself, and the other seven can't be far off."

"Here is Galleygo, Sir Gervaise," returned the secretary, smiling; "though *he* can scarcely be called a captain's steward, having the honour to serve a vice-admiral and a commander-in-chief."

"Ay, but *we* feed the whole fleet at times, and have some excuse for being a little exacting – harkee, Galleygo – get a horse-cart, and push off at once, four or five miles further into the country; you might as well expect to find real pearls in fishes' eyes, as hope to pick up any thing nice among so many gun-room and cock-pit boys. I dine ashore to-day, but Captain Greenly is fond of mutton-chops, you'll remember."

This was said kindly, and in the manner of a man accustomed to treat his domestics with the familiarity of humble friends. Galleygo was as unpromising a looking butler as any gentleman ashore would be at all likely to tolerate; but he had been with his present master, and in his present capacity, ever since the latter had commanded a sloop of war. All his youth had been passed as a top-man, and he was really a prime seaman; but accident having temporarily placed him in his present station, Captain Oakes was so much pleased with his attention to his duty, and particularly with his order, that he ever afterwards retained him in his cabin, notwithstanding the strong desire the honest fellow himself had felt to remain aloft. Time and familiarity, at length reconciled the steward to his station, though he did not formally accept it, until a clear agreement had been made that he was not to be considered an idler on any occasion that called for the services of the best men. In this manner David, for such was his Christian name, had become a sort of nondescript on board of a man-of-war; being foremost in all the cuttings out, a captain of a gun, and was frequently seen on a yard in moments of difficulty, just to keep his hand in, as he expressed it, while he descended to the duties of the cabin in peaceable times and good weather. Near thirty years had he thus been half-steward, half-seaman when afloat, while on land he was rather a counsellor and minister of the closet, than a servant; for out of a ship he was utterly useless, though he never left his master for a week at a time, ashore or afloat. The name of Galleygo was a *sobriquet* conferred by his brother top-men, but had been so generally used, that for the last twenty years most of his shipmates believed it to be his patronymic. When this compound of cabin and forecastle received the order just related, he touched the lock of hair on his forehead, a ceremony he always used before he spoke to Sir Gervaise, the hat being removed at some three or four yards' distance, and made his customary answer of –

"Ay-ay-sir – your honour has been a young gentleman yourself, and knows what a young gentleman's stomach gets to be, a'ter a six months' fast in the Bay of Biscay; and a young gentleman's *boy's* stomach, too. I always thinks there's but a small chance for us, sir, when I sees six or eight of them light cruisers in my neighbourhood. They're som'mat like the sloops and cutters of a fleet, which picks up all the prizes."

"Quite true, Master Galleygo; but if the light cruisers get the prizes, you should recollect that the admiral always has his share of the prize-money."

"Yes, sir, I knows we has our share, but that's accordin' to law, and because the commanders of the light craft can't help it. Let 'em once get the law on their side, and not a ha'pence would bless our

pockets! No, sir, what we gets, we gets by the law; and as there is no law to fetch up young gentlemen or their boys, that pays as they goes, we never gets any thing they or their boys puts hands on."

"I dare say you are right, David, as you always are. It wouldn't be a bad thing to have an Act of Parliament to give an admiral his twentieth in the reefers' foragings. The old fellows would sometimes get back some of their own poultry and fruit in that way, hey! Atwood?"

The secretary smiled his assent, and then Sir Gervaise apologized to his host, repeated the order to the steward, and the party proceeded.

"This fellow of mine, Sir Wycherly, is no respecter of persons, beyond the etiquette of a man-of-war," the admiral continued, by way of further excuse. "I believe His Majesty himself would be favoured with an essay on some part of the economy of the cabin, were Galleygo to get an opportunity of speaking his mind to him. Nor is the fool without his expectations of some day enjoying this privilege; for the last lime I went to court, I found honest David rigged, from stem to stern, in a full suit of claret and steel, under the idea that he was 'to sail in company with me,' as he called it, 'with or without signal!'"

"There was nothing surprising in that, Sir Gervaise," observed the secretary. "Galleygo has sailed in company with you so long, and to so many strange lands; has been through so many dangers at your side, and has got so completely to consider himself as part of the family, that it was the most natural thing in the world he should expect to go to court with you."

"True enough. The fellow would face the devil, at my side, and I don't see why he should hesitate to face the king. I sometimes call him Lady Oakes, Sir Wycherly, for he appears to think he has a right of dower, or to some other lawyer-like claim on my estate; and as for the fleet, he always speaks of *that*, as if we commanded it in common. I wonder how Bluewater tolerates the blackguard; for he never scruples to allude to him as under *our* orders! If any thing should befal me, Dick and David would have a civil war for the succession, hey! Atwood?"

"I think military subordination would bring Galleygo to his senses, Sir Gervaise, should such an unfortunate accident occur – which Heaven avert for many years to come! There is Admiral Bluewater coming up the street, at this very moment, sir."

At this sudden announcement, the whole party turned to look in the direction intimated by the secretary. It was by this time at one end of the short street, and all saw a man just entering the other, who, in his walk, air, attire, and manner, formed a striking contrast to the active, merry, bustling, youthful young sailors who thronged the hamlet. In person, Admiral Bluewater was exceedingly tall and exceedingly thin. Like most seamen who have that physical formation, he stooped; a circumstance that gave his years a greater apparent command over his frame, than they possessed in reality. While this bend in his figure deprived it, in a great measure, of the sturdy martial air that his superior presented to the observer, it lent to his carriage a quiet and dignity that it might otherwise have wanted. Certainly, were this officer attired like an ordinary civilian, no one would have taken him for one of England's bravest and most efficient sea-captains; he would have passed rather as some thoughtful, well-educated, and refined gentleman, of retired habits, diffident of himself, and a stranger to ambition. He wore an undress rear-admiral's uniform, as a matter of course; but he wore it carelessly, as if from a sense of duty only; or conscious that no arrangement could give him a military air. Still all about his person was faultlessly neat, and perfectly respectable. In a word, no one but a man accustomed to the sea, were it not for his uniform, would suspect the rear-admiral of being a sailor; and even the seaman himself might be often puzzled to detect any other signs of the profession about him, than were to be found in a face, which, fair, gentlemanly, handsome, and even courtly as it was, in expression and outline, wore the tint that exposure invariably stamps on the mariner's countenance. Here, however, his unseaman-like character ceased. Admiral Oakes had often declared that "Dick Bluewater knew more about a ship than any man in England;" and as for a fleet, his mode of man[oe]uvring one had got to be standard in the service.

As soon as Sir Gervaise recognised his friend, he expressed a wish to wait for him, which was courteously converted by Sir Wycherly into a proposition to return and meet him. So abstracted was Admiral Bluewater, however, that he did not see the party that was approaching him, until he was fairly accosted by Sir Gervaise, who led the advance by a few yards.

"Good-day to you, Bluewater," commenced the latter, in his familiar, off-hand way; "I'm glad you have torn yourself away from your ship; though I must say the manner in which you came-to, in that fog, was more like instinct, than any thing human! I determined to tell you as much, the moment we met; for I don't think there is a ship, half her length out of mathematical order, notwithstanding the tide runs, here, like a racehorse."

"That is owing to your captains, Sir Gervaise," returned the other, observing the respect of manner, that the inferior never loses with his superior, on service, and in a navy; let their relative rank and intimacy be what they may on all other occasions; "good captains make handy ships. Our gentlemen have now been together so long, that they understand each other's movements; and every vessel in the fleet has her character as well as her commander!"

"Very true, Admiral Bluewater, and yet there is not another officer in His Majesty's service, that could have brought a fleet to anchor, in so much order, and in such a fog; and I ask your leave, sir, most particularly to thank you for the lesson you have given, not only to the captains, but to the commander-in-chief. I presume I may admire that which I cannot exactly imitate."

The rear-admiral merely smiled and touched his hat in acknowledgment of the compliment, but he made no direct answer in words. By this time Sir Wycherly and the others had approached, and the customary introductions took place. Sir Wycherly now pressed his new acquaintance to join his guests, with so much heartiness, that there was no such thing as refusing.

"Since you and Sir Gervaise both insist on it so earnestly, Sir Wycherly," returned the rear-admiral, "I must consent; but as it is contrary to our practice, when on foreign service – and I call this roadstead a foreign station, as to any thing we know about it – as it is contrary to our practice for both flag-officers to sleep out of the fleet, I shall claim the privilege to be allowed to go off to my ship before midnight. I think the weather looks settled, Sir Gervaise, and we may trust that many hours, without apprehension."

"Pooh – pooh – Bluewater, you are always fancying the ships in a gale, and clawing off a lee-shore. Put your heart at rest, and let us go and take a comfortable dinner with Sir Wycherly, who has a London paper, I dare to say, that may let us into some of the secrets of state. Are there any tidings from our people in Flanders?"

"Things remain pretty much as they have been," returned Sir Wycherly, "since that last terrible affair, in which the Duke got the better of the French at – I never can remember an outlandish name; but it sounds something like a Christian baptism. If my poor brother, St. James, were living, now, he could tell us all about it."

"Christian baptism! That's an odd allusion for a field of battle. The armies can't have got to Jerusalem; hey! Atwood?"

"I rather think, Sir Gervaise," the secretary coolly remarked, "that Sir Wycherly Wychecombe refers to the battle that took place last spring – it was fought at Font-something; and a font certainly has something to do with Christian baptism."

"That's it – that's it," cried Sir Wycherly, with some eagerness; "Fontenoï was the name of the place, where the Duke would have carried all before him, and brought Marshal Saxe, and all his frog-eaters prisoners to England, had our Dutch and German allies behaved better than they did. So it is with poor old England, gentlemen; whatever *she* gains, her allies always *lose* for her – the Germans, or the colonists, are constantly getting us into trouble!"

Both Sir Gervaise and his friend were practical men, and well knew that they never fought the Dutch or the French, without meeting with something that was pretty nearly their match. They had no faith in general national superiority. The courts-martial that so often succeeded general actions,

had taught them that there were all degrees of spirit, as well as all degrees of a want of spirit; and they knew too much, to be the dupes of flourishes of the pen, or of vapid declamation at dinner-speeches, and in the House of Commons. Men, well led and commanded, they had ascertained by experience, were worth twice as much as the same men when ill led and ill commanded; and they were not to be told that the moral tone of an army or a fleet, from which all its success was derived, depended more on the conventional feeling that had been got up through moral agencies, than on birth-place, origin, or colour. Each glanced his eye significantly at the other, and a sarcastic smile passed over the face of Sir Gervaise, though his friend maintained his customary appearance of gravity.

"I believe le Grand Monarque and Marshal Saxe give a different account of that matter, Sir Wycherly," drily observed the former; "and it may be well to remember that there are two sides to every story. Whatever may be said of Dettingen, I fancy history will set down Fontenoï as any thing but a feather in His Royal Highness' cap."

"You surely do not consider it possible for the French arms to overthrow a British army, Sir Gervaise Oakes!" exclaimed the simple-minded provincial – for such was Sir Wycherly Wychecombe, though he had sat in parliament, had four thousand a year, and was one of the oldest families in England – "It sounds like treason to admit the possibility of such a thing."

"God bless us, my dear sir, I am as far from supposing any such thing, as the Duke of Cumberland himself; who, by the way, has as much English blood in his veins, as the Baltic may have of the water of the Mediterranean – hey! Atwood? By the way, Sir Wycherly, I must ask a little tenderness of you in behalf of my friend the secretary, here, who has a national weakness in favour of the Pretender, and all of the clan Stuart."

"I hope not – I sincerely hope not, Sir Gervaise!" exclaimed Sir Wycherly, with a warmth that was not entirely free from alarm; his own loyalty to the new house being altogether without reproach. "Mr. Atwood has the air of a gentleman of too good principles not to see on which side real religious and political liberty lie. I am sure you are pleased to be jocular, Sir Gervaise; the very circumstance that he is in your company is a pledge of his loyalty."

"Well, well, Sir Wycherly, I would not give you a false idea of my friend Atwood, if possible; and so I may as well confess, that, while his Scotch blood inclines him to toryism, his English reason makes him a whig. If Charles Stuart never gets the throne until Stephen Atwood helps him to a seat on it, he may take leave of ambition for ever."

"I thought as much, Sir Gervaise – I thought *your* secretary could never lean to the doctrine of 'passive obedience and non-resistance.' That's a principle which would hardly suit sailors, Admiral Bluewater."

Admiral Bluewater's line, full, blue eye, lighted with an expression approaching irony; but he made no other answer than a slight inclination of the head. In point of fact, *he* was a Jacobite: though no one was acquainted with the circumstance but his immediate commanding officer. As a seaman, he was called on only to serve his country; and, as often happens to military men, he was willing to do this under any superior whom circumstances might place over his head, let his private sentiments be what they might. During the civil war of 1715, he was too young in years, and too low in rank to render his opinions of much importance; and, kept on foreign stations, his services could only affect the general interests of the nation, without producing any influence on the contest at home. Since that period, nothing had occurred to require one, whose duty kept him on the ocean, to come to a very positive decision between the two masters that claimed his allegiance. Sir Gervaise had always been able to persuade him that he was sustaining the honour and interests of his country, and that ought to be sufficient to a patriot, let who would rule. Notwithstanding this wide difference in political feeling between the two admirals – Sir Gervaise being as decided a whig, as his friend was a tory – their personal harmony had been without a shade. As to confidence, the superior knew the inferior so well, that he believed the surest way to prevent his taking sides openly with the Jacobites, or of doing them secret service, was to put it in his power to commit a great breach of trust. So long as

faith were put in his integrity, Sir Gervaise felt certain his friend Bluewater might be relied on; and he also knew that, should the moment ever come when the other really intended to abandon the service of the house of Hanover, he would frankly throw up his employments, and join the hostile standard, without profiting, in any manner, by the trusts he had previously enjoyed. It is also necessary that the reader should understand that Admiral Bluewater had never communicated his political opinions to any person but his friend; the Pretender and his counsellors being as ignorant of them, as George II. and his ministers. The only practical effect, therefore, that they had ever produced was to induce him to decline separate commands, several of which had been offered to him; one, quite equal to that enjoyed by Sir Gervaise Oakes, himself.

"No," the latter answered to Sir Wycherly's remark; though the grave, thoughtful expression of his face, showed how little his feelings chimed in, at the moment, with the ironical language of his tongue. "No – Sir Wycherly, a man-of-war's man, in particular, has not the slightest idea of 'passive obedience and non-resistance,' – that is a doctrine which is intelligible only to papists and tories. Bluewater is in a brown study; thinking no doubt of the manner in which he intends to lead down on Monsieur de Gravelin, should we ever have the luck to meet that gentleman again; so we will, if it's agreeable to all parties, change the subject."

"With all my heart, Sir Gervaise," answered the baronet, cordially; "and, after all, there is little use in discussing the affair of the Pretender any longer, for he appears to be quite out of men's minds, since that last failure of King Louis XV."

"Yes, Norris rather crushed the young viper in its shell, and we may consider the thing at an end."

"So my late brother, Baron Wychecombe, always treated it, Sir Gervaise. He once assured me that the twelve judges were clearly against the claim, and that the Stuarts had nothing to expect from *them*."

"Did he tell you, sir, on what ground these learned gentlemen had come to this decision?" quietly asked Admiral Blue-water.

"He did, indeed; for he knew my strong desire to make out a good case against the tories so well, that he laid all the law before me. I am a bad hand, however, to repeat even what I hear; though my poor brother, the late Rev. James Wychecombe – St. James as I used to call him – could go over a discourse half an hour long, and not miss a word. Thomas and James appear to have run away with the memories of the rest of the family. Nevertheless, I recollect it all depended on an act of Parliament, which is supreme; and the house of Hanover reigning by an act of Parliament, no court could set aside the claim."

"Very clearly explained, sir," continued Bluewater; "and you will permit me to say that there was no necessity for an apology on account of the memory. Your brother, however, might not have exactly explained what an act of Parliament is. King, Lords, and Commons, are all necessary to an act of Parliament."

"Certainly – we all know that, my dear admiral; we poor fellows ashore here, as well as you mariners at sea. The Hanoverian succession had all three to authorize it."

"Had it a king?"

"A king! Out of dispute – or what we bachelors ought to consider as much better, it had a *queen*. Queen Anne approved of the act, and that made it an act of Parliament. I assure you, I learned a good deal of law in the Baron's visits to Wychecombe; and in the pleasant hours we used to chat together in his chambers!"

"And who signed the act of Parliament that made Anne a queen? or did she ascend the throne by regular succession? Both Mary and Anne were sovereigns by acts of Parliament, and we must look back until we get the approval of a prince who took the crown by legal descent."

"Come – come, Bluewater," put in Sir Gervaise, gravely; "we may persuade Sir Wycherly, in this manner, that he has a couple of furious Jacobites in company. The Stuarts were dethroned by a

revolution, which is a law of nature, and enacted by God, and which of course overshadows all other laws when it gets into the ascendant, as it clearly has done in this case. I take it, Sir Wycherly, these are your park-gates, and that yonder is the Hall."

This remark changed the discourse, and the whole party proceeded towards the house, discussing the beauty of its position, its history, and its advantages, until they reached its door.

Chapter V

"Monarch and ministers, are awful names:
Whoever wear them, challenge our devoir."

Young.

Our plan does not require an elaborate description of the residence of Sir Wycherly. The house had been neither priory, abbey, nor castle; but it was erected as a dwelling for himself and his posterity, by a Sir Michael Wychecombe, two or three centuries before, and had been kept in good serviceable condition ever since. It had the usual long, narrow windows, a suitable hall, wainscoted rooms, battlemented walls, and turreted angles. It was neither large, nor small; handsome, nor ugly; grand, nor mean; but it was quaint, respectable in appearance, and comfortable as an abode.

The admirals were put each in possession of bed-chambers and dressing-rooms, as soon as they arrived; and Atwood was *berthed* not far from his commanding-officer, in readiness for service, if required. Sir Wycherly was naturally hospitable; but his retired situation had given him a zest for company, that greatly increased the inborn disposition. Sir Gervaise, it was understood, was to pass the night with him, and he entertained strong hopes of including his friend in the same arrangement. Beds were ordered, too, for Dutton, his wife, and daughter; and his namesake, the lieutenant, was expected also to sleep under his roof, that night.

The day passed in the customary manner; the party having breakfasted, and then separated to attend to their several occupations, agreeably to the usages of all country houses, in all parts of the world, and, we believe, in all time. Sir Gervaise, who had sent a messenger off to the Plantagenet for certain papers, spent the morning in writing; Admiral Bluewater walked in the park, by himself; Atwood was occupied with his superior; Sir Wycherly rode among his labourers; and Tom Wychecombe took a rod, and pretended to go forth to fish, though he actually held his way back to the head-land, lingering in and around the cottage until it was time to return home. At the proper hour, Sir Wycherly sent his chariot for the ladies; and a few minutes before the appointed moment, the party began to assemble in the drawing-room.

When Sir Wycherly appeared, he found the Duttons already in possession, with Tom doing the honours of the house. Of the sailing-master and his daughter, it is unnecessary to say more than that the former was in his best uniform – an exceedingly plain one, as was then the case with the whole naval wardrobe – and that the last had recovered from her illness, as was evident by the bloom that the sensitive blushes constantly cast athwart her lovely face. Her attire was exactly what it ought to have been; neat, simple, and becoming. In honour of the host, she wore her best; but this was what became her station, though a little jewelry that rather surpassed what might have been expected in a girl of her rank of life, threw around her person an air of modest elegance. Mrs. Dutton was a plain, matronly woman – the daughter of a land-steward of a nobleman in the same county – with an air of great mental suffering, from griefs she had never yet exposed to the heartless sympathy of the world.

The baronet was so much in the habit of seeing his humble neighbours, that an intimacy had grown up between them. Sir Wycherly, who was anything but an acute observer, felt an interest in the melancholy-looking, and almost heart-broken mother, without knowing why; or certainly without suspecting the real character of her habitual sadness; while Mildred's youth and beauty had not failed of producing the customary effect of making a friend of the old bachelor. He shook hands all round, therefore, with great cordiality; expressing his joy at meeting Mrs. Dutton, and congratulating the daughter on her complete recovery.

"I see Tom has been attentive to his duty," he added, "while I've been detained by a silly fellow about a complaint against a poacher. My namesake, young Wycherly, has not got back yet, though it is quite two hours past his time; and Mr. Atwood tells me the admiral is a little uneasy about his despatches. I tell him Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe, though I have not the honour of ranking him among my relatives, and he is only a Virginian by birth, is a young man to be relied on; and that the despatches are safe, let what may detain the courier."

"And why should not a Virginian be every way as trustworthy and prompt as an Englishman, Sir Wycherly?" asked Mrs. Dutton. "He *is* an Englishman, merely separated from us by the water."

This was said mildly, or in the manner of one accustomed to speak under a rebuked feeling; but it was said earnestly, and perhaps a little reproachfully, while the speaker's eye glanced with natural interest towards the beautiful face of her daughter.

"Why not, sure enough, my dear Mrs. Dutton!" echoed the baronet. "They *are* Englishmen, like ourselves, only born out of the realm, as it might be, and no doubt a little different on that account. They are fellow-subjects, Mrs. Dutton, and that is a great deal. Then they are miracles of loyalty, there being scarcely a Jacobite, as they tell me, in all the colonies."

"Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe is a very respectable young gentleman," said Dutton; "and I hear he is a prime seaman for his years. He has not the honour of being related to this distinguished family, like Mr. Thomas, here, it is true; but he is likely to make a name for himself. Should he get a ship, and do as handsome things in her, as he has done already, His Majesty would probably knight him; and then we should have *two* Sir Wycherly Wychecombes!"

"I hope not – I hope not!" exclaimed the baronet; "I think there must be a law against *that.* As it is, I shall be obliged to put Bart. after my name, as my worthy grandfather used to do, in order to prevent confusion; but England can't bear two Sir Wycherlys, any more than the world can bear two suns. Is not that your opinion, Miss Mildred?"

The baronet had laughed at his own allusion, showing he spoke half jocularly; but, as his question was put in too direct a manner to escape general attention, the confused girl was obliged to answer.

"I dare say Mr. Wychecombe will never reach a rank high enough to cause any such difficulty," she said; and it was said in all sincerity; for, unconsciously perhaps, she secretly hoped that no difference so wide might ever be created between the youth and herself. "If he should, I suppose his rights would be as good as another's, and he must keep his name."

"In such a case, which is improbable enough, as Miss Mildred has so well observed," put in Tom Wychecombe, "we should have to submit to the *knighthood*, for that comes from the king, who might knight a chimney-sweep, if he see fit; but a question might be raised as to the *name*. It is bad enough as it is; but if it really got to be *two* Sir Wycherlys, I think my dear uncle would be wrong to submit to such an invasion of what one might call his individuality, without making some inquiry as to the right of the gentleman to one or both his names. The result might show that the king had made a Sir Something Nobody."

The sneer and spite with which this was uttered, were too marked to escape notice; and both Dutton and his wife felt it would be unpleasant to mingle farther in the discourse. Still the last, submissive, rebuked, and heart-broken as she was, felt a glow on her own pale cheek, as she saw the colour mount in the face of Mildred, and she detected the strong impulses that urged the generous girl herself to answer.

"We have now known Mr. Wychecombe several months," observed Mildred, fastening her full, blue eye calmly on Tom's sinister-looking face; "and we have never known any thing to cause us to think he would bear a name – or names – that he does not at least think he has a right to."

This was said gently, but so distinctly, that every word entered fairly into Tom Wychecombe's soul; who threw a quick, suspicious glance at the lovely speaker, as if to ascertain how far she intended

any allusion to himself. Meeting with no other expression than that of generous interest, he recovered his self-command, and made his reply with sufficient coolness.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Dutton," he cried, laughing; "we young men will all of us have to get over the cliff, and hang dangling at the end of a rope, in order to awaken an interest in Miss Mildred, to defend us when our backs are turned. So eloquent – and most especially, so lovely, so charming an advocate, is almost certain of success; and my uncle and myself must admit the absent gentleman's right to our name; though, heaven be praised, he has not yet got either the title or the estate."

"I hope I have said nothing, Sir Wycherly, to displease *you*," returned Mildred, with emphasis; though her face was a thousand times handsomer than ever, with the blushes that suffused it. "Nothing would pain me more, than to suppose I had done so improper a thing. I merely meant that we cannot believe Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe would willingly take a name he had no right to."

"My little dear," said the baronet, taking the hand of the distressed girl, and kissing her cheek, as he had often done before, with fatherly tenderness; "it is not an easy matter for *you* to offend *me*; and I'm sure the young fellow is quite welcome to both my names, if you wish him to have 'em."

"And I merely meant, Miss Mildred," resumed Tom, who feared he might have gone too far; "that the young gentleman – quite without any fault of his own – is probably ignorant how he came by two names that have so long pertained to the head of an ancient and honourable family. There is many a young man born, who is worthy of being an earl, but whom the law considers – " here Tom paused to choose terms suitable for his auditor, when the baronet added,

"A *filius nullius* – that's the phrase, Tom – I had it from your own father's mouth."

Tom Wychecombe started, and looked furtively around him, as if to ascertain who suspected the truth. Then he continued, anxious to regain the ground he feared he had lost in Mildred's favour.

"*Filius nullius* means, Miss Mildred, exactly what I wish to express; a family without any legal origin. They tell me, however, that in the colonies, nothing is more common than for people to take the names of the great families at home, and after a while they fancy themselves related."

"I never heard Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe say a word to lead us to suppose that he was, in any manner, connected with this family, sir," returned Mildred, calmly, but quite distinctly.

"Did you ever hear him say he was *not*, Miss Mildred?"

"I cannot say I ever did, Mr. Wychecombe. It is a subject that has seldom been introduced in my hearing."

"But it has often been introduced in his! I declare, Sir Wycherly, it has struck me as singular, that while you and I have so very frequently stated in the presence of this gentleman, that our families are in no way connected, he has never, in any manner, not even by a nod or a look of approbation, assented to what he must certainly know to be the case. But I suppose, like a true colonist, he was unwilling to give up his hold on the old stock."

Here the entrance of Sir Gervaise Oakes changed the discourse. The vice-admiral joined the party in good spirits, as is apt to be the case with men who have been much occupied with affairs of moment, and who meet relaxation with a consciousness of having done their duty.

"If one could take with him to sea, the comforts of such a house as this, Sir Wycherly, and such handsome faces as your own, young lady," cried Sir Gervaise, cheerfully, after he had made his salutations; "there would be an end of our exclusiveness, for every *petit maître* of Paris and London would turn sailor, as a matter of course. Six months in the Bay of Biscay gives an old fellow, like myself, a keen relish for these enjoyments, as hunger makes any meat palatable; though I am far, very far, indeed, from putting this house or this company, on a level with an indifferent feast, even for an epicure."

"Such as it is, Sir Gervaise, the first is quite at your service, in all things," rejoined the host; "and the last will do all in its power to make itself agreeable."

"Ah – here comes Bluewater to echo all I have said and feel. I am telling Sir Wycherly and the ladies, of the satisfaction we grampuses experience when we get berthed under such a roof as this, with woman's sweet face to throw a gleam of happiness around her."

Admiral Bluewater had already saluted the mother, but when his eye fell on the face and person of Mildred, it was riveted, for an instant, with an earnestness and intentness of surprise and admiration that all noted, though no one saw fit to comment on it.

"Sir Gervaise is so established an admirer of the sex," said the rear-admiral, recovering himself, after a pause; "that I am never astonished at any of his raptures. Salt water has the usual effect on him, however; for I have now known him longer than he might wish to be reminded of, and yet the only mistress who can keep him true, is his ship."

"And to that I believe I may be said to be constant. I don't know how it is with you, Sir Wycherly, but every thing I am accustomed to I like. Now, here I have sailed with both these gentlemen, until I should as soon think of going to sea without a binnacle, as to go to sea without 'em both – hey! Atwood? Then, as to the ship, my flag has been flying in the Plantagenet these ten years, and I can't bear to give the old craft up, though Bluewater, here, would have turned her over to an inferior after three years' service. I tell all the young men they don't stay long enough in any one vessel to find out her good qualities. I never was in a slow ship yet."

"For the simple reason that you never get into a fast one, that you do not wear her fairly out, before you give her up. The Plantagenet, Sir Wycherly, is the fastest two-decker in His Majesty's service, and the vice-admiral knows it too well to let any of us get foot in her, while her timbers will hang together."

"Let it be so, if you will; it only shows, Sir Wycherly, that I do not choose my friends for their bad qualities. But, allow me to ask, young lady, if you happen to know a certain Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe – a namesake, but no relative, I understand, of our respectable host – and one who holds a commission in His Majesty's service?"

"Certainly, Sir Gervaise," answered Mildred, dropping her eyes to the floor, and trembling, though she scarce knew why; "Mr. Wychecombe has been about here, now, for some months, and we all know something of him."

"Then, perhaps you can tell me whether he is generally a loiterer on duty. I do not inquire whether he is a laggard in his duty to you, but whether, mounted on a good hunter, he could get over twenty miles, in eight or ten hours, for instance?"

"I think Sir Wycherly would tell you that he could, sir."

"He may be a Wychecombe, Sir Wycherly, but he is no Plantagenet, in the way of sailing. Surely the young gentleman ought to have returned some hours since!"

"It's quite surprising to me that he is not back before this," returned the kind-hearted baronet. "He is active, and understands himself, and there is not a better horseman in the county – is there, Miss Mildred?"

Mildred did not think it necessary to reply to this direct appeal; but spite of the manner in which she had been endeavouring to school her feelings, since the accident on the cliff, she could not prevent the deadly paleness that dread of some accident had produced, or the rush of colour to her cheeks that followed from the unexpected question of Sir Wycherly. Turning to conceal her confusion, she met the eye of Tom Wychecombe riveted on her face, with an expression so sinister, that it caused her to tremble. Fortunately, at this moment, Sir Gervaise turned away, and drawing near his friend, on the other side of the large apartment, he said in an under tone —

"Luckily, Atwood has brought ashore a duplicate of my despatches, Bluewater, and if this dilatory gentleman does not return by the time we have dined, I will send off a second courier. The intelligence is too important to be trifled with; and after having brought the fleet north, to be in readiness to serve the state in this emergency, it would be rare folly to leave the ministry in ignorance of the reasons why I have done it."

"Nevertheless, they would be almost as well-informed, as I am myself," returned the rear-admiral, with a little point, but quite without any bitterness of manner. "The only advantage I have over them is that I *do* know where the fleet is, which is more than the First Lord can boast of."

"True – I had forgot, my friend – but you must feel that there *is* a subject on which I had better not consult you. I have received some important intelligence, that my duty, as a commander-in-chief, renders it necessary I should – keep to myself."

Sir Gervaise laughed as he concluded, though he seemed vexed and embarrassed. Admiral Bluewater betrayed neither chagrin, nor disappointment; but strong, nearly ungovernable curiosity, a feeling from which he was singularly exempt in general, glowed in his eyes, and lighted his whole countenance. Still, habitual submission to his superior, and the self-command of discipline, enabled him to wait for any thing more that his friend might communicate. At this moment, the door opened, and Wycherly entered the room, in the state in which he had just dismounted. It was necessary to throw but a single glance at his hurried manner, and general appearance, to know that he had something of importance to communicate, and Sir Gervaise made a sign for him not to speak.

"This is public service, Sir Wycherly," said the vice-admiral, "and I hope you will excuse us for a few minutes. I beg this good company will be seated at table, as soon as dinner is served, and that you will treat us as old friends – as I should treat you, if we were on board the Plantagenet. Admiral Blue-water, will you be of our conference?"

Nothing more was said until the two admirals and the young lieutenant were in the dressing-room of Sir Gervaise Oakes. Then the latter turned, and addressed Wycherly, with the manner of a superior.

"I should have met you with a reproof, for this delay, young gentleman," he commenced, "did I not suspect, from your appearance, that something of moment has occurred to produce it. Had the mail passed the market-town, before you reached it, sir?"

"It had not, Admiral Oakes; and I have the satisfaction of knowing that your despatches are now several hours on their way to London. I reached the office just in season to see them mailed."

"Humph! On board the Plantagenet, it is the custom for an officer to report any important duty done, as soon as it is in a condition to be thus laid before the superior!"

"I presume that is the usage in all His Majesty's ships, Sir Gervaise Oakes: but I have been taught that a proper discretion, when it does not interfere with positive orders, and sometimes when it does, is a surer sign of a useful officer, than even the most slavish attention to rules."

"That is a just distinction, young gentleman, though safer in the hands of a captain, perhaps, than in those of a lieutenant," returned the vice-admiral, glancing at his friend, though he secretly admired the youth's spirit. "Discretion is a comparative term; meaning different things with different persons. May I presume to ask what Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe calls discretion, in the present instance?"

"You have every right, sir, to know, and I only wanted your permission to tell my whole story. While waiting to see the London mail start with your despatches, and to rest my horse, a post-chaise arrived that was carrying a gentleman, who is suspected of being a Jacobite, to his country-seat, some thirty miles further west. This gentleman held a secret conference with another person of the same way of thinking as himself; and there was so much running and sending of messages, that I could not avoid suspecting something was in the wind. Going to the stable to look after Sir Wycherly's hunter, for I knew how much he values the animal, I found one of the stranger's servants in discourse with the ostler. The latter told me, when the chaise had gone, that great tidings had reached Exeter, before the travellers quitted the town. These tidings he described as news that 'Charley was no longer over the water.' It was useless, Sir Gervaise, to question one so stupid; and, at the inn, though all observed the manner of the traveller and his visiter, no one could tell me any thing positive. Under the circumstances, therefore, I threw myself into the return chaise, and went as far as Fowey, where I met the important intelligence that Prince Charles has actually landed, and is at this moment up, in Scotland!"

"The Pretender is then really once more among us!" exclaimed Sir Gervaise, like one who had half suspected the truth.

"Not the Pretender, Sir Gervaise, as I understand the news; but his young son, Prince Charles Edward, one much more likely to give the kingdom trouble. The fact is certain, I believe; and as it struck me that it might be important to the commander of so fine a fleet as this which lies under Wychecombe Head, to know it, I lost no time in getting back with the intelligence."

"You have done well, young gentleman, and have proved that discretion *is* quite as useful and respectable in a lieutenant, as it can possibly prove to be in a full admiral of the white. Go, now, and make yourself fit to take a seat by the side of one of the sweetest girls in England, where I shall expect to see you, in fifteen minutes. Well, Bluewater," he continued, as soon as the door closed on Wycherly; "this *is* news, of a certainty!"

"It is, indeed; and I take it to be the news, or connected with the news, that you have sent to the First Lord, in the late despatches. It has not taken you altogether by surprise, if the truth were said?"

"It has not, I confess. You know what excellent intelligence we have had, the past season, from the Bordeaux agent; he sent me off such proofs of this intended expedition, that I thought it advisable to bring the fleet north on the strength of it, that the ships might be used as the exigency should require."

"Thank God, it is a long way to Scotland, and it is not probable we can reach the coast of that country until all is over! I wish we had inquired of this young man with what sort of, and how large a naval force the prince was accompanied with. Shall I send for him, that we may put the question?"

"It is better that you remain passive, Admiral Bluewater. I now promise you that you shall learn all I hear; and that, under the circumstances, I think ought to content you."

The two admirals now separated, though neither returned to the company for some little time. The intelligence they had just learned was too important to be lightly received, and each of these veteran seamen paced his room, for near a quarter of an hour, reflecting on what might be the probable consequences to the country and to himself. Sir Gervaise Oakes expected some event of this nature, and was less taken by surprise than his friend; still he viewed the crisis as exceedingly serious, and as one likely to destroy the prosperity of the nation, as well as the peace of families. There was then in England, as there is to-day, and as there probably will be throughout all time, two parties; one of which clung to the past with its hereditary and exclusive privileges, while the other looked more towards change for anticipated advantages, and created honours. Religion, in that age, was made the stalking-horse of politicians; as is liberty on one side, and order on the other, in our own times; and men just as blindly, as vehemently, and as regardlessly of principle, submitted to party in the middle of the eighteenth century, as we know they do in the middle of the nineteenth. The mode of acting was a little changed, and the watchwords and rallying points were not exactly the same, it is true; but, in all that relates to ignorant confidence, ferocious denunciation, and selfishness but half concealed under the cloak of patriotism, the England of the original whigs and tories, was the England of conservatism and reform, and the America of 1776, the America of 1841.

Still thousands always act, in political struggles, with the fairest intentions, though they act in bitter opposition to each other. When prejudice becomes the stimulant of ignorance, no other result may be hoped for; and the experience of the world, in the management of human affairs, has left the upright and intelligent, but one conclusion as the reward of all the pains and penalties with which political revolutions have been effected – the conviction that no institutions can be invented, which a short working does not show will be perverted from their original intention, by the ingenuity of those entrusted with power. In a word, the physical constitution of man does not more infallibly tend to decrepitude and imbecility, imperiously requiring a new being, and a new existence, to fulfil the objects of his creation, than the moral constitutions which are the fruits of his wisdom, contain the seeds of abuses and decay, that human selfishness will be as certain to cultivate, as human indulgence is to aid the course of nature, in hastening the approaches of death. Thus, while

on the one hand, there exists the constant incentive of abuses and hopes to induce us to wish for modifications of the social structure, on the other there stands the experience of ages to demonstrate their insufficiency to produce the happiness we aim at. If the world advances in civilization and humanity, it is because knowledge will produce its fruits in every soil, and under every condition of cultivation and improvement.

Both Sir Gervaise Oakes and Admiral Bluewater believed themselves to be purely governed by principles, in submitting to the bias that each felt towards the conflicting claims of the houses of Brunswick and Stuart. Perhaps no two men in England were in fact less influenced by motives that they ought to feel ashamed to own; and yet, as has been seen, while they thought so much alike on most other things, on this they were diametrically opposed to each other. During the many years of arduous and delicate duties that they had served together, jealousy, distrust, and discontent had been equally strangers to their bosoms; for each had ever felt the assurance that his own honour, happiness, and interests were as much ruling motives with his friend, as they could well be with himself Their lives had been constant scenes of mutual but unpretending kindnesses; and this under circumstances that naturally awakened all the most generous and manly sentiments of their natures. When young men, their laughing messmates had nick-named them Pylades and Orestes; and later in life, on account of their cruising so much in company, they were generally known in the navy as the “twin captains.” On several occasions had they fought enemies’ frigates, and captured them; on these occasions, as a matter of course, the senior of the two became most known to the nation; but Sir Gervaise had made the most generous efforts to give his junior a full share of the credit, while Captain Bluewater never spoke of the affairs without mentioning them as victories of the commodore. In a word, on all occasions, and under all circumstances, it appeared to be the aim of these generous-minded and gallant seamen, to serve each other; nor was this attempted with any effort, or striving for effect; all that was said, or done, coming naturally and spontaneously from the heart. But, for the first time in their lives, events had now occurred which threatened a jarring of the feelings between them, if they did not lead to acts which must inevitably place them in open and declared hostility to each other. No wonder, then, that both looked at the future with gloomy forebodings, and a distrust, which, if it did not render them unhappy, at least produced uneasiness.

Chapter VI

"The circle form'd, we sit in silent state,
Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate; Y
es ma'am, and no ma'am, uttered softly show,
Every five minutes how the minutes go."

Cowper.

It is scarcely necessary to tell the reader that England, as regarded material civilization, was a very different country a hundred years since, from what it is to-day. We are writing of an age of heavy wagons, coaches and six, post-chaises and four; and not of an era of MacAdam-roads, or of cars flying along by steam. A man may now post down to a country-house, some sixty or eighty miles, to dinner; and this, too, by the aid of only a pair of horses; but, in 1745 such an engagement would have required at least a start on the previous day; and, in many parts of the island, it would have been safer to have taken two days' grace. Scotland was then farther from Devonshire, in effect, than Geneva is now; and news travelled slowly, and with the usual exaggerations and uncertainties of delay. It was no wonder, then, that a Jacobite who was posting off to his country-house – the focus of an English landlord's influence and authority – filled with intelligence that had reached him through the activity of zealous political partisans, preceded the more regular tidings of the mail, by several hours. The little that had escaped this individual, or his servants rather, for the gentleman was tolerably discreet himself, confiding in only one or two particular friends at each relay, had not got out to the world, either very fully, or very clearly. Wycherly had used intelligence in making his inquiries, and he had observed an officer's prudence in keeping his news for the ears of his superior alone. When Sir Gervaise joined the party in the drawing-room, therefore, he saw that Sir Wycherly knew nothing of what had occurred at the north; and he intended the glance which he directed at the lieutenant to convey a hearty approval of his discretion. This forbearance did more to raise the young officer in the opinion of the practised and thoughtful admiral, than the gallantry with which the youth had so recently purchased his commission; for while many were brave, few had the self-command, and prudence, under circumstances like the present, that alone can make a man safe in the management of important public interests. The approbation that Sir Gervaise felt, and which he desired to manifest, for Wycherly's prudence, was altogether a principle, however; since there existed no sufficient reason for keeping the secret from as confirmed a whig as his host. On the contrary, the sooner those opinions, which both of them would be apt to term sound, were promulgated in the neighbourhood, the better it might prove for the good cause. The vice-admiral, therefore, determined to communicate himself, as soon as the party was seated at table, the very secret which he so much commended the youth for keeping. Admiral Bluewater joining the company, at this instant, Sir Wycherly led Mrs. Dutton to the table. No alteration had taken place among the guests, except that Sir Gervaise wore the red riband; a change in his dress that his friend considered to be openly hoisting the standard of the house of Hanover.

"One would not think, Sir Wycherly," commenced the vice-admiral, glancing his eyes around him, as soon as all were sealed; "that this good company has taken its place at your hospitable table, in the midst of a threatened civil war, if not of an actual revolution."

Every hand was arrested, and every eye turned towards the speaker; even Admiral Bluewater earnestly regarding his friend, anxious to know what would come next.

"I believe my household is in due subjection," answered Sir Wycherly, gazing to the right and left, as if he expected to see his butler heading a revolt; "and I fancy the only change we shall see to-day, will be the removal of the courses, and the appearance of their successors."

"Ay, so says the hearty, comfortable Devonshire baronet, while seated at his own board, favoured by abundance and warm friends. But it would seem the snake was only scotched; not killed."

"Sir Gervaise Oaken has grown figurative; with his *snakes* and *scotch*ings," observed the rear-admiral, a little drily.

"It is *Scotch*-ing, as you say with so much emphasis, Blue-water. I suppose, Sir Wycherly – I suppose, Mr. Dutton, and you, my pretty young lady – I presume all of you have heard of such a person as the Pretender; – some of you may possibly have *seen* him."

Sir Wycherly now dropt his knife and fork, and sat gazing at the speaker in amazement. To him the Christian religion, the liberties of the subject – more especially of the baronet and lord of the manor, who had four thousand a year – and the Protestant succession, all seemed to be in sudden danger.

"I always told my brother, the judge – Mr. Baron Wychecombe, who is dead and gone – that what between the French, that rogue the Pope, and the spurious offspring of King James II., we should yet see troublesome times in England! And now, sir, my predictions are verified!"

"Not as to England, yet, my good sir. Of Scotland I have not quite so good news to tell you; as your namesake, here, brings us the tidings that the son of the Pretender has landed in that kingdom, and is rallying the clans. He has come unattended by any Frenchmen, it would seem, and has thrown himself altogether on the misguided nobles and followers of his house."

"'Tis, at least, a chivalrous and princely act!" exclaimed Admiral Bluewater.

"Yes – inasmuch as it is a heedless and mad one. England is not to be conquered by a rabble of half-dressed Scotchmen."

"True; but England may be conquered by England, notwithstanding."

Sir Gervaise now chose to remain silent, for never before had Bluewater come so near betraying his political bias, in the presence of third persons. This pause enabled Sir Wycherly to find his voice.

"Let me see, Tom," said the baronet, "fifteen and ten are twenty-five, and ten are thirty, and ten are forty-five – it is just thirty years since the Jacobites were up before! It would seem that half a human life is not sufficient to fill the cravings of a Scotchman's maw, for English gold."

"Twice thirty years would hardly quell the promptings of a noble spirit, when his notions of justice showed him the way to the English throne," observed Bluewater, coolly. "For my part, I like the spirit of this young prince, for he who nobly dares, nobly deserves. What say you, my beautiful neighbour?"

"If you mean to address me, sir, by that compliment," answered Mildred, modestly, but with the emphasis that the gentlest of her sex are apt to use when they feel strongly; "I must be suffered to say that I hope every Englishman will dare as nobly, and deserve as well in defence of his liberties."

"Come – come, Bluewater," interrupted Sir Gervaise, with a gravity that almost amounted to reproof; "I cannot permit such innuendoes before one so young and unpractised. The young lady might really suppose that His Majesty's fleet was entrusted to men unworthy to enjoy his confidence, by the cool way in which you carry on the joke. I propose, now, Sir Wycherly, that we eat our dinner in peace, and say no more about this mad expedition, until the cloth is drawn, at least. It's a long road to Scotland, and there is little danger that this adventurer will find his way into Devonshire before the nuts are placed before us."

"It would be nuts to us, if he did, Sir Gervaise," put in Tom Wycherly, laughing heartily at his own wit. "My uncle would enjoy nothing more than to see the spurious sovereign on his own estate, here, and in the hands of his own tenants. I think, sir, that Wychecombe and one or two of the adjoining manors, would dispose of him."

"That might depend on circumstances," the admiral answered, a little drily. "These Scots have such a thing as a claymore, and are desperate fellows, they tell me, at a charge. The very fact of arming a soldier with a short sword, shows a most bloody-minded disposition."

"You forget, Sir Gervaise, that we have our Cornish hug, here in the west of England; and I will put our fellows against any Scotch regiment that ever charged an enemy."

Tom laughed again at his own allusion to a proverbial mode of grappling, familiar to the adjoining county.

"This is all very well, Mr. Thomas Wychecombe, so long as Devonshire is in the west of England, and Scotland lies north of the Tweed. Sir Wycherly might as well leave the matter in the hands of the Duke and his regulars, if it were only in the way of letting every man follow his own trade."

"It strikes me as so singularly insolent in a base-born boy like this, pretending to the English crown, that I can barely speak of him with patience! We all know that his father was a changeling, and the son of a changeling can have no more right than the father himself. I do not remember what the law terms such pretenders; but I dare say it is something sufficiently odious."

"*Filius nullius*, Thomas," said Sir Wycherly, with a little eagerness to show his learning. "That's the very phrase. I have it from the first authority; my late brother, Baron Wychecombe, giving it to me with his own mouth, on an occasion that called for an understanding of such matters. The judge was a most accurate lawyer, particularly in all that related to names; and I'll engage, if he were living at this moment, he would tell you the legal appellation of a changeling ought to be *filius nullius*."

In spite of his native impudence, and an innate determination to make his way in the world, without much regard to truth, Tom Wychecombe felt his cheek burn so much, at this innocent allusion of his reputed uncle, that he was actually obliged to turn away his face, in order to conceal his confusion. Had any moral delinquency of his own been implicated in the remark, he might have found means to steel himself against its consequences; but, as is only too often the case, he was far more ashamed of a misfortune over which he had no possible control, than he would have been of a crime for which he was strictly responsible in morals. Sir Gervaise smiled at Sir Wycherly's knowledge of law terms, not to say of Latin; and turning good-humouredly to his friend the rear-admiral, anxious to re-establish friendly relations with him, he said with well-concealed irony –

"Sir Wycherly must be right, Bluewater. A changeling is *nobody* – that is to say, he is not the *body* he pretends to be, which is substantially being nobody – and the son of nobody, is clearly a *filius nullius*. And now having settled what may be called the law of the case, I demand a truce, until we get our nuts – for as to Mr. Thomas Wychecombe's having *his* nut to crack, at least to-day, I take it there are too many loyal subjects in the north."

When men know each other as well as was the case with our two admirals, there are a thousand secret means of annoyance, as well as of establishing amity. Admiral Bluewater was well aware that Sir Gervaise was greatly superior to the vulgar whig notion of the day, which believed in the fabricated tale of the Pretender's spurious birth; and the secret and ironical allusion he had made to his impression on that subject, acted as oil to his own chafed spirit, disposing him to moderation. This had been the intention of the other; and the smiles they exchanged, sufficiently proved that their usual mental intercourse was temporarily restored at least.

Deference to his guests made Sir Wycherly consent to change the subject, though he was a little mystified with the obvious reluctance of the two admirals to speak of an enterprise that ought to be uppermost, according to his notion of the matter, in every Englishman's mind. Tom had received a rebuke that kept him silent during the rest of the dinner; while the others were content to eat and drink, as if nothing had happened.

It is seldom that a party takes its seat at table without some secret man[oe]uvring, as to the neighbourhood, when the claims of rank and character do not interfere with personal wishes. Sir Wycherly had placed Sir Gervaise on his right and Mrs. Dutton on his left. But Admiral Bluewater

had escaped from his control, and taken his seat next to Mildred, who had been placed by Tom Wychecombe close to himself, at the foot of the table. Wycherly occupied the seat opposite, and this compelled Dutton, and Mr. Rotherham, the vicar, to fill the other two chairs. The good baronet had made a wry face, at seeing a rear-admiral so unworthily bestowed; but Sir Gervaise assuring him that his friend was never so happy as when in the service of beauty, he was fain to submit to the arrangement.

That Admiral Bluewater was struck with Mildred's beauty, and pleased with her natural and feminine manner, one altogether superior to what might have been expected from her station in life, was very apparent to all at table; though it was quite impossible to mistake his parental and frank air for any other admiration than that which was suitable to the difference in years, and in unison with their respective conditions and experience. Mrs. Dutton, so far from taking the alarm at the rear-admiral's attentions, felt gratification in observing them; and perhaps she experienced a secret pride in the consciousness of their being so well merited. It has been said, already, that she was, herself, the daughter of a land-steward of a nobleman, in an adjoining county; but it may be well to add, here, that she had been so great a favourite with the daughters of her father's employer, as to have been admitted, in a measure, to their society; and to have enjoyed some of the advantages of their education. Lady Wilmeter, the mother of the young ladies, to whom she was admitted as a sort of humble companion, had formed the opinion it might be an advantage to the girl to educate her for a governess; little conceiving, in her own situation, that she was preparing a course of life for Martha Ray, for such was Mrs. Dutton's maiden name, that was perhaps the least enviable of all the careers that a virtuous and intelligent female can run. This was, as education and governesses were appreciated a century ago; the world, with all its faults and sophisms, having unquestionably made a vast stride towards real civilization, and moral truths, in a thousand important interests, since that time. Nevertheless, the education was received, together with a good many tastes, and sentiments, and opinions, which it may well be questioned, whether they contributed most to the happiness or unhappiness of the pupil, in her future life. Frank Dutton, then a handsome, though far from polished young sea-lieutenant, interfered with the arrangement, by making Martha Ray his wife, when she was two-and-twenty. This match was suitable, in all respects, with the important exception of the educations and characters of the parties. Still, as a woman may well be more refined, and in some things, even more intelligent than her husband; and as sailors, in the commencement of the eighteenth century, formed a class of society much more distinct than they do today, there would have been nothing absolutely incompatible with the future well-being of the young couple, had each pursued his, or her own career, in a manner suitable to their respective duties. Young Dutton took away his bride, with the two thousand pounds she had received from her father, and for a long time he was seen no more in his native county. After an absence of some twenty years, however, he returned, broken in constitution, and degraded in rank. Mrs. Dutton brought with her one child, the beautiful girl introduced to the reader, and to whom she was studiously imparting all she had herself acquired in the adventitious manner mentioned. Such were the means, by which Mildred, like her mother, had been educated above her condition in life; and it had been remarked that, though Mrs. Dutton had probably no cause to felicitate herself on the possession of manners and sentiments that met with so little sympathy, or appreciation, in her actual situation, she assiduously cultivated the same manners and opinions in her daughter; frequently manifesting a sort of sickly fastidiousness on the subject of Mildred's deportment and tastes. It is probable the girl owed her improvement in both, however, more to the circumstance of her being left so much alone with her mother, than to any positive lessons she received; the influence of example, for years, producing its usual effects.

No one in Wychecombe positively knew the history of Dutton's professional degradation. He had never risen higher than to be a lieutenant; and from this station he had fallen by the sentence of a court-martial. His restoration to the service, in the humbler and almost hopeless rank of a master, was believed to have been brought about by Mrs. Dutton's influence with the present Lord Wilmeter,

who was the brother of her youthful companions. That the husband had wasted his means, was as certain as that his habits, on the score of temperance at least, were bad, and that his wife, if not positively brokenhearted, was an unhappy woman; one to be pitied, and admired. Sir Wycherly was little addicted to analysis, but he could not fail to discover the superiority of the wife and daughter, over the husband and father; and it is due to his young namesake to add, that his obvious admiration of Mildred was quite as much owing to her mind, deportment, character, and tastes, as to her exceeding personal charms.

This little digression may perhaps, in the reader's eyes, excuse the interest Admiral Bluewater took in our heroine. With the indulgence of years and station, and the tact of a man of the world, he succeeded in drawing Mildred out, without alarming her timidity; and he was surprised at discovering the delicacy of her sentiments, and the accuracy of her knowledge. He was too conversant with society, and had too much good taste, to make any deliberate parade of opinions; but in the quiet manner that is so easy to those who are accustomed to deal with truths and tastes as familiar things, he succeeded in inducing her to answer his own remarks, to sympathize with his feelings, to laugh when he laughed, and to assume a look of disapproval, when he felt that disapprobation was just. To all this Wycherly was a delighted witness, and in some respects he participated in the conversation; for there was evidently no wish on the part of the rear-admiral to monopolize his beautiful companion to himself. Perhaps the position of the young man, directly opposite to her, aided in inducing Mildred to bestow so many grateful looks and sweet smiles, on the older officer; for she could not glance across the table, without meeting the admiring gaze of Wycherly, fastened on her own blushing face.

It is certain, if our heroine did not, during this repast, make a conquest of Admiral Bluewater, in the ordinary meaning of the term, that she made him a friend. Sir Gervaise, even, was struck with the singular and devoted manner in which his old messmate gave all his attention to the beautiful girl at his side; and, once or twice, he caught himself conjecturing whether it were possible, that one as practised, as sensible, and as much accustomed to the beauties of the court, as Bluewater, had actually been caught, by the pretty face of a country girl, when so well turned of fifty, himself! Then discarding the notion as preposterous, he gave his attention to the discourse of Sir Wycherly; a dissertation on rabbits, and rabbit-warrens. In this manner the dinner passed away.

Mrs. Dutton asked her host's permission to retire, with her daughter, at the earliest moment permitted by propriety. In quitting the room she cast an anxious glance at the face of her husband, which was already becoming flushed with his frequent applications of port; and spite of an effort to look smiling and cheerful, her lips quivered, and by the time she and Mildred reached the drawing-room, tears were fast falling down her cheeks. No explanation was asked, or needed, by the daughter, who threw herself into her mother's arms, and for several minutes they wept together, in silence. Never had Mrs. Dutton spoken, even to Mildred, of the besetting and degrading vice of her husband; but it had been impossible to conceal its painful consequences from the world; much less from one who lived in the bosom of her family. On that failing which the wife treated so tenderly, the daughter of course could not touch; but the silent communion of tears had got to be so sweet to both, that, within the last year, it was of very frequent occurrence.

"Really, Mildred," said the mother, at length, after having succeeded in suppressing her emotion, and in drying her eyes, while she smiled fondly in the face of the lovely and affectionate girl; "this Admiral Bluewater is getting to be so particular, I hardly know how to treat the matter."

"Oh! mother, he is a delightful old gentleman! and he is so gentle, while he is so frank, that he wins your confidence almost before you know it. I wonder if he could have been serious in what he said about the noble daring and noble deserving of Prince Edward!"

"That must pass for trifling, of course; the ministry would scarcely employ any but a true whig, in command of a fleet. I saw several of his family, when a girl, and have always heard them spoken of with esteem and respect. Lord Bluewater, this gentleman's cousin, was very intimate with the present Lord Wilmeter, and was often at the castle. I remember to have heard that he had a disappointment

in love, when quite a young man, and that he has ever since been considered a confirmed bachelor. So you will take heed, my love."

"The warning was unnecessary, dear mother," returned Mildred, laughing; "I could dote on the admiral as a father, but must be excused from considering him young enough for a nearer tie."

"And yet he has the much admired profession, Mildred," said the mother, smiling fondly, and yet a little archly. "I have often heard you speak of your passion for the sea."

"That was formerly, mother, when I spoke as a sailor's daughter, and as girls are apt to speak, without much reflection. I do not know that I think better of a seaman's profession, now, than I do of any other. I fear there is often much misery in store for soldiers' and sailors' wives."

Mrs. Dutton's lip quivered again; but hearing a foot at the door, she made an effort to be composed, just as Admiral Blue-water entered.

"I have run away from the bottle, Mrs. Dutton, to join you and your fair daughter, as I would run from an enemy of twice my force," he said, giving each lady a hand, in a manner so friendly, as to render the act more than gracious; for it was kind. "Oakes is bowsing out his jib with his brother baronet, as we sailors say, and I have hauled out of the line, without a signal."

"I hope Sir Gervaise Oakes does not consider it necessary to drink more wine than is good for the mind and body," observed Mrs. Dutton, with a haste that she immediately regretted.

"Not he. Gervaise Oakes is as discreet a man, in all that relates to the table, as an anchorite; and yet he has a faculty of *seeming* to drink, that makes him a boon companion for a four-bottle man. How the deuce he does it, is more than I can tell you; but he does it so well, that he does not more thoroughly get the better of the king's enemies, on the high seas, than he floors his friends under the table. Sir Wycherly has begun his libations in honour of the house of Hanover, and they will be likely to make a long sitting."

Mrs. Dutton sighed, and walked away to a window, to conceal the paleness of her cheeks. Admiral Bluewater, though perfectly abstemious himself, regarded license with the bottle after dinner, like most men of that age, as a very venial weakness, and he quietly took a seat by the side of Mildred, and began to converse.

"I hope, young lady, as a sailor's child, you feel an hereditary indulgence for a seaman's gossip," he said. "We, who are so much shut up in our ships, have a poverty of ideas on most subjects; and as to always talking of the winds and waves, that would fatigue even a poet."

"As a sailor's daughter, I honour my father's calling, sir; and as an English girl, I venerate the brave defenders of the island. Nor do I know that seamen have less to say, than other men."

"I am glad to hear you confess this, for – shall I be frank with you, and take a liberty that would better become a friend of a dozen years, than an acquaintance of a day; – and, yet, I know not why it is so, my dear child, but I feel as if I had long known you, though I am certain we never met before."

"Perhaps, sir, it is an omen that we are long to know each other, in future," said Mildred, with the winning confidence of unsuspecting and innocent girlhood. "I hope you will use no reserve."

"Well, then, at the risk of making a sad blunder, I will just say, that 'my nephew Tom' is any thing but a prepossessing youth; and that I hope all eyes regard him exactly as he appears to a sailor of fifty-five."

"I cannot answer for more than those of a girl of nineteen, Admiral Bluewater," said Mildred, laughing; "but, for her, I think I may say that she does not look on him as either an Adonis, or a Crichton."

"Upon my soul! I am right glad to hear this, for the fellow has accidental advantages enough to render him formidable. He is the heir to the baronetcy, and this estate, I believe?"

"I presume he is. Sir Wycherly has no other nephew – or at least this is the eldest of three brothers, I am told – and, being childless himself, it *must* be so. My father tells me Sir Wycherly speaks of Mr. Thomas Wychecombe as his future heir."

"Your father! – Ay, fathers look on these matters with eyes very different from their daughters!"

"There is one thing about seamen that renders them at least safe acquaintances," said Mildred, smiling; "I mean their frankness."

"That is a failing of mine, as I have heard. But you will pardon an indiscretion that arises in the interest I feel in yourself. The eldest of three brothers – is the lieutenant, then, a younger son?"

"*He* does not belong to the family at all, I believe," Mildred answered, colouring slightly, in spite of a resolute determination to appear unconcerned. "Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe is no relative of our host, I hear; though he bears both of his names. He is from the colonies; born in Virginia."

"*He* is a noble, and a noble-looking fellow! Were I the baronet, I would break the entail, rather than the acres should go to that sinister-looking nephew, and bestow them on the namesake. From Virginia, and not even a relative, at all?"

"That is what Mr. Thomas Wychecombe says; and even Sir Wycherly confirms it. I have never heard Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe speak on the subject, himself."

"A weakness of poor human nature! The lad finds an honourable, ancient, and affluent family here, and has not the courage to declare his want of affinity to it; happening to bear the same name."

Mildred hesitated about replying; but a generous feeling got the better of her diffidence. "I have never seen any thing in the conduct of Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe to induce me to think that he feels any such weakness," she said, earnestly. "He seems rather to take pride in, than to feel ashamed of, his being a colonial; and you know, we, in England, hardly look on the people of the colonies as our equals."

"And have you, young lady, any of that overweening prejudice in favour of your own island?"

"I hope not; but I think most persons have. Mr. Wycherly Wychecombe admits that Virginia is inferior to England, in a thousand things; and yet he seems to take pride in his birthplace."

"Every sentiment of this nature is to be traced to self. We know that the fact is irretrievable, and struggle to be proud of what we cannot help. The Turk will tell you he has the honour to be a native of Stamboul; the Parisian will boast of his Faubourg; and the cockney exults in Wapping. Personal conceit lies at the bottom of all; for we fancy that places to which *we* belong, are not places to be ashamed of."

"And yet I do not think Mr. Wycherly at all remarkable for conceit. On the contrary, he is rather diffident and unassuming."

This was said simply, but so sincerely, as to induce the listener to fasten his penetrating blue eye on the speaker, who now first took the alarm, and felt that she might have said too much. At this moment the two young men entered, and a servant appeared to request that Admiral Bluewater would do Sir Gervaise Oakes the favour to join him, in the dressing-room of the latter.

Tom Wychecombe reported the condition of the dinner-table to be such, as to render it desirable for all but three and four-bottle men to retire. Hanoverian toasts and sentiments were in the ascendant, and there was every appearance that those who remained intended to make a night of it. This was sad intelligence for Mrs. Dutton, who had come forward eagerly to hear the report, but who now returned to the window, apparently irresolute as to the course she ought to take. As both the young men remained near Mildred, she had sufficient opportunity to come to her decision, without interruption, or hindrance.

Chapter VII

"Somewhat we will do.
And, look, when I am king, claim thou of me
The earldom of Hereford, and all the moveables
Whereof the king my brother was possessed."

Richard III.

Rear-Admiral Bluewater found Sir Gervaise Oakes pacing a large dressing-room, quarter-deck fashion, with as much zeal, as if just released from a long sitting, on official duty, in his own cabin. As the two officers were perfectly familiar with each other's personal habits, neither deviated from his particular mode of indulging his ease; but the last comer quietly took his seat in a large chair, disposing of his person in a way to show he intended to consult his comfort, let what would happen.

"Bluewater," commenced Sir Gervaise, "this is a very foolish affair of the Pretender's son, and can only lead to his destruction. I look upon it as altogether unfortunate."

"That, as it may terminate. No man can tell what a day, or an hour, may bring forth. I am sure, such a rising was one of the last things I have been anticipating, down yonder, in the Bay of Biscay."

"I wish, with all my heart, we had never left it," muttered Sir Gervaise, so low that his companion did not hear him. Then he added, in a louder tone, "*Our* duty, however, is very simple. We have only to obey orders; and it seems that the young man has no naval force to sustain him. We shall probably be sent to watch Brest, or l'Orient, or some other port. Monsieur must be kept in, let what will happen."

"I rather think it would be better to let him out, our chances on the high seas being at least as good as his own. I am no friend to blockades, which strike me as an un-English mode of carrying on a war."

"You are right enough, Dick, in the main," returned Sir Gervaise, laughing.

"Ay, and *on* the main, Oakes. I sincerely hope the First Lord will not send a man like you, who are every way so capable of giving an account of your enemy with plenty of sea-room, on duly so scurvy as a blockade."

"A man like *me*! Why a man like *me* in particular? I trust I am to have the pleasure of Admiral Bluewater's company, advice and assistance?"

"An inferior never can know, Sir Gervaise, where it may suit the pleasure of his superiors to order him."

"That distinction of superior and inferior, Bluewater, will one day lead you into a confounded scrape, I fear. If you consider Charles Stuart your sovereign, it is not probable that orders issued by a servant of King George will be much respected. I hope you will do nothing hastily, or without consulting your oldest and truest friend!"

"You know my sentiments, and there is little use in dwelling on them, now. So long as the quarrel was between my own country and a foreign land, I have been content to serve; but when my lawful prince, or his son and heir, comes in this gallant and chivalrous manner, throwing himself, as it might be, into the very arms of his subjects, confiding all to their loyalty and spirit; it makes such an appeal to every nobler feeling, that the heart finds it difficult to repulse. I could have joined Norris, with right good will, in dispersing and destroying the armament that Louis XV. was sending against us, in this very cause; but here every thing is English, and Englishmen have the quarrel entirely to themselves. I do not see how, as a loyal subject of my hereditary prince, I can well refrain from joining his standard."

"And would *you*, Dick Bluewater, who, to my certain knowledge, were sent on board ship at twelve years of age, and who, for more than forty years, have been a man-of-war's-man, body and soul; would you now strip your old hulk of the sea-blue that has so long covered and become it, rig yourself out like a soldier, with a feather in your hat, – ay, d – – e, and a camp-kettle on your arm, and follow a drummer, like one of your kinsmen, Lord Bluewater's fellows of the guards? – for of sailors, your lawful prince, as you call him, hasn't enough to stopper his conscience, or to whip the tail of his coat, to keep it from being torn to tatters by the heather of Scotland. If you *do* follow the adventurer, it must be in some such character, since I question if he can muster a seaman, to tell him the bearings of London from Perth."

"When I join him, he will be better off."

"And what could even *you* do alone, among a parcel of Scotchmen, running about their hills under bare poles? Your signals will not man[oe]uvre regiments, and as for man[oe]uvr-ing in any other manner, you know nothing. No – no; stay where you are, and help an old friend with knowledge that is useful to him. – I should be afraid to do a dashing thing, unless I felt the certainty of having you in my van, to strike the first blow; or in my rear, to bring me off, handsomely.

"You would be afraid of nothing, Gervaise Oakes, whether I stood at your elbow, or were off in Scotland. Fear is not your failing, though temerity may be."

"Then I want your presence to keep me within the bounds of reason," said Sir Gervaise, stopping short in his walk, and looking his friend smilingly in the face. "In some mode, or other, I always need your aid."

"I understand the meaning of your words, Sir Gervaise, and appreciate the feeling that dictates them. You must have a perfect conviction that I will do nothing hastily, and that I will betray no trust. When I turn my back on King George, it will be loyalty, in one sense, whatever he may think of it in another; and when I join Prince Charles Edward, it will be with a conscience that he need not be ashamed to probe. What names he bears! They are the designations of ancient English sovereigns, and ought of themselves, to awaken the sensibilities of Englishmen."

"Ay, Charles in particular," returned the vice-admiral, with something like a sneer. "There's the second Charles, for instance – St. Charles, as our good host, Sir Wycherly, might call him – he is a pattern prince for Englishmen to admire. Then his father was of the school of the Star-Chamber martyrs!"

"Both were lineal descendants of the Conqueror, and of the Saxon princes; and both united the double titles to the throne, in their sacred persons. I have always considered Charles II. as the victim of the rebellious conduct of his subjects, rather than vicious. He was driven abroad into a most corrupt state of society, and was perverted by our wickedness. As to the father, he was the real St. Charles, and a martyred saint he was; dying for true religion, as well as for his legal rights. Then the Edwards – glorious fellows! – remember that they were all but one Plantagenets; a name, of itself, to rouse an Englishman's fire!"

"And yet the only difference between the right of these very Plantagenets to the throne, and that of the reigning prince, is, that one produced a revolution by the strong hand, and the other was produced by a revolution that came from the nation. I do not know that your Plantagenets ever did any thing for a navy; the only real source of England's power and glory. D – – e, Dick, if I think so much of your Plantagenets, after all!"

"And yet the name of Oakes is to be met with among their bravest knights, and most faithful followers."

"The Oakes, like the pines, have been timbers in every ship that has floated," returned the vice-admiral, half-unconscious himself, of the pun he was making.

For more than a minute Sir Gervaise continued his walk, his head a little inclined forward, like a man who pondered deeply on some matter of interest. Then, suddenly stopping, he turned towards his friend, whom he regarded for near another minute, ere he resumed the discourse.

"I wish I could fairly get you to exercise your excellent reason on this matter, Dick," he said, after the pause; "then I should be certain of having secured you on the side of liberty."

Admiral Bluewater merely shook his head, but he continued silent, as if he deemed discussion altogether supererogatory. During this pause, a gentle tap at the door announced a visiter; and, at the request to enter, Atwood made his appearance. He held in his hand a large package, which bore on the envelope the usual stamp that indicated it was sent on public service.

"I beg pardon, Sir Gervaise," commenced the secretary, who always proceeded at once to business, when business was to be done; "but His Majesty's service will not admit of delay. This packet has just come to hand, by the arrival of an express, which left the admiralty only yesterday noon."

"And how the devil did he know where to find me!" exclaimed the vice-admiral, holding out a hand to receive the communication.

"It is all owing to this young lieutenant's forethought in following up the Jacobite intelligence to a market-town. The courier was bound to Falmouth, as fast as post-horses could carry him, when he heard, luckily, that the fleet lay at anchor, under Wychecombe Head; and, quite as luckily, he is an officer who had the intelligence to know that you would sooner get the despatches, if he turned aside, and came hither by land, than if he went on to Falmouth, got aboard the sloop that was to sail with him, for the Bay of Biscay, and came round here by water."

Sir Gervaise smiled at this sally, which was one in keeping with all Atwood's feelings; for the secretary had matured a system of expresses, which, to his great mortification, his patron laughed at, and the admiralty entirely overlooked. No time was lost, however, in the way of business; the secretary having placed the candles on a table, where Sir Gervaise took a chair, and had already broken a seal. The process of reading, nevertheless, was suddenly interrupted by the vice-admiral's looking up, and exclaiming –

"Why, you are not about to leave us, Bluewater?"

"You may have private business with Mr. Atwood, Sir Gervaise, and perhaps I had better retire."

Now, it so happened that while Sir Gervaise Oakes had never, by look or syllable, as he confidently believed, betrayed the secret of his friend's Jacobite propensities, Atwood was perfectly aware of their existence. Nor had the latter obtained his knowledge by any unworthy means. He had been neither an eavesdropper, nor an inquirer into private communications, as so often happens around the persons of men in high trusts; all his knowledge having been obtained through native sagacity and unavoidable opportunities. On the present occasion, the secretary, with the tact of a man of experience, felt that his presence might be dispensed with; and he cut short the discussion between the two admirals, by a very timely remark of his own.

"I have left the letters uncopied, Sir Gervaise," he said, "and will go and finish them. A message by Locker" – this was Sir Gervaise's body-servant – "will bring me back at a moment's notice, should you need me again to-night."

"That Atwood has a surprising instinct, for a Scotchman!" exclaimed the vice-admiral, as soon as the door was closed on the secretary. "He not only knows when he *is* wanted, but when he is *not* wanted. The last is an extraordinary attainment, for one of his nation."

"And one that an Englishman may do well to emulate," returned Bluewater. "It is possible my company may be dispensed with, also, just at this important moment."

"You are not so much afraid of the Hanoverians, Dick, as to run away from their hand-writing, are ye? Ha – what's this? – As I live, a packet for yourself, and directed to 'Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Bluewater, K.B.' By the Lord, my old boy, they've given you the red riband at last! This is an honour well earned, and which may be fitly worn."

"'Tis rather unexpected, I must own. The letter, however, cannot be addressed to me, as I am not a Knight of the Bath."

"This is rank nonsense. Open the packet, at once, or I will do it for you. Are there two Dick Bluewaters in the world, or another rear-admiral of the same name?"

"I would rather not receive a letter that does not strictly bear my address," returned the other, coldly.

"As I'll be sworn this does. But hand it to me, since you are so scrupulous, and I will do that small service for you."

As this was said, Sir Gervaise tore aside the seals; and, as he proceeded rather summarily, a red riband was soon uncased and fell upon the carpet. The other usual insignia of the Bath made their appearance, and a letter was found among them, to explain the meaning of all. Every thing was in due form, and went to acquaint Rear-Admiral Bluewater, that His Majesty had been graciously pleased to confer on him one of the vacant red ribands of the day, as a reward for his eminent services on different occasions. There was even a short communication from the premier, expressing the great satisfaction of the ministry in thus being able to second the royal pleasure with hearty good will.

"Well, what do you think of that, Richard Bluewater?" asked Sir Gervaise, triumphantly. "Did I not always tell you, that sooner or later, it *must* come?"

"It has come too late, then," coldly returned the other, laying the riband, jewels, and letters, quietly on the table. "This is an honour, I can receive, *now*, only from my rightful prince. None other can legally create a knight of the Bath."

"And pray, Mr. Richard Bluewater, who made you a captain, a commander, a rear-admiral? Do you believe me an impostor, because I wear this riband on authority no better than that of the house of Hanover? Am I, or am I not, in your judgment, a vice-admiral of the red?"

"I make a great distinction, Oakes, between rank in the navy, and a mere personal dignity. In the one case, you serve your country, and give quite as much as you receive; whereas, in the other, it is a grace to confer consideration on the person honoured, without such an equivalent as can find an apology for accepting a rank illegally conferred."

"The devil take your distinctions, which would unsettle every thing, and render the service a Babel. If I am a vice-admiral of the red, I am a knight of the Bath; and, if you are a rear-admiral of the white, you are also a knight of that honourable order. All comes from the same source of authority, and the same fountain of honour."

"I do not view it thus. Our commissions are from the admiralty, which represents the country; but dignities come from the prince who happens to reign, let *his* title be what it may."

"Do you happen to think Richard III. a usurper, or a lawful prince?"

"A usurper, out of all question; and a murderer to boot. His name should be struck from the list of English kings. I never hear it, without execrating him, and his deeds."

"Pooh – pooh, Dick, this is talking more like a poet than a seaman. If only one-half the sovereigns who deserve to be execrated had their names erased, the list of even our English kings would be rather short; and some countries would be without historical kings at all. However much Richard III. may deserve cashiering in this summary manner, his peers and laws are just as good as any other prince's peers and laws. Witness the Duke of Norfolk, for instance."

"Ay, that cannot be helped by me; but it *is* in my power to prevent Richard Bluewater's being made a knight or the Bath, by George II.; and the power shall be used."

"It would seem not, as he is already created; and I dare to say, gazetted."

"The oaths are not yet taken, and it is, at least, an Englishman's birth-right, to decline an honour; if, indeed, this can be esteemed an honour, at all."

"Upon my word, Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Bluewater, you are disposed to be complimentary, to-night! The unworthy knight present, and all the rest of the order, are infinitely indebted to you!"

"Your case and mine, Oakes, are essentially different," returned the other, with some emotion in his voice and manner. "Your riband was fairly won, fighting the battles of England, and can be worn with credit to yourself and to your country; but these baubles are sent to me, at a moment when a rising was foreseen, and as a sop to keep me in good-humour, as well as to propitiate the whole Bluewater interest."

"That is pure conjecture, and I dare say will prove to be altogether a mistake. Here are the despatches to speak for themselves; and, as it is scarcely possible that the ministry should have known of this rash movement of the Pretender's son, more than a few days, my life on it, the dates will show that your riband was bestowed before the enterprise was even suspected."

As Sir Gervaise commenced, with his constitutional ardour, to turn over the letters, as soon as his mind was directed to this particular object, Admiral Bluewater resumed his seat, awaiting the result, with not a little curiosity; though, at the same time, with a smile of incredulity. The examination disappointed Sir Gervaise Oakes. The dates proved that the ministers were better informed than he had supposed; for it appeared they had been apprised about the time he was himself of the intended movement. His orders were to bring the fleet north, and in substance to do the very thing his own sagacity had dictated. So far every thing was well; and he could not entertain a doubt about receiving the hearty approbation of his superiors, for the course he had taken. But here his gratification ended; for, on looking at the dates of the different communications, it was evident that the red riband was bestowed after the intelligence of the Pretender's movement had reached London. A private letter, from a friend at the Board of Admiralty, too, spoke of his own probable promotion to the rank of admiral of the blue; and mentioned several other similar preferments, in a way to show that the government was fortifying itself, in the present crisis, as much as possible, by favours. This was a politic mode of procedure, with ordinary men, it is true; but with officers of the elevation of mind, and of the independence of character of our two admirals, it was most likely to produce disgust.

"D – n 'em, Dick," cried Sir Gervaise, as he threw down the last letter of the package, with no little sign of feeling; "you might take St. Paul, or even Wychecombe's dead brother, St. James the Less, and put him at court, and he would come out a thorough blackguard, in a week!"

"That is not the common opinion concerning a court education," quietly replied the friend; "most people fancying that the place gives refinement of manners, if not of sentiment."

"Poh – poh – you and I have no need of a dictionary to understand each other. I call a man who never trusts to a generous motive – who thinks it always necessary to bribe or cajole – who has no idea of any thing's being done without its direct *quid pro quo*, a scurvy blackguard, though he has the airs and graces of Phil. Stanhope, or Chesterfield, as he is now. What do you think those chaps at the Board, talk of doing, by way of clinching my loyalty, at this blessed juncture?"

"No doubt to get you raised to the peerage. I see nothing so much out of the way in the thing. You are of one of the oldest families of England, and the sixth baronet by inheritance, and have a noble landed estate, which is none the worse for prize-money. Sir Gervaise Oakes of Bowldero, would make a very suitable Lord Bowldero."

"If it were only that, I shouldn't mind it; for nothing is easier than to refuse a peerage. I've done *that* twice already, and can do it a third time, at need. But one can't very well refuse promotion in his regular profession; and, here, just as a true gentleman would depend on the principles of an officer, the hackneyed consciences of your courtiers have suggested the expediency of making Gervaise Oakes an admiral of the blue, by way of sop! – me, who was made vice-admiral of the red, only six months since, and who take an honest pride in boasting that every commission, from the lowest to the highest, has been fairly earned in battle!"

"They think it a more delicate service, perhaps, for a gentleman to be true to the reigning house, when so loud an appeal is made to his natural loyalty; and therefore class the self-conquest with a victory at sea!"

"They are so many court-lubbers, and I should like to have an opportunity of speaking my mind to them. I'll not take the new commission; for every one must see, Dick, that it is a sop."

"Ay, that's just my notion, too, about the red riband; and I'll not take *that*. You have had the riband these ten years, have declined the peerage twice, and their only chance is the promotion. Take it you ought, and must, however, as it will be the means of pushing on some four or five poor devils, who have been wedged up to honours, in this manner, ever since they were captains. I am glad they

do not talk of promoting *me*, for I should hardly know how to refuse such a grace. There is great virtue in parchment, with all us military men."

"Still it must be parchment fairly won. I think you are wrong, notwithstanding, Bluewater, in talking of refusing the riband, which is so justly your due, for a dozen different acts. There is not a man in the service, who has been less rewarded for what he has done, than yourself."

"I am sorry to hear you give this as your opinion; for just at this moment, I would rather think that I have no cause of complaint, in this way, against the reigning family, or its ministers. I'm sure I was posted when quite a young man, and since that time, no one has been lifted over my head."

The vice-admiral looked intently at his friend; for never before had he detected a feeling which betrayed, as he fancied, so settled a determination in him to quit the service of the powers that were. Acquainted from boyhood with all the workings of the other's mind, he perceived that the rear-admiral had been endeavouring to persuade himself that no selfish or unworthy motive could be assigned to an act which he felt to proceed from disinterested chivalry, just as he himself broke out with his expression of an opinion that no officer had been less liberally rewarded for his professional services than his friend. While there is no greater mystery to a selfish manager, than a man of disinterested temperament, they who feel and submit to generous impulses, understand each other with an instinctive facility. When any particular individual is prone to believe that there is a predominance of good over evil in the world he inhabits, it is a sign of inexperience, or of imbecility; but when one acts and reasons as if *all* honour and virtue are extinct, he furnishes the best possible argument against his own tendencies and character. It has often been remarked that stronger friendships are made between those who have different personal peculiarities, than between those whose sameness of feeling and impulses would be less likely to keep interest alive; but, in all cases of intimacies, there must be great identity of principles, and even of tastes in matters at all connected with motives, in order to ensure respect, among those whose standard of opinion is higher than common, or sympathy among those with whom it is lower. Such was the fact, as respected Admirals Oakes and Bluewater. No two men could be less alike in temperament, or character, physically, and in some senses, morally considered; but, when it came to principles, or all those tastes or feelings that are allied to principles, there was a strong native, as well as acquired affinity. This union of sentiment was increased by common habits, and professional careers so long and so closely united, as to be almost identical. Nothing was easier, consequently, than for Sir Gervaise Oakes to comprehend the workings of Admiral Bluewater's mind, as the latter endeavoured to believe he had been fairly treated by the existing government. Of course, the reasoning which passed through the thoughts of Sir Gervaise, on this occasion, required much less time than we have taken to explain its nature; and, after regarding his friend intently, as already related, for a few seconds, he answered as follows; a good deal influenced, unwittingly to himself, with the wish to check the other's Jacobite propensities.

"I am sorry not to be able to agree with you, Dick," he said, with some warmth. "So far from thinking you *well* treated, by any ministry, these twenty years, I think you have been very *ill* treated. Your rank you have, beyond a question; for of that no brave officer can well be deprived in a regulated service; but, have you had the *commands* to which you are entitled? – I was a commander-in-chief when only a rear-admiral of the blue; and then how long did I wear a broad pennant, before I got a flag at all!"

"You forget how much I have been with you. When two serve together, one must command, and the other must obey. So far from complaining of these Hanoverian Boards, and First Lords, it seems to me that they have always kept in view the hollowness of their claims to the throne, and have felt a desire to purchase honest men by their favours."

"You are the strangest fellow, Dick Bluewater, it has ever been my lot to fall in with! D – – e me, if I believe you know always, when you *are* ill treated. There are a dozen men in service, who have had separate commands, and who are not half as well entitled to them, as you are yourself."

"Come, come, Oakes, this is getting to be puerile, for two old fellows, turned of fifty. You very well know that I was offered just as good a fleet, as this of your own, with a choice of the whole list of flag-officers below me, to pick a junior from; and, so, we'll say no more about it. As respects their red riband, however, it may go a-begging for me."

Sir Gervaise was about to answer in his former vein, when a tap at the door announced the presence of another visiter. This time the door opened on the person of Galleygo, who had been included in Sir Wycherly's hospitable plan of entertaining every soul who immediately belonged to the suite of Sir Gervaise.

"What the d – – I has brought *you* here!" exclaimed the vice-admiral, a little warmly; for he did not relish an interruption just at this moment. "Recollect you're not on board the Plantagenet, but in the dwelling of a gentleman, where there are both butler and housekeeper, and who have no occasion for your advice, or authority, to keep things in order."

"Well, there, Sir Gervaise I doesn't agree with you the least bit; for I thinks as a ship's steward – I mean a *cabin* steward, and a good 'un of the quality – might do a great deal of improvement in this very house. The cook and I has had a partic'lar dialogue on them matters, already; and I mentioned to her the names of seven different dishes, every one of which she quite as good as admitted to me, was just the same as so much gospel to *her*."

"I shall have to quarantine this fellow, in the long run, Bluewater! I do believe if I were to take him to Lambeth Palace, or even to St. James's, he'd thrust his oar into the archbishop's benedictions, or the queen's caudle-cup!"

"Well, Sir Gervaise, where would be the great harm, if I did? A man as knows the use of an oar, may be trusted with one, even in a church, or an abbey. When your honour comes to hear what the dishes was, as Sir Wycherly's cook had never heard on, you'll think it as great a cur'osity as I do myself. If I had just leave to name 'em over, I think as both you gentlemen would look at it as remarkable."

"What are they, Galleygo?" inquired Bluewater, putting one of his long legs over an arm of the adjoining chair, in order to indulge himself in a yarn with his friend's steward, with greater freedom; for he greatly delighted in Galleygo's peculiarities; seeing just enough of the fellow to find amusement, without annoyance in them. "I'll answer for Sir Gervaise, who is always a little diffident about boasting of the superiority of a ship, over a house."

"Yes, your honour, that he is – that is just one of Sir Jarvy's weak p'ints, as a body might say. Now, I never goes ashore, without trimming sharp up, and luffing athwart every person's hawse, I fall in with; which is as much as to tell 'em, I belongs to a flag-ship, and a racer, and a craft as hasn't her equal on salt-water; no disparagement to the bit of bunting at the mizzen-topgallant-mast-head of the Cæsar, or to the ship that carries it. I hopes, as we are so well acquainted, Admiral Bluewater, no offence will be taken."

"Where none is meant, none ought to be taken, my friend. Now let us hear your bill-of-fare."

"Well, sir, the very first dish I mentioned to Mrs. Larder, Sir Wycherly's cook, was lobscous; and, would you believe it, gentlemen, the poor woman had never heard of it! I began with a light hand, as it might be, just not to overwhelm her with knowledge, at a blow, as Sir Jarvy captivated the French frigate with the upper tier of guns, that he might take her alive, like."

"And the lady knew nothing of a lobscous – neither of its essence, nor nature?"

"There's no essences as is ever put in a lobscous, besides potaties, Admiral Bluewater; thof we make 'em in the old Planter" – *nautice* for Plantagenet – "in so liquorish a fashion, you might well think they even had Jamaiky, in 'em. No, potaties is the essence of lobscous; and a very good thing is a potatie, Sir Jarvy, when a ship's company has been on salted oakum for a few months."

"Well, what was the next dish the good woman broke down under?" asked the rear-admiral, fearful the master might order the servant to quit the room; while he, himself, was anxious to get rid of any further political discussion.

"Well, sir, she knowed no more of a chowder, than if the sea wern't in the neighbourhood, and there wern't such a thing as a fish in all England. When I talked to her of a chowder, she gave in, like a Spaniard at the fourth or fifth broadside."

"Such ignorance is disgraceful, and betokens a decline in civilization! But, you hoisted out more knowledge for her benefit, Galleygo – small doses of learning are poor things."

"Yes, your honour; just like weak grog – burning the priming, without starting the shot. To be sure, I did, Admiral Blue. I just named to her burgoo, and then I mentioned duff (*anglice* dough) to her, but she denied that there was any such things in the cookery-book. Do you know, Sir Jarvy, as these here shore craft get their dinners, as our master gets the sun; all out of a book as it might be. Awful tidings, too, gentlemen, about the Pretender's son; and I s'pose we shall have to take the fleet up into Scotland, as I fancy them 'ere sogers will not make much of a hand in settling law?"

"And have you honoured us with a visit, just to give us an essay on dishes, and to tell us what you intend to do with the fleet?" demanded Sir Gervaise, a little more sternly than he was accustomed to speak to the steward.

"Lord bless you, Sir Jarvy, I didn't dream of one or t'other! As for telling you, or Admiral Blue, (so the seamen used to call the second in rank,) here, any thing about lobscous, or chowder, why, it would be carrying coals to New Market. I've fed ye both with all such articles, when ye was nothing but young gentlemen; and when you was no longer young gentlemen, too, but a couple of sprightly luffs, of nineteen. And as for moving the fleet, I know, well enough, that will never happen, without our talking it over in the old Planter's cabin; which is a much more nat'ral place for such a discourse, than any house in England!"

"May I take the liberty of inquiring, then, what *did* bring you here?"

"That you may, with all my heart, Sir Jarvy, for I likes to answer your questions. My errand is not to your honour this time, though you are my master. It's no great matter, after all, being just to hand this bit of a letter over to Admiral Blue."

"And where did this letter come from, and how did it happen to fall into your hands?" demanded Bluewater, looking at the superscription, the writing of which he appeared to recognise.

"It hails from Lun'nun, I hear; and they tell me it's to be a great secret that you've got it, at all. The history of the matter is just this. An officer got in to-night, with orders for us, carrying sail as hard as his shay would bear. It seems he fell in with Master Atwood, as he made his land-fall, and being acquainted with that gentleman, he just whipped out his orders, and sent 'em off to the right man. Then he laid his course for the landing, wishing to get aboard of the Dublin, to which he is ordered; but falling in with our barge, as I landed, he wanted to know the where-away of Admiral Blue, here; believing him to be afloat. Some 'un telling him as I was a friend and servant of both admirals, as it might be, he turned himself over to me for advice. So I promised to deliver the letter, as I had a thousand afore, and knowed the way of doing such things; and he gives me the letter, under special orders, like; that is to say, it was to be handed to the rear-admiral as it might be under the lee of the mizzen-stay-sail, or in a private fashion. Well, gentlemen, you both knows I understand that, too, and so I undertook the job."

"And I have got to be so insignificant a person that I pass for no one, in your discriminating mind, Master Galleygo!" exclaimed the vice-admiral, sharply. "I have suspected as much, these five-and-twenty years."

"Lord bless you, Sir Jarvy, how flag-officers will make mistakes sometimes! They're mortal, I says to the people of the galley, and have their appetites false, just like the young gentlemen, when they get athwart-hawse of a body, I says. Now, I count Admiral Blue and yourself pretty much as one man, seeing that you keep few, or no secrets from each other. I know'd ye both as young gentlemen, and then you loved one another like twins; and then I know'd ye as luffs, when ye'd walk the deck the whole watch, spinning yarns; and then I know'd ye as Pillardees and Arrestee, though one pillow

might have answered for both; and as for Arrest, I never know'd either of ye to got into that scrape. As for telling a secret to one, I've always looked upon it as pretty much telling it to t'other."

The two admirals exchanged glances, and the look of kindness that each met in the eyes of his friend removed every shadow that had been cast athwart their feelings, by the previous discourse.

"That will do, Galleygo," returned Sir Gervaise, mildly. "You're a good fellow in the main, though a villanously rough one – "

"A little of old Boreus, Sir Jarvy," interrupted the steward, with a grim smile: "but it blows harder at sea than it does ashore. These chaps on land, ar'n't battened down, and caulked for such weather, as we sons of Neptun' is obligated to face."

"Quite true, and so good-night. Admiral Bluewater and myself wish to confer together, for half an hour; all that it is proper for you to know, shall be communicated another time."

"Good-night, and God bless your honour. Good-night, Admiral Blue: we three is the men as can keep any secret as ever floated, let it draw as much water as it pleases."

Sir Gervaise Oakes stopped in his walk, and gazed at his friend with manifest interest, as he perceived that Admiral Bluewater was running over his letter for the third time. Being now without a witness, he did not hesitate to express his apprehensions.

"'Tis as I feared, Dick!" he cried. "That letter is from some prominent partisan of Edward Stuart?"

The rear-admiral turned his eyes on the face of his friend, with an expression that was difficult to read; and then he ran over the contents of the epistle, for the fourth time.

"A set of precious rascals they are, Gervaise!" at length the rear-admiral exclaimed. "If the whole court was culled, I question if enough honesty could be found to leaven one puritan scoundrel. Tell me if you know this hand, Oakes? I question if you ever saw it before."

The superscription of the letter was held out to Sir Gervaise, who, after a close examination, declared himself unacquainted with the writing.

"I thought as much," resumed Bluewater, carefully tearing the signature from the bottom of the page, and burning it in a candle; "let this disgraceful part of the secret die, at least. The fellow who wrote this, has put 'confidential' at the top of his miserable scrawl: and a most confident scoundrel he is, for his pains. However, no man has a right to thrust himself, in this rude manner, between me and my oldest friend; and least of all will I consent to keep this piece of treachery from your knowledge. I do more than the rascal merits in concealing his name; nevertheless, I shall not deny myself the pleasure of sending him such an answer as he deserves. Read that, Oakes, and then say if keelhauling would be too good for the writer."

Sir Gervaise took the letter in silence, though not without great surprise, and began to peruse it. As he proceeded, the colour mounted to his temples, and once he dropped his hand, to cast a look of wonder and indignation towards his companion. That the reader may see how much occasion there was for both these feelings, we shall give the communication entire. It was couched in the following words:

"Dear. Admiral Bluewater:

"Our ancient friendship, and I am proud to add, affinity of blood, unite in inducing me to write a line, at this interesting moment. Of the result of this rash experiment of the Pretender's son, no prudent man can entertain a doubt. Still, the boy may give us some trouble, before he is disposed of altogether. We look to all our friends, therefore, for their most efficient exertions, and most prudent co-operation. On *you*, every reliance is placed; and I wish I could say as much for *every flag-officer afloat*. Some distrust – unmerited, I sincerely hope – exists in a very high quarter, touching the loyalty of a certain commander-in-chief, who is so completely under your observation, that it is felt enough is done in hinting the fact to one of your political tendencies. The king said, this morning, 'Vell, dere isht Bluevater; of *him* we are shure asht of ter sun.' You stand excellently well *there*, to my great delight; and I need only say, be watchful and prompt.

"Yours, with the most sincere faith and attachment, my dear Bluewater, &c., &c.

"Rear-Admiral Bluewater.

"P. S. – I have just heard that they have sent you the red riband. The king himself, was in this."

When Sir Gervaise had perused this precious epistle to himself, he read it slowly, and in a steady, clear voice, aloud. When he had ended, he dropped the paper, and stood gazing at his friend.

"One would think the fellow some exquisite satirist," said Bluewater, laughing. "*I* am to be vigilant, and see that *you* do not mutiny, and run away with the fleet to the Highlands, one of these foggy mornings! Carry it up into Scotland, as Galleygo has it! Now, what is your opinion of that letter?"

"That all courtiers are knaves, and all princes ungrateful. I should think my loyalty to the good *cause*, if not to the *man*, the last in England to be suspected."

"Nor is it suspected, in the smallest degree. My life on it, neither the reigning monarch, nor his confidential servants, are such arrant dunces, as to be guilty of so much weakness. No, this masterly move is intended to secure *me*, by creating a confidence that they think no generous-minded man would betray. It is a hook, delicately baited to catch a gudgeon, and not an order to watch a whale."

"Can the scoundrels be so mean – nay, dare they be so bold! They must have known you would show me the letter."

"Not they – they have reasoned on my course, as they would on their own. Nothing catches a weak man sooner than a pretended confidence of this nature; and I dare say this blackguard rates me just high enough to fancy I may be duped in this flimsy manner. Put your mind at rest; King George knows he may confide in *you*, while I think it probable *I* am distrusted."

"I hope, Dick, you do not suspect *my* discretion! My own secret would not be half so sacred to me."

"I know that, full well. Of *you*, I entertain no distrust, either in heart or head; of myself, I am not quite so certain. When we *feel*, we do not always *reason*; and there is as much feeling, as any thing else, in this matter."

"Not a line is there, in all my despatches, that go to betray the slightest distrust of me, or any one else. You are spoken of, but it is in a manner to gratify you, rather than to alarm. Take, and read them all; I intended to show them to you, as soon as we had got through with that cursed discussion"

As Sir Gervaise concluded, he threw the whole package of letters on the table, before his friend.

"It will be time enough, when you summon me regularly to a council of war," returned Bluewater, laying the letters gently aside. "Perhaps we had better sleep on this affair; in the morning we shall meet with cooler heads, and just as warm hearts."

"Good-night, Dick," said Sir Gervaise, holding out both hands for the other to shake as he passed him, in quitting the room.

"Good-night, Gervaise; let this miserable devil go overboard, and think no more of him. I have half a mind to ask you for a leave, to-morrow, just to run up to London, and cut off his ears."

Sir Gervaise laughed and nodded his head, and the two friends parted, with feelings as kind as ever had distinguished their remarkable career.

Chapter VIII

"Look to't, think on't, I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near; lay hand on heart, advise;
An' you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;
An' you be not, hang, beg, starve, die i' the streets."

Romeo and Juliet.

Wychecombe Hall, had most of the peculiarities of a bachelor's dwelling, in its internal government; nor was it, in any manner, behind, or, it might be better to say, before, the age, in its modes and customs connected with jollifications. When its master relaxed a little, the servants quite uniformly imitated his example. Sir Wycherly kept a plentiful table, and the servants' hall fared nearly as well as the dining-room; the single article of wine excepted. In lieu of the latter, however, was an unlimited allowance of double-brewed ale; and the difference in the potations was far more in the name, than in the quality of the beverages. The master drank port; for, in the middle of the last century, few Englishmen had better wine – and port, too, that was by no means of a very remarkable delicacy, but which, like those who used it, was rough, honest, and strong; while the servant had his malt liquor of the very highest stamp and flavour. Between indifferent wine and excellent ale, the distance is not interminable; and Sir Wycherly's household, was well aware of the fact, having frequently instituted intelligent practical comparisons, by means of which, all but the butler and Mrs. Larder had come to the conclusion to stand by the home-brewed.

On the present occasion, not a soul in the house was ignorant of the reason why the baronet was making a night of it. Every man, woman, and child, in or about the Hall, was a devoted partisan of the house of Hanover; and as soon as it was understood that this feeling was to be manifested by drinking "success to King George, and God bless him," on the one side; and "confusion to the Pretender, and his mad son," on the other; all under the roof entered into the duty, with a zeal that might have seated a usurper on a throne, if potations could do it.

When Admiral Bluewater, therefore, left the chamber of his friend, the signs of mirth and of a regular debauch were so very obvious, that a little curiosity to watch the result, and a disinclination to go off to his ship so soon, united to induce him to descend into the rooms below, with a view to get a more accurate knowledge of the condition of the household. In crossing the great hall, to enter the drawing-room, he encountered Galleygo, when the following discourse took place.

"I should think the master-at-arms has not done his duty, and dowsed the glim below, Master Steward," said the rear-admiral, in his quiet way, as they met; "the laughing, and singing, and hiccupping, are all upon a very liberal scale for a respectable country-house."

Galleygo touched the lock of hair on his forehead, with one hand, and gave his trowsers a slue with the other, before he answered; which he soon did, however, though with a voice a little thicker than was usual with him, on account of his having added a draught or two to those he had taken previously to visiting Sir Gervaise's dressing-room; and which said additional draught or two, had produced some such effect on his system, as the fresh drop produces on the cup that is already full.

"That's just it, Admiral Blue," returned the steward, in passing good-humour, though still sober enough to maintain the decencies, after his own fashion; "that's just it, your honour. They've passed the word below to let the lights stand for further orders, and have turned the hands up for a frolic. Such ale as they has, stowed in the lower hold of this house, like leaguers in the ground-tier, it does a body's heart good to conter'plate. All hands is bowsing out their jibs on it, sir, and the old Hall will soon be carrying as much sail as she can stagger under. It's nothing but loose-away and sheet-home."

"Ay, ay, Galleygo, this may be well enough for the people of the household, if Sir Wycherly allows it; but it ill becomes the servants of guests to fall into this disorder. If I find Tom has done any thing amiss, he will hear more of it; and as your own master is not here to admonish *you*, I'll just take the liberty of doing it for him, since I know it would mortify him exceedingly to learn that his steward had done any thing to disgrace himself."

"Lord bless your dear soul, Admiral Blue, take just as many liberties as you think fit, and I'll never pocket one on 'em. I know'd you, when you was only a young gentleman, and now you're a rear. You're close on our heels; and by the time we are a full admiral, you'll be something like a vice. I looks upon you as bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, – Pillardees and Arrestees – and I no more minds a setting-down from your honour, than I does from Sir Jarvy, hisself."

"I believe that is true enough, Galleygo; but take my advice, and knock off with the ale for to-night. Can you tell me how the land lies, with the rest of the company?"

"You couldn't have asked a better person, your honour, as I've just been passing through all the rooms, from a sort of habit I has, sir; for, d'ye see, I thought I was in the old Planter, and that it was my duty to overlook every thing, as usual. The last pull at the ale, put that notion in my head; but it's gone now, and I see how matters is. Yes, sir, the mainmast of a church isn't stiffer and more correct-like, than my judgment is, at this blessed moment. Sir Wycherly guv' me a glass of his black-strap, as I ran through the dining-room, and told me to drink 'Confusion to the Pretender,' which I did, with hearty good-will; but his liquor will no more lay alongside of the ale they've down on the orlop, than a Frenchman will compare with an Englishman. What's your opinion, Admiral Blue, consarning this cruise of the Pretender's son, up in the Highlands of Scotland?"

Bluewater gave a quick, distrustful glance at the steward, for he knew that the fellow was half his time in the outer cabin and pantries of the Plantagenet, and he could not tell how much of his many private dialogues with Sir Gervaise, might have been overheard. Meeting with nothing but the unmeaning expression of one half-seas-over, his uneasiness instantly subsided.

"I think it a gallant enterprise, Galleygo," he answered; too manly even to feign what he did not believe; "but I fear as a *cruise*, it will not bring much prize-money. You have forgotten you were about to tell me how the land lies. Sir Wycherly, Mr. Dutton, Mr. Rotherham, are still at the table, I fancy – are these all? What have become of the two young gentlemen?"

"There's none ashore, sir," said Galleygo, promptly, accustomed to give that appellation only to midshipmen.

"I mean the two Mr. Wychecombes; one of whom, I had forgot, is actually an officer."

"Yes, sir, and a most partic'lar fine officer he is, as every body says. Well, sir, *he's* with the ladies; while his namesake has gone back to the table, and has put luff upon luff, to fetch up leeway."

"And the ladies – what have they done with themselves, in this scene of noisy revelry?"

"They'se in yonder state-room, your honour. As soon as they found how the ship was heading, like all women-craft, they both makes for the best harbour they could run into. Yes, they'se yonder."

As Galleygo pointed to the door of the room he meant, Bluewater proceeded towards it, parting with the steward after a few more words of customary, but very useless caution. The tap of the admiral was answered by Wycherly in person, who opened the door, and made way for his superior to enter, with a respectful obeisance. There was but a single candle in the little parlour, in which the two females had taken refuge from the increasing noise of the debauch; and this was due to a pious expedient of Mildred's, in extinguishing the others, with a view to conceal the traces of tears that were still visible on her own and her mother's cheeks. The rear-admiral was, at first, struck with this comparative obscurity; but it soon appeared to him appropriate to the feelings of the party assembled in the room. Mrs. Dutton received him with the ease she had acquired in her early life, and the meeting passed as a matter of course, with persons temporarily residing under the same roof.

"Our friends appear to be enjoying themselves," said Blue-water, when a shout from the dining-room forced itself on the ears of all present. "The loyalty of Sir Wycherly seems to be of proof."

"Oh! Admiral Bluewater," exclaimed the distressed wife, feeling, momentarily, getting the better of discretion; "*do* you – *can* you call such a desecration of God's image enjoyment?"

"Not justly, perhaps, Mrs. Dutton; and yet it is what millions mistake for it. This mode of celebrating any great event, and even of illustrating what we think our principles, is, I fear, a vice not only of our age, but of our country."

"And yet, neither you, nor Sir Gervaise Oakes, I see, find it necessary to give such a proof of your attachment to the house of Hanover, or of your readiness to serve it with your time and persons."

"You will remember, my good, lady, that both Oakes and myself are flag-officers in command, and it would never do for us to fall into a debauch in sight of our own ships. I am glad to see, however, that Mr. Wychecombe, here, prefers such society as I find him in, to the pleasures of the table."

Wycherly bowed, and Mildred cast an expressive, not to say grateful, glance towards the speaker; but her mother pursued the discourse, in which she found a little relief to her suppressed emotion.

"God be thanked for that!" she exclaimed, half-unconscious of the interpretation that might be put on her words; "All that we have seen of Mr. Wychecombe would lead us to believe that this is not an unusual, or an accidental forbearance."

"So much the more fortunate for him. I congratulate you, young sir, on this triumph of principle, or of temperament, or of both. We belong to a profession, in which the bottle is an enemy more to be feared, than any that the king can give us. A sailor can call in no ally as efficient in subduing this mortal foe, as an intelligent and cultivated mind. The man who really *thinks* much, seldom *drinks* much; but there are hours – nay, weeks and months of idleness in a ship, in which the temptation to resort to unnatural excitement in quest of pleasure, is too strong for minds, that are not well fortified, to resist. This is particularly the case with commanders, who find themselves isolated by their rank, and oppressed with responsibility, in the privacy of their own cabins, and get to make a companion of the bottle, by way of seeking relief from uncomfortable thoughts, and of creating a society of their own. I deem the critical period of a sailor's life, to be the first few years of solitary command."

"How true! – how true!" murmured Mrs. Dutton. "Oh! that cutter – that cruel cutter!"

The truth flashed upon the recollection of Bluewater, at this unguarded, and instantly regretted exclamation. Many years before, when only a captain himself, he had been a member of a court-martial which cashiered a lieutenant of the name of Dutton, for grievous misconduct, while in command of a cutter; the fruits of the bottle. From the first, he thought the name familiar to him; but so many similar things had happened in the course of forty years' service, that this particular incident had been partially lost in the obscurity of time. It was now completely recalled, however; and that, too, with all its attendant circumstances. The recollection served to give the rear-admiral renewed interest in the unhappy wife, and lovely daughter, of the miserable delinquent. He had been applied to, at the time, for his interest in effecting the restoration of the guilty officer, or even to procure for him, the hopeless station he now actually occupied; but he had sternly refused to be a party in placing any man in authority, who was the victim of a propensity that not only disgraced himself, but which, in the peculiar position of a sailor, equally jeoparded the honour of the country, and risked the lives of all around him. He was aware that the last application had been successful, by means of a court influence it was very unusual to exert in cases so insignificant; and, then, he had, for years, lost sight of the criminal and his fortunes. This unexpected revival of his old impressions, caused him to feel like an ancient friend of the wife and daughter; for well could he recall a scene he had with both, in which the struggle between his humanity and his principles had been so violent as actually to reduce him to tears. Mildred had forgotten the name of this particular officer, having been merely a child; but well did Mrs. Dutton remember it, and with fear and trembling had she come that day, to meet him at the Hall. The first look satisfied her that she was forgotten, and she had struggled herself, to bury in oblivion, a scene which was one of the most painful of her life. The unguarded expression, mentioned, entirely changed the state of affairs.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.