

FRITH HENRY

IN THE
YELLOW SEA

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Содержание

CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	20
CHAPTER III	29
CHAPTER IV	40
CHAPTER V	53
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	66

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PREFACE

Perhaps a few words of explanation as regards this volume may be permitted. The following extract from a letter, from a relative who addresses me as "Uncle Harry," will suffice at first. His letter is dated "Shanghai, November 1897": —

"Here are all the papers, with manuscript. Some of the latter is translated by a friend, and some is newspaper work. But I daresay you will be able to work up the matter. Do it as you like best; but don't give me away, please. You will find some additional information in Vladmir's work, and in the *Mail*, etc. etc. But I am only sending you my experiences and adventures. Call them what you like.

"JULIUS."

Here then is the narrative, in which the writer does not spare himself. He certainly has had adventures by land and sea, between China and Japan — "'twixt Jack and Jap" — during the late war. I have used his papers and extracts in the compilation of the story; with gleanings from *Heroic Japan* and newspapers,

which I have examined, with history, for my own benefit, and to verify my "nephew's" account of his adventures during that stirring time in the Far East.

HENRY FRITH

UPPER TOOTING, S.W.,

March 1898

CHAPTER I

A DISAPPOINTMENT – I ESCAPE MY FORETOLD DESTINY – THE *OSPREY* – THE STORM

"There, that settles the matter," said my stepfather irritably. "The lad's no good for the navy!"

"Why not?" asked my mother, pausing in the act of pouring out the breakfast tea for me, – my parents preferred coffee.

"Because they say his sight is defective – that's all," replied my stepfather. "That's a pretty ending to his career!"

Mr. Bentham was a persistent grumbler. I had already remarked that trait in his disposition, and it annoyed me.

"I am quite sure his eyes are all right," said mother.

"Then perhaps you'll kindly tell the Admiralty so," said my stepfather ("Daddy," I called him). "There's the medical decision. He's been plucked on sight."

"And *I* am certain there's nothing the matter," said my mother. "I will take him to Mr. Jones, an old friend of his. You will find he is perfectly sound."

"My dear Emily, what is the use of discussing the matter? Julius is deficient. There's the letter, read it for yourself. It's a

great nuisance. I suppose he'd better go to Granding and Smith's now. Granding will take him" —

"Granding and Smith's!" I exclaimed suddenly. "To the warehouse in St. Paul's? Oh, why? I *can't* go into a shop."

Hitherto I had been silent, but when this terrible fate was presented to me I spoke out. The very idea of a warehouse was abhorrent to me.

"My dear Julius, you must learn obedience. We have been educating you for the Royal Navy, you have failed, and" —

"For no fault of his own," interrupted mother quickly.

"My dear, *did* I say it was for any fault of his? I wish you would not introduce irrelevant remarks. He has failed to satisfy the examiners in eyesight, so" —

"I don't believe it!" exclaimed mother firmly.

My stepfather made no reply. He silently folded the report in its official folds, finished his coffee, — still in silence, — rose quietly, and deliberately left the room.

"Where are you going, Mark?" asked my mother anxiously.

"To my study, until you have settled the question with the Admiralty," he answered satirically, as he closed the door.

We were silent for a while. At length I said timidly —

"Mother, *must* I go to Granding's? I hate it! Why can't I go to sea?"

"We shall manage something, I daresay, dear," she replied. "I am afraid your father is vexed about this. He was anxious for you to succeed, and he is disappointed."

"But, mother, *I* can't help it if my eyes are bad. They don't look weak. Shall I go to old Jones, the oculist?"

"We will go by and by; meantime, let me see your father. I am sure Granding's warehouse will not suit you. The confinement will be most trying to your disposition. There may be some mistake about your eyesight; though I fear, even if so, it cannot be amended. Wait here until I return. Ring the bell, and tell Ellen to clear the breakfast things away, dear."

My loving mother left the breakfast-room, and I seated myself at the window to await her return. I was very much upset, – savage, in fact, – and considered that the doctors had spun me on purpose. My eyes were perfectly sound, I knew, at least I thought I knew, and it was "favouritism." I had heard of such a thing; and the medical board were, in my angry estimation, stupid! There was nothing the matter!

When my mother returned to the breakfast-room she found me silent and cross. The idea of giving up all my wishes for the navy, just because a doctor chose to say my eyes were not sound, was absurd! But even then I could not help myself; and, however ridiculous I fancied the decision to be, I was compelled to accept it. I had failed! The medical gentlemen – one, rather – had decided against me. I was most indignant, and inclined to be sulky, when mother had explained all this to me. For some days I was greatly upset, and went about "like a bear with a sore head."

Perhaps I had better not dwell upon that period during which, I now must confess, I behaved badly. My parents were most kind

and indulgent. They perceived my disappointment, and made allowances for me in all ways, including pocket-money. They did not worry me, but let me find my level while openly discussing the question of my prospects.

During these weeks I continued my boating and sailing trips. I was well known on the beach; the sailors, with a tender regard for me and my pocket, – which they did not wish to see either too heavy or too light, – indulged me to the top of my bent; and I believe had I suggested a voyage to France, or the Channel Isles, old Murry and his son Tim would have carried me off in their boat, which I called a "yacht" when describing her.

The *Osprey* was a tidy little "ship," and many a splendid sail we had. I had already learned a good deal respecting ships and shipping, could handle a boat, and steer fairly well. Thus weeks passed. I grew a tall lad; my face was browned by sun and sea, and I quite forgot business, – had even been reconciled to my disappointment as regards the navy, and was repairing my eyesight. Alas! I was just too old for the service then, and my stepfather began to make some arrangements for my future.

I heard the names of Granding and Smith of St. Paul's mentioned, and shuddered. A counting-house and confinement in place of liberty and fresh air! What had I done to deserve this prison fate? It was not my fault that my eyes had been weak; and even mother had thought that "business" was not suited to me. But the blow fell!

The decision had evidently been made. My fate was fixed. I

began to be restless, but made no inquiry, and kept away from home as much as possible. But one day, late in summer, the hammer fell upon my "lot" – I was knocked down to the drapers!

Mother came in and told me my fate. "Daddy" had determined it! It was Granding and Smith, or a local bank, – I was generously permitted to take my choice.

Then I arose in wrath, and made some unkind, not to say rude, remarks concerning my stepfather and Granding and Smith. Naval surgeons and examiners also "caught it," and, indeed, my expressions pained my fond mother deeply. Till I had apologised for my violence she declined any assistance on my behalf in future.

Of course, I said I was "sorry," and kissed her penitently. She perceived my repentance was sincere, and forgave me.

"Run away now, Julius, there's a good boy. Take a boat, and sail about until this ill-feeling has subsided. Your father only means it for your good, remember that."

"Yes, I daresay he *means* all right, mother, but that does *me* no good! I want to go to sea – I mean in the navy – and I shall do no good any other way, I tell you plainly!"

"My dear boy, that is just nonsense! You have plenty of ability, and will, in time, be very glad to reflect that you were induced to go into business. Business is really the best career, your father says."

"*You* said it wouldn't suit me, and I know it wouldn't!"

"My dear Julius, your father thinks it best for you."

"*He* isn't my father, and I *won't* go to Granding. There!"

With this defiance I rushed from the room, took my straw hat, and hurried away into the bright warm sunlight in search of the sea.

I had not far to travel. We lived then within two miles of the Channel, and close to a tiny station, at which a few branch trains stopped during the day. Perceiving that one of these tiny trains was approaching, I hastened on and caught it. In five minutes afterwards I was crunching the shingle, near the boats, on the beach. Several boatmen accosted me; I knew them well. They humoured me, – I liked them.

"Mornin', sir! Fine mornin' for a sail," said Murry, a queer, old, weather-beaten salt, who had served in the merchant marine. "Goin' out, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied shortly. "How's the tide?"

"Young gentleman's arskin' for the tide, Tim," remarked another salted fellow. "As if he wasn't a sailor now!"

"I am no sailor," I replied savagely. "I'm plucked!"

"Plucked! What d'ye mean? Thrown overboard? Who's been pullin' your leg, sir?"

"It's true. My eyes are bad, the doctor says," I muttered. "He's an ass."

"Your eyes bad? Well, that beats! Why, I wish I'd one o' them at your age! It's a mistake, whoever said it, I say that much."

"Well, anyway, I'm not to be a sailor – not in the navy, anyhow. Perhaps never at all. But let's shut it up. Where's the boat?"

"Yonder she swims," said Murry. "Ye can go where ye like to-day, if you're not venturesome too much."

"Why, do you expect a storm?" I asked, looking at the blue above.

"Well, I wouldn't say it mightn't squall a bit. There's thun'ers about too. Better take a hand with ye."

"Better take a second hand," added Tim; "them mare's tails is subspicious. How far d'ye think o' goin'?"

"Round Ratcham Head, and away to Greystones. I suppose we can fetch that?"

"Ay, ay; tide's makin', and we can come back with a flowin' sheet agin' it, proper. Here's my lad, Tim; he can go for the prog. Suppose you'll want somethin'?"

"Of course. Here's the money. Get anything you like, and some beer. Look slippy, Tim. Come back as soon as you can."

Tim touched his cap, took the money, and set off rapidly in the direction of the main street – the only one – of Beachmouth, which was then a small, almost unknown, watering-place. Now it is growing rapidly. Our house and grounds have already been purchased for building purposes, and in the few years which have elapsed since my disappointment the changes have been many and various.

I waited with impatience for Tim's return. The sea was calm. The breeze, which was off-shore, was gentle from the north-west, westing, and the sky was deep blue, with a haze hanging about, indicative of heat in the future hours. The distant vessels – not

steamers – were lazily dipping in the offing, not making much way, but still progressing, so we could hope for a breeze outside.

The dirty, chalky cliff sheltered us, and accentuated the rays of the sun, which, reflected from the water, burned and blistered us that summer more than usual, but as I was so much on the sea perhaps I felt it more then. At anyrate, that August day I felt the heat greatly, and became impatient for Tim's return with the "grub," so that we might get away, and sail down Channel, away into the west perhaps.

After what seemed an hour, but was really twenty minutes, we sighted Tim carrying a parcel and a jar, three tumblers being hung around his neck, and his jacket pockets bulging. One glance satisfied me, and I called to Murry to come along.

"I'm a-comin'! I'm a-comin'! We'm goin' alongside in Bill's skiff, ye know. The boat's all ready – ballast and all. Don't ye worrit yourself, Mister Jule; Tim's comin' on, hand over hand."

Tim was certainly very warm when he stepped into the small boat, and when he was seated old Murry sculled us over to the *Osprey*, a small "yacht," if one may say so – a fore and aft sailing-boat, boasting a little recess which was covered by a hatch, and called the cabin. There was room for ten or twelve people, and she could accommodate more. She carried the usual fore and aft sails, with a mizzen, and sailed very fast. In fact, she was a rather smart boat, and easily handled, being stiff and strong, with pretty lines; she looked smaller than she really was because of her fine shape and slender appearance.

The *Osprey* could stand rough weather, as I well knew, and when we hauled up the mainsail, and set the jib and foresail, I felt happy for the first time that day.

"Here's the change," said Tim, handing me a small sum, in which sixpence shone proudly in a nest of coppers.

"Pouch it, Tim, please. Now, Murry, what's the course, eh?"

"Well, I should say, keep her close hauled myself. Keep your luff, sir, that's what it is, and then you'll have all your run back. But as you like."

"I want to make Greystones, though," I said, as I glanced ahead.

"Well, ye can tack in. Ye see, it's this way: the tide's agin' ye, and when ye weather the Ratcham ye'll want all the luff ye can find to fetch Greystones this wind, anyway – and it's a squally bit down that gully."

"Yes, that's true; but we can fetch in. So you think I'm a sailor, Murry?" I continued, referring to our previous talk.

"That ye be," he said. "Eyes, indeed! as if ye couldn't see like a cat. Why, I've see ye make out the rig of a coaster when Tim couldn't, and he's been at sea since afore you come."

"How old is Tim?" I asked, with my despised eyes watching ahead.

"Why, about your age, I should say. Fifteen, ain't it?" he shouted to his son.

"Fifteen what?" called back the lad, from forward behind the jib.

"Years, ye donkey-foal!" replied his father. "Your age, I says."

"You oughter know, *dad!* But I believe I'm thereabouts. What then – what of it?"

"Nothin' – don't you think it," was the reply. "Mind you keep your eyes to windward, seems a change like."

"I've been thinking o' that cloud yonder, dad; seems like to spread. What d'ye think o' standin' in a bit?"

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed sharply. "We can't weather the point if we keep in. As it is the tide seems sucking us into the cliffs."

"There's no call for hurry," said Murry. "But when ye can lay a point inside – well, half a point – do it. The sky's getting kind o' hazy."

We had run well down the coast, slipping over the small waves, and darting merrily along. The boat was sailing well up in the wind, close hauled; and every now and then, with all my care, I could not prevent the sail shaking a bit. This back lift required me to keep away farther out, and then we found the wind coming more abeam, and fresher at times. Again it died away, and luffed up once more.

All this time the sun was blazing hot, like a furnace heat in its effects. Even the wind was warm, and appeared as if from a stove-pipe. It was nearly midday, and the heat was tremendous. So I suggested lunch.

"Suppose we stand out a while, Murry, and pipe to dinner."

"Ay, ay," he replied, with a grin at my assumption of phrase. "It's eight bells, ain't it? Then make it so!"

"We don't want any 'observations,' Murry, I think," said I, smiling.

"No, sir; I ain't going to offer any except 'Hands, splice the mainbrace!'"

Tim laughed, and handed out the beer jar, and a quantity of slices of beef and bacon, some bread and condiments, pickled onions in a bottle, and a huge piece of strong cheese. Altogether it was a splendid dinner, and we fell to, lying gently over to the wind, and enjoyed the fare, the "ship" almost steering herself.

"Well, that's good catering, Tim. I think you are a splendid steward for a small craft," I said, after an interval, during which our attentions had been directed to the thwarts, on which our food was spread. "Now I think we may clear up, and keep our course."

"The weather don't seem so willing to clear up, though," said Murry. "That big, black cloud is sailing up hand over fist. That's a thun'er squall, sir, and we'd better reef the mainsail."

"For a summer squall like that!" I exclaimed. "Why, we shall be under shelter of the cliff before it comes up; and its coming off shore, you see, not on shore."

"Exactly," replied Murry, rising. "Bear a hand, Tim, my lad. Get in a couple of reefs. Lower the foresail afore ye come aft."

"Oh, come, Murry! I believe you're frightened. Why, it's only a puff off shore, anyway."

"That's just it, sir. Tie them reefs, Tim, smart. The squall will catch us out here unless ye luff up, Mister Jule."

"I am luffing up all I can," I replied. "The beastly ship won't stand up to it, somehow! What's the matter?"

"It's the thun'er in the air does it. Ye see the breeze is backin' and fillin'. Give me the tiller, and go ye forward with Tim. Now, just be easy."

Murry did not often interfere with my sailing, and, therefore, I made no further objection to vacate the post of honour. He loosed the sheet, and held it in his left hand while steering the boat. Ever and anon he cast a glance above the cliff in the direction of which we were running obliquely to save all possible wind, but we did not make so much headway, as we wished to reach beneath the point of Ratcham Head for shelter.

"There she comes," cried Tim. "What a black 'un! Whiz! that's lightnin', sure."

"Yes, certainly. We're in for it, I think," I replied.

"Father don't like it, I can see. He's allus skeered in a big storm. Mother, she was struck that-a-way," he whispered.

"How dreadful! In a boat you mean?"

"In this very boat it was. They was out lookin' after nets. Father he was stoopin' forrad, a'most in the water, and mother she was steerin', when *smack* come the lightnin' and kill her stone dead, settin' up like a statoo, she was; and when father shouted at her to keep up, she set, and set, until he went on savage, and then found her struck. There it is again!"

It was! Behind the cliff, which showed up whiter than ever, an immense bank of cloud was extended as far as we could see

landwards, but only occupying a portion of the sky on both sides. To east, west, and south the horizon was clear, but great hanging tendrils were seeking to grip the blue below, and were curling up and retreating or advancing by turns; but apparently also always gaining ground, though the movement of the mass was imperceptible to us. Nevertheless, the blackness increased, and at length the rumbling of the thunder became distinctly audible.

The wind rose, and came rushing across the waters, taking up the little waves in spin-drift, and indicating a bad quarter of an hour for any craft caught unprepared. The boat's head was necessarily put more west, and so, with the wind more on the beam, the rate of sailing increased. The clouds came up steadily, the wind began to bluster suddenly, and to roughen the edges of the waves more and more.

The old fisherman hauled on the sheet, and sat over more to the weather side. He made no remark for a few minutes, then he cried —

"Get in under the hatch there, forward, and haul a tarpaulin over ye. The rain's a-comin' thick. Hear that!"

A tremendous burst of thunder came crashing upon our bowed heads as it seemed. Tim routed out a tarpaulin, and he and I rolled each other in it. It was a covering for the sails, which the old man used at times much to his friends' amusement. However, on this occasion we did not complain, for the rain, and, I fancied, even hail, came down with fearful force, and ran out of the lee scuppers, though with difficulty it escaped.

Notwithstanding all our protection we were getting wet. The wind rose, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed past us, the little yacht bounded and dipped. At length a fearful burst of flame struck us, and we actually screamed in terror.

Then the next moment the wind caught the sail, and flapped it with a terrible noise which mingled with the thunder. The boat careened over, righted, and flew before the wind like a frightened gull. I felt Tim rise, and go astern; I heard a cry of pain and anguish. Then I subsided upon the seething deck blinded and helpless!

CHAPTER II

A TERRIBLE POSITION – A PROPHETIC VISION – SINKING!

When I had rubbed my eyes, and began to take in the surroundings, I felt drenched by the rain and sea. My hands were sticky, and cold and damp. My clothes clung to my limbs, which were stiff under me. My straw hat, with the ribbon of which I had been so proud – a yacht-club ribbon – was sopped, out of shape, and off-colour like my drenched face. The squall was still passing, but the thunder had ceased.

The sea was very lively, and the wind boisterous. We were running close-hauled and fast, dipping and slapping; the mainsail stretched stiffly over the boat, reefed still, and the jib was as taut as a board. Daddy, I thought, was steering splendidly in such a sea, but I at once perceived that the cliffs had sunk deep into the water behind us, and that the line of the horizon was continually broken with the rolling waves. A change, indeed, and in a few moments! A great change!

I sat up, feeling a peculiar sensation of dizziness, and a breathlessness, a desire to gasp for breath – a taste, moreover, of something unpleasant, almost sulphurous, but not of sulphur. Something had happened! I looked around me; astern I saw Tim gripping the sheet in one hand, the tiller in the other, and

dragging at the sail, half in the boat, half out.

"What's the matter, Tim? Is the skipper asleep?"

I often called Murry the "skipper" for fun, as he called me his "young gentleman," meaning midshipman.

Tim made no reply. Perhaps my voice had not reached him, so I shouted at him —

"Tim, ahoy! Whither bound? What ship's this, anyhow?"

"The Dead-ship," replied the young sailor. "Come aft, if ye can, and bear a hand. I can't manage the sail and steer this way."

Feeling alarmed, I scrambled up, and in an instant I saw that some fearful accident had occurred. The mainsail was lying half in and half out of the boat, dipping and lashing the waves, and bringing the *Osprey* down by the quarter and stern, deeply. No wonder I felt drenched, no wonder the boat was uneasy; and Tim had need of all his nerve and skill to keep his course.

I clambered astern and hauled in the sail which had come down full, with the gaff, upon the stern-sheets, and nearly swamped us. I recollected the cry I had heard. What had happened?

My cheerfulness was quenched in a second. I was face to face with death for the first time! I could not credit it!

Yet I knew it I could see nothing but the sail, the blackened spar, the tangled ropes, the mainsheet still gripped in Tim's hand, held, too, I fancied, *by another hand — the hand of his dead father!*

This impression suddenly seized me, and the idea burned into

my brain like a dart – a hot nerve-thrill. Murry had been struck by that fearful flash, and I must have been laid out senseless. The peculiar feeling and sensation caused by the "electric fluid" I still remember, and do not wish to experience them again.

I felt afraid as I seated myself silently and with carefulness beside Tim. I questioned him with a look; he replied with a nod. Neither of us made an attempt to speak. He kept the boat's head close to the wind as possible, but we drifted out farther and farther all the time. We had no grapnel, and had we shipped an anchor we had not line to hold the boat there. All Tim could do was to keep up until a fishing-smack or some other craft could assist us.

Meantime we hauled the sail in board, and then, having lashed the tiller, we managed to roll it up and get it away from the body, which lay in the small, sunk, stern-sheets, still half supported. Murry was dead! My heart thumped in my throat, and a horrible feeling of hysteria attacked me. I suddenly burst out crying, and then sniggered in shame amid sobs.

"That's how mother was took," said Tim at length. "Can't we carry him in to the cabin place, think ye?"

I nodded assent. With great difficulty we managed to place the fine old man upon the lockers; the rolling and jumping of the boat was excessive, and imparted a weird movement to the body of the sailor.

He lay perfectly uninjured to all appearance. There was a blue mark on his neck, and his jersey had been split. Those were

the only signs of dissolution. Poor Murry! He was a fine hearty sailor, and I am sure all his mates missed him for many a day.

This terrible incident affected us both deeply. Tim said a few words only, but I could perceive that he was feeling deeply, though his training and habit did not tend to sentiment. My intention was to get back as quickly as possible, and I said so. Let us get home!

"Whatever course are you steering, Tim?" I asked. "We're making *out*, not home."

"We shall never get home unless by land – unless we run ashore," replied Tim grimly. "She's leakin' like old boots."

"Leaking! What do you mean?" I asked in alarm.

"I means leakin', that's plain enough, I think. She's takin' the sea in fine, and I dessay in a few hours we'll see her beached."

"Where?" I asked quickly. "You're keeping off shore now."

"Can't land under these cliffs, anyhow. We must bail and run soon. That's our only chance I take it, Mister Jule. 'Spose you looks and bails; there's a dipper there. See to the well. Come, we'll lash the tiller, and she'll lie up a while in the wind if the mainsel catches her astern."

"But surely we can get ashore well enough. There are several vessels yonder; let us run out and board one."

"And be swamped likely. No, sir; let's weather the point and then we may get in on the eddy a bit. See here, we're driftin' now; we can't signal, the weather's thick a'ready, and likely as not a fog will come up to-night. There's bad weather about now. So let's

try for the leak anyhow, and fix it."

We made an investigation which occupied some little time. We found the vessel was leaking, not badly; and if we could set the mainsail we could sail fairly well. The wind was unfortunately rising fast, and the day had completely changed.

I was surprised to find that time had passed so rapidly; it was three o'clock already. We were some miles out then, and still drifting out.

We determined to repair the gaff as a preliminary, so Tim set to work, and I assisted him as much as I could. That was not much, however, and all the time the day declined, the sea rose, the wind increased, and the *Osprey* jumped so that our efforts were not quickly successful.

"I say, Tim, can't we rig up the sail on the stump, and let her drive? We shall surely run against something bound homewards, or to London, or somewhere, and get ashore."

"I'm thinkin' we must chance it! The drift is dashing up too thick, and I'm feelin' like tea-time. Tell ye the truth, Mister Jule, I ain't the spirit for this. Think o' father there! How can we go back with that story? I'm gettin' 'down' over it."

"Oh, I say, Tim, none of that, please! Cheer up! we mustn't say die, you know. We have had a bad time, I know that, but we can't alter the *facts*. It's Providence, you know."

"Ye didn't say that this mornin' when you was savage about your eyesight," retorted Tim. "There was no 'Providence' in that. It was bad words and hanging people then."

"I was savage then, I know, and sick of things. But 'there's worse things happen at sea,' remember; and this is the worst I ever knew. Besides, it's a matter of self-defence and preservation, Tim. So let her drive; we'll be picked up certain. Let's do our best!"

"Very well, sir; you're master! Only, just see the weather! If we gets out yonder we'll never get back!"

"And if we lie here dipping and leaking we shall get nowhere! We can't hoist the sail, can we? No; well, then, loose the jib-sheet and drive out, there's plenty of steamers in the offing. I don't want to go home in such a hurry, and if it was not for" —

I stopped suddenly, my eyes had rested upon the outline of the poor old skipper's form, covered with the tarpaulin, amidships.

"Beg your pardon, Tim; do as you think best. I'll say no more. Let us lay to as you say, and try it."

There was a pause for a few moments. The spin-drift drenched us anew.

"Mister Jule," said he, — Jule being, of course, short for Julius, — "I think I understand ye. But, sir, you're the 'boss,' and arter all, the old dad — he can't hurt. He's 'done his bit,' and done it well! We'm alive-like, and we mustn't give in, must us? No, sir; we'll trim the boat, and run into the sea-way, and take what the Lord sends us. What d'ye say?"

"Done with you, Tim! Here's my hand on it. We'll sink or swim together. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir; that's hearty! I rather thinks it's sink more than

swim. What you says I dessay's right; we may sink, and lay-to that way. Let's drive!"

"Ay, indeed! I am inclined to make a run for it, and *do* something."

Before I had finished speaking this *ultimatum* Tim had loosed the jib-sheet, and I shifted the helm a bit. The wind was lashing us then across Channel; the afternoon was glooming, the sun had disappeared to our starboard beam, and the sea became higher as the tide turned and carried us away from the "dirty cliffs."

"We shall smile at our fears to-morrow," I said, in an effort to be cheerful which my heart did not respond to.

Tim Murry made no reply, and we still ran seaward silently. Then I suddenly became dreamy – listless. I did not realise the circumstances, the sea seemed rocking me to sleep. Tim approached and looked at me, took the tiller from me, and I fell into a calm dream of home. I remember it well even now. The whole dream was for me a reality. My stepfather was looking at me, while I appeared to be on board a large ship like a man-of-war. Guns were mounted fore and aft, a number of men were running about, there was some great excitement. Yet I was not on the large vessel long; I was on a steamship next. The large man-of-war attacked us, I could not say how, and the ship I was in sank with a roar of steam and whistling and —

"Rouse up, sir, look alive! Steamer close aboard of us. She's whistling; she's seen us. I waved to her. Now we must leave this sinking boat."

I started up. The evening had fallen. The *Osprey* was half full of water. I had been dreaming of sinking – the reality was very near.

"Let us shout," I cried. "Say we're sinking, Tim."

"That's no lie, Mister Jule. The steamer sees us right enough. Will she be in time?"

"What a time she takes," I muttered. "Somehow I can't believe it all. Is it *really* true, Tim?"

"Rather!" replied Tim. "There's the boat launched! Don't you believe the water's up to your boots now? Look at it!"

I suppose I was still half asleep. I gazed at the swishing sea, and had no fear.

"All right, I can swim! You said we wouldn't, Tim!"

"You're nearer sinkin'," he answered. "Dad will never see the home again, arter all. Well, well, it's the Lord's will, that it is."

It was a sad and painful ending to a boating excursion. But at least we were saved, and going home. How delightful it would be to see mother again, to tell her all my adventures, to confess my temper, and to try to do all she had told me to please Mr. Bentham. Yes, I made up my mind to behave well, and give up the sea – if I must.

"Step in youngster," said someone.

My reverie had been suddenly cut short. I looked up, the steamer's boat was alongside.

"Just in the nick," remarked the officer. "How did you lads get into this pickle o' fish? Lucky we sighted you."

"Yes," I responded in a sleepy voice. "Is Tim there?"

"Aye, I'm here," he said.

"And your father's – body?" I asked. "Bring him out, please."

"What?" exclaimed the steersman. "A body – a dead body!"

Not for us. Push off, lads."

"You won't take it?" I cried. "Won't you bring it ashore?"

"No time to go ashore, youngster! There, you see, just in time! See! – she's sinking!"

I looked. The *Osprey* began to lurch and dip as the men pulled away. I stared in dread suspense, half dead, I fancied. Then we increased our distance. The *Osprey* lifted and fell, appeared again, disappeared; rose again, and just when one expected to see it once more the sea hid it and bore it out of sight for ever.

I think I shouted; I know I leaped up in haste, but a firm hand was placed upon my collar, and I sank back unconscious of all around me save the darkness of sea and sky. My senses left me!

So Murry had gained a sailor's grave. "There in the lone, lone sea – in a spot unmarked but holy," he lies at rest until the last call for "all hands" is piped.

CHAPTER III

THE STEAMER *FÊNG-SHUI*, FOR CHINA – CAPTAIN GOLDHEUGH – DISCIPLINE AND A ROPE'S END!

When I again recovered consciousness I found myself in a comfortable berth, in what appeared an airy cabin on the deck of a vessel. The distant churning noise which attracted my rather wandering attention, and the shaking of the furniture, told me that I was on board a screw steamer. From the cabin windows I perceived a dim light upon the sea. The steamer rolled and plunged and shook herself with great energy, and at times the lamp hung, apparently, quite sideways across the room. As I continued to gaze rather listlessly about me, my eyes fastened themselves upon two words, of which I could make no sense nor meaning. These were painted upon a locker in golden characters, above some peculiar characters, and read —

FÊNG-SHUI

What was Fêng-Shui? I had never heard of it. I puzzled over

it. Was it a name, a motto, or a spell of some kind? It seemed to my still obscured brain "neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring," and the painted characters beneath the words looked even funnier than those upon a tea-chest. FÊNG-SHUI!

The letters burned into my brain; they kept recurring in a kind of sing-song refrain, and finally adapted themselves to the "Tit-Willow" song in the *Mikado*. *Fêng-Shui, Fêng-Shui, Fêng-Shui!* As I lay staring at the locker my mind turned the song anew —

A poor little sailor-boy lay in a berth,

Fêng-Shui, Fêng-Shui, Fêng-Shui!

And never could tell what was meant on this earth

By Shui, Fêng-Shui, Fêng-Shui!

And so on, *ad infinitum*, till my senses reeled again. At length, being almost desperate, I rose, and was in the act of quitting the horrible cabin, when a man in uniform – merchant service – came in.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, "what are you up to? Sleep-walking? Get back directly, d'ye hear? Smart now!"

He aimed a blow at my back, and literally ran me into the swinging cot which I had just vacated.

"Are ye mad?" he inquired, with a touch of the brogue of northern Ireland – a most amusing accent to my mind – which gave a comic turn to his most serious remarks.

I made no reply immediately, only by staring.

"Ah! the boy's off his head! D'ye hear me? Are ye deaf and

mad?"

"No," I replied; "neither, I think."

"Ye *think*! Ye're not sure! Then bedad *I* think ye're mad. What made ye jump out o' bed, then, like a lunatic?"

"I was wondering where I was, and thinking of those queer letters. I am better now. I was confused when I woke up."

"Oh, that's better! Sure it was a miracle ye woke at all; we all thought ye dead as Kerry mutton. What's ailing ye?"

"Nothing, except those queer letters."

"What! The ship's name, is it? That's nothing but *Fêng-Shui*, and it's written in Chinese besides."

"Oh, thank you, I see. I couldn't make it out. What does it mean?"

"*Wind and Weather*, and a lot more, in China. Ye'll see in time. Be easy now, I tell ye."

"In time! What do you mean?" I asked, starting up.

"What I say. In time! By and by, – when ye get there."

"Get where? To China?"

"That's it," replied my new acquaintance. "Ye've hit it plumb."

"But *I* am *not* going to China!"

"Aren't ye, bedad! Well, we'll agree to differ on that."

"What rot!" I exclaimed rudely. "Surely you're going to London?"

"Not till I get back, round the East. Then, maybe I will."

"Do you mean to say that this vessel is bound to China?"

"I do; and ye're bound to go with it."

"Then I *won't*! I want to go home to Beachmouth. Can't you put me ashore anywhere? – I don't care where it is."

"Can ye swim?" he asked, looking at me with a funny wink.

"I can, of course. Well?"

"Then ye must swim home. We're away in the Channel, and France is on the port-beam, if ye know what that is."

"Of course I do. Do you think me an idiot?"

"I did – a while ago. If ye're not a fool ye'll stay where ye are. Of course, ye're a bit mad now, but by the mornin' ye'll be well. Lie quiet now, and I'll send ye some food."

"No, thank you, I am not hungry. I am thirsty and chilly, though. Why can't I go home?"

"Because, unless I stop to put ye aboard some ship, ye can't. I can't stop now till daylight, anyway; and then we shall be about in the Bay. By that time I expect ye'll want to stay where ye are. Lie quiet now, I'll send the steward to ye with a lemon drink. Maybe in the morning ye'll feel better. Anyhow, ye must remain here – for the present, and keep yer claws in, like Tim Connor's cat."

"Are *you* the captain?" I asked, with some deference.

"So they tell me," was the quaint reply, as he left the cabin.

The captain of the *Wind and Weather*! Perhaps I had been too "cheeky." What would he do to me, I wondered. He seemed a nice man. Then I began to wonder what had become of Tim. He had not been given a cabin. Why had the captain taken such care of me? he had never heard of me, I was sure.

While thus groping in my mind for assistance and ideas, the

steward appeared with a warm drink, which smelt of lemon juice, and some spirit – I think whisky. I had never tasted spirits, and declined the draught then.

"If you don't drink it the doc will come and fix you," said the steward. "Better this than him. He's a 'nailer' at nastiness. Take my advice, drink this, and you'll sleep like a top."

"On one leg, do you mean?" I asked, taking the glass and smiling.

"Anyhow, after that. There, you've some sense in you, I see. You came up pretty limp from the boat. Now lie down, and sleep till mornin', I'll come and see after you."

"I say, steward, wait a second. What's the captain's name?"

"Goldheugh – Martin Goldheugh – and a first-rate captain, too, I can tell you. But you must do as you're bid, mind; no skulking. Now shut your eyes and keep quiet. Good-night."

I murmured something. The drink I had imbibed was mounting to my head; I felt warm and comfortable. Then I began to count the distant throbs of the engine, and just as I had reached three hundred and sixty-two I – woke.

It was broad daylight. I rubbed my eyes in surprise. *Daylight!* Had I slept (like Scrooge in the "Christmas Carol") through a whole night in a few minutes. It could not be daylight, surely? I had only counted three hundred and odd beats of the engine at supper-time, and already morning had come. My first glance fell upon "*Wind and Weather*" – the *Fêng-Shui* sign; and then my heart beat fast. I flushed hotly. What would my parents *think*?

what would they *do*?

I confess I was miserable and greatly upset. I was at sea, and for the first time very unhappy. My thoughts rushed to my mother, then to my indulgent stepfather, and I compared them with other fellows' parents who were so strict and stiff and severe. Neither my own father nor mother, not even Mr. Bentham, had been really severe with me. Most of my troubles had been caused by my own wilfulness and obstinacy; and, I then confessed, my disobedience! Yes, they had advised and guided me, while I, in my conceit, fancied I knew best, and consequently came to grief at last. Punishments came at times, and I rebelled, got punished again, and sulked. I perceived then that my parents had been just, and I regretted now that I had been so rude, and had parted from my mother so brusquely and unkindly.

My melancholy reflections were disturbed by the entrance of the steward. I was pleased to see him.

"Good-morning," he said. "Sleep well?"

"Splendidly! Where are we, steward?"

"Off Ushant. We shall get a tossing presently."

"What do you call this?" I asked, as the waves came rushing past the bulwarks. I could see great mountains rising and sinking outside, and white foam dashing up. The air was cool too, and raw.

"That's nothing at all; wait a while. The wind's rising fast, and we'll have a fine sea presently. Are you getting up?"

"What's the time, please? I feel better now."

"It's seven bells in the morning watch – half-past seven, you know."

"Yes, I know *that*," I replied. "Can I have breakfast?"

"Of course; whatever you like – in reason."

"Where will you reach port and land me?"

"I can't say; maybe at Gib – or Malta. We're in the Bay now. It's all the Bay between Ushant and Cape Finisterre."

"It's awful rough, I think I had better lie still," I said.

"As you like. The swell comes in here from the west, you see. But it isn't any rougher than the Atlantic between Ireland and America."

"I suppose you have sailed all around England, and also abroad?"

"Yes, I've been in a few places in my time. I was a schoolmaster once."

"You – a schoolmaster!" I exclaimed, sitting up with a jerk.

"Yes. Then I left the business, and went to sea as a purser's mate in the American trade. I saw a bit, and learned more geography than I could teach. I suppose you know all the celebrated sea places?"

"Oh yes; Trafalgar, and all those, of course."

"And Dungeness, Beachy Head, Harfleur, and Ushant close here, on the great first of June. I could tell boys all about them better now. Ay, ay; but let's not think of them. You want breakfast – all right."

He disappeared, and in a few minutes another man entered

with a tray of good things, including marmalade and jam, toast, and hot rolls. What a splendid breakfast I made. I *almost* forgot my home then. But the reaction came, and I felt miserable once more.

At half-past eight – I mean one bell in the forenoon watch – I said I would get up. I received some assistance from the steward, who had dried my clothes, but they had shrunk sadly. I made inquiries for Tim.

"He's forward all right, – you mean the fisherman, don't you?"

"Yes, Tim Murry. I should like to see him."

"You can see him on the forecastle, if you like. You can walk forward when you've found your legs. Gently does it."

I was greatly amused by being advised to take care. Why, I had been out in vessels in *very* rough seas often! The idea of the steamer being so bad was ridiculous. So I stepped out on deck, and was just about to gaze around when I was thrown forcibly against the port (lee) bulwarks, and the breath knocked out of my body.

Wildly I grasped at the shrouds and halyards within reach. I gasped, turned blue and pale, and felt as if I was dying.

"Hold up!" cried the steward, who had come out behind me. "Don't try to kill yourself, young fellow! You're too venturesome. Here, let me lead you to the companion, and sit there by the steps."

He assisted me to the companion stair, and placed me in safety by the entrance to the little saloon.

The captain was on the bridge close by, over the chart-house. The ship was flush-decked, broken only by the commander's cabin, the charthouse, and the skylights, masts, and funnel. Forward was the men's berth and hatch. I could only observe these points when the captain hailed me.

"Hallo, my lad, are ye practisin' for the slack-wire? Would ye like a sling for yer legs?"

I blushed because the mate and steward laughed. The sailor at the wheel grinned silently.

"All right, captain," I replied, "I'll have a sling, please. Hoist away!"

The mate – I thought him the mate – on the deck laughed again, but in a different key. The captain spoke to him in a low tone. The officer came aft and beckoned to me to approach the bulwarks.

I staggered up as bidden, and in a moment he had secured me with a rope to a belaying pin amidships, beneath the bridge. The rope hurt me, and pressed hard upon my waist in front.

"Let me go," I cried, struggling to reach the deck, from which I was just lifted by the rope; "I can't breathe."

"You can shout, anyhow," replied the mate. "You'll find your level presently. Then you'll walk circumspectly."

"Can you spell it?" I sneered. I was annoyed then by the laughter.

"I T," was the answer. "And you'll spell 'rope's end' if you're impudent, my lad. So put that in your pipe!"

"I don't smoke," I retorted. "Let me go, please."

"Presently. Keep quiet, as the captain says. You'll be glad presently. How do you feel now, eh?"

"None the better for seeing you," I said rudely. "Let me go!"

"No, no; you must feel better first. You see this rope's end, you'll feel it presently. Just a little pleasant warming. See?"

He then suddenly laid the rope across my shoulders sharply, and on my back a few times.

"That will keep you," he concluded, stepping forward and leaving me to my reflections. "Now you know the ropes," he cried jeeringly.

I was angry, and made up my mind to fight the mate when I got released. The captain did not interfere at all, though he saw all that had occurred. However, I suspected he would have said something had he disapproved. I was very savage, though not really hurt – except in my inmost feelings. I wriggled, and kicked, and yelled aloud, but no one took any notice of me whatever. At length I subsided, – I felt rather sick and faint.

"Cut him down," said the captain to one of the hands; "he's had enough. He'll lie quiet now."

The man at once untied the knot which I could not reach; I fell on deck, and felt terribly ill.

"Come along o' me," said the sailor. "Just stand here to leeward! You'll be all spry in a few minutes now. Hold up, matey! Why, you're a greenhorn, and no mistake! Shave my cat's whiskers, but you *are*!"

I felt too unwell to dispute the question. I considered that I had been most unkindly treated; that the captain and crew, including the mate most particularly, had been almost brutal! I longed to quit the ship and to return home. Even Granding and Smith's, I believed, would be more pleasant than the steamer. I began to *hate* the sea, the waves, the voyage! Was *this* the beautiful Ocean on which I had sailed so joyfully so often? What a mercy it was that I had been plucked in eyesight!

My eyes were open now, long before the usual nine days. I could see things in a different light. No doubt the Royal Navy was different from this "tramp" steamer, but it was all the same feeling *at sea*! Oh, my head! my head!

CHAPTER IV

BOUND TO CHINA – THE VOYAGE AND MY EXPERIENCES — *CASH* IN HONG KONG – RUMOUR OF WAR

"I've been thinking about ye," said the skipper, two days later, when my head and legs became more easy, and obedient to my will. "When we reach Gib ye must make yer choice – and I think ye'd better stay with me."

"Yes, sir," I replied doubtfully; "I suppose I must."

"There's no must in it, youngster. I'm bound for Hong Kong and Canton, and, further, I don't keep any idlers on board. If ye go with me ye must look lively. Yer mate, Tim, yonder, is already worth his salt. He tells me ye're a cadet."

"I wanted to be; my eyes were wrong, the doctor said."

"Then ye're fond of the sea? Now, here's my idea: I'll keep ye, if ye like, aboard, and, please Goodness, bring ye home. If not, ye must telegraph home from Gib, and I must send ye back in some liner, somehow. Make up yer mind, it can't take long."

"I suppose you think me a fool?" I exclaimed testily.

"I do *not*," he replied, with the emphasis of the native Irishman; "but maybe I will when I hear yer opinion."

"Then, I'll stay," I replied, feeling rather undecided nevertheless. "But what will they think at home? My mother will fret."

"Well, I'm sorry for yer mother, but I think she'll survive. I know something about ye from the boy forward. Now, tell me the truth about yerself. Who are ye, anyhow?"

I told him the truth. He listened quietly, nodding at intervals, and finally said —

"All right. Now, my lad, listen to me. I'll be the making of ye, and yer mother won't know ye when ye go back, eh?"

I hardly fancied that this would be an advantage for my parents, but I said nothing, and the captain continued —

"I'll make a man of ye, so I will. I'll just wire to yer daddy, and tell him I've got ye safe and sound, and will bring ye back. I'll clothe and feed ye and teach ye something, and maybe ye'll come back a second mate for the Company — the Shanghai and Hong Kong Tea Company."

"Thanks," I said briefly, rising as I spoke.

"Hold on a minute, there's one lesson first. When ye speak to the captain, say sir; d'ye mind?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, blushing furiously as I stood before the master.

"Very well, that's the first thing. Now, what can ye do? Can ye hand, reef, or steer? Speak up!"

"I can't furl a sail, sir. I can reef a fore and aft sail, and can steer a little."

"Very well. Look here, now, I'll keep ye, and put ye under my man; he'll trim ye a bit, and Mr. Rose, the mate, will set yer lessons. By the time we reach the China Sea I expect ye'll know the ropes. Ye must work for your living here, – no skulking, now!"

"No, sir," I answered respectfully.

"That'll do; I'll take the responsibility of ye, and bedad ye'll have to mind me! But I understand ye are a gentleman; so'm I, and ye'll be taken care of. Ye'll be a man before your mother yet."

This I believed highly probable, and nearly said so, but the looks of the captain deterred me. He proceeded —

"Just keep quiet till we make Gib; then I'll see ye fix'd up, and put to work. My steward will berth ye and feed ye. Ye needn't go amongst the crew, mind; and needn't keep watch – unless ye like – at first. Now, are ye satisfied?"

"Yes, sir, I am; and am very grateful to you for all your kindness."

"That's bully, now," he exclaimed. "Here's my hand on the bargain. Ye'll do, when ye get the starch out of yer collar. We don't want any airs here, mind ye. What's yer name? Jule, is it? – what?"

"Julius, sir," I replied, feeling terribly small.

"Julius Cæsar? No, it can't be that, I suppose. Never mind, we'll call ye Julius until ye become a mate. In my country they'd say if ye wasn't the *mate* ye'd be the boy to *serve it*! D'ye mind that? Come up now, and get a breath of the wind, young Cæsar."

I laughed, and thus I became a sailor. But how different was the introduction from that I had anticipated! I was rigged out as a cabin-boy in the steamer, and carried away to the Far East, instead of being trained on the *Britannia* and serving in a man-of-war. Many a night I lay half-crying in my bunk, thinking of the change in my prospects, but the days passed quickly, letters came from home, and I had plenty of money afterwards, but the first step counted very much in my career, and I grew fast at sea. I said so once to the captain.

"Mind ye don't grow fast ashore," he said. "Cut yer wisdom teeth first here."

I could not get much "change" out of the skipper.

But I am anticipating. I was still a cabin lad, and under orders. I was taught many things, such as knots and splices, heaving the lead, the names of the ropes, and was sent aloft when I had become accustomed to the vessel. We didn't sail much, but at times we hoisted a topsail, jib, and spencer (or mainsail) when the wind was on the quarter, and time was pressing. We steamed through the Mediterranean, and had I time I could tell you my experiences and pleasure in seeing the places which as a lad I had read about.

What lad of fifteen would not have been delighted, as I was, by seeing Capes St. Vincent and Trafalgar? The steward, the captain's man, my chief, so to say, told me many anecdotes about them, and the battles, the prizes, Nelson, and other heroes. Gibraltar, Naples, Malta, the canal, where we saw mirages in

the sand, Suez, the Red Sea, Colombo, and away to Hong Kong, whence we proceeded to Canton. All these experiences were delightful. I almost forgot home in the new and charming scenes of the East, though I found some drawbacks in the Chinese people and the climate.

We voyaged and traded between India and China for eighteen months, until I became, as the captain had declared, a mate under him, and though acting, I could act fairly well! I was then a grown lad, nearly seventeen, and full of energy.

We were at Hong Kong in the year 1894, a place I always liked, and the first visit to Victoria I never shall forget. It was in the end of the year after leaving home. Hong Kong in my mind had been always associated with a song which we used to sing in the bedroom at my first school about a "gay cavalier" who, having been disappointed by the lady he loved, declared, lyrically, that she "might go to Hong Kong" for him! This fine and interesting ditty, as we then thought it, came into my head that day when the *Fêng Shui* steamed into the harbour.

What a beautiful scene! Perhaps you think that because I am young and (a little) verdant I exaggerate the beauties of the panorama. Well, ask your friends. Let them tell you of the blue sky and sea, with the numerous vessels sailing and at anchor, the men-of-war with flags and pennants of all nations, the sampans, the junks, the hundreds of strange rigs and faces (and languages as of Babel all around you) floating on the beautiful water, from behind which rises "the Peak," the highest point of the mountain

chain which dominates the town of Victoria, which is built along the slopes.

And, indeed, upon a steep slope it rests, in an apparently insecure basis, inasmuch as the houses appear to be tending to the sea, as if thrust by those behind; so that one almost expects, when one returns after an absence, to find a row missing, and the larger houses lower down on the hill. Above them are the woods or thickets of the mountains, and, at times, the low clouds upon the Peak. Opposite is China, bare and rugged.

When you land in Hong Kong – at least this was my youthful experience – you are inundated by coolies who will carry your baggage, for a few *cash*, upon a bamboo pole, resting upon the shoulders of two "porters." A single porter may be employed, but in this case your (light) load will be balanced by him at the end of the pole and sustained by a weight at the other, in the weighing-machine method. These fellows trot up the hills with the burden which sways upon the pole, and though you may wonder why the man does not walk quietly, you will soon discover that the flexible bamboo is most easily borne at a jogtrot when laden, because it adapts itself to the pace, or the pace to it, as it swings. Try it, my young friends, and you will agree with me that a swinging trot is the easiest mode of progression under the circumstances.

"Cash" in Hong Kong, and in China generally, is of course in signification the same as in Europe, but in China it is specific, definite. The *cash* is a bronze coin, in value about the tenth of a

penny, with a square hole punched in it, so that the purse-bearer can string hundreds of them over his shoulder like a bandolier of cartridges. The *cash* is usually slipped upon a cord, knotted in the centre, and the money passed on over both ends. When a hundred *cash* has been strung on each end a knot is tied, and two other hundreds are added as before, up to usually one thousand *cash*, which then represent a dollar. Three shillings and ninepence at most, if good money, but frequently it is mixed. In some ports eleven hundred *cash* equal a dollar.[¹]

The dollar and cent are the money values in China, – copper *cash* and paper notes. A five cent piece represents about twopence farthing. Provided with *cash*, and even sometimes with a purse-bearer, one can "shop" in China if you are careful to give about one-third of the value of the article demanded. Let me now resume my story in 1894.

"Jule," said the skipper to me one day, "take the belt and come with me. I want to make a few purchases and to do a little bit of business. I think we shall make money."

I accordingly procured sufficient *cash*, and we were passing the club of Hong Kong, which, by the bye, contains a nice library,

¹ *Cash* is very ancient, it dates to 2300 B.C. The "sword cash" was in use about 221 B.C.; the circular, with square cut, is of David's time in Israel. Value, 1800 *cash* = 1 oz. silver.

when a gentleman accosted the captain. The stranger looked like a Japanese. He was short, intelligent, quiet, but decided in his manner, and spoke English fairly well.

"Captain Goldheugh, I believe?" he said, raising his hat in salute. It was not the salute of an inferior, though; there was no servility in the man's manner.

"Yes, sir," replied the captain, responding in kind.

"Can you favour me with five minutes conversation?" asked the young man. "Perfectly private matter."

"Certainly," was the reply; "shall I accompany you? We may talk here." They drew aside within the shelter of the house, and appeared to be in earnest conversation, which continued for some minutes. Meantime I strolled back and forwards watching the mixed assortment of people, of whom there are specimens from India and Arabia and other lands in abundance – negroes, Europeans, Parsees, Chinese, British, Portuguese, and French, coolies, and some – very few – Japanese; so the gentleman who had accosted my skipper was rather remarkable, perhaps.

When the pair had finished their chat, the skipper came back to me, and said —

"Jule, my lad, ye need not carry the *cash* to-day. Unless I am mistaken we are in for a fine deal. Mind now, keep your mouth shut. I think we'll make a profitable business of this."

"What is it?" I asked, as we returned to the waterside.

"Well I'm going to trust ye now, as a gentleman. What d'ye think of a war?" he asked.

"A war!" I exclaimed. "Where? In Europe do you mean, against us?"

"No, here; in China perhaps."

Such an idea had never entered my mind. The fact of impending war in China had not been presented to me; all seemed peaceful.

"Who is going to fight?" I asked.

"Perhaps no one. But ye saw that Jap there?"

"Yes; a nice fellow I thought, sir."

"Well, he has made me an offer, and if my suspicions are correct we'll make a little haul of cash. English cash – pounds – not this miserable, crawling, centipede kind of stuff which wouldn't buy a scarecrow a meal for Sunday. No, bedad, Jule, my boy, we're in luck."

"I hope so, sir. How?"

"Don't ye know I told ye about some business when we started that had reference to a mandarin chap, one of the Company's customers, for whom I had advices. Now, mind ye, this Jap has shown a hand – only a finger, I may say, but a finger points somewhere; and it just indicates the very direction in which I was going later. D'ye take me?"

"Yes, sir. It seems that the John Chinaman and the Jap have their heads in the same direction."

"Exactly. Jack and Jap is the business entirely. I have business both in Japan and China. I know the seas about here, and they both know I know them. So my friend has 'offered' me for the

steamer. What d'ye think of that? But he desires secrecy – a private cruise."

"The Japanese man you mean?"

"Ay, the Jap. But I was going to-day to the Mandarin Johnny to hear *his* business, and if he means the same, I smell *war*, my lad!"

"But how will that benefit you, sir?"

"It will benefit the Company if the Government takes up any transports, and makes a contract with the *Fêng Shui*. See? Now let us go on board, dress, and see the mandarin later."

We went off in a sampan to the steamer, which was lying off a little, awaiting orders. The captain took me ashore, dressed in a neat uniform, and I rather fancied myself in it. We landed, chartered two "rickshas," or jinrickshas, a Japanese importation, and were trotted out to the bamboo-shaded house, amid the scent of lovely flowers of all colours and perfumes – frangipanni, jessamine, roses – which the natives arrange in tasteful bouquets in the streets.

The "ricksha," pulled rapidly by the coolies, passed along the hilly thoroughfares under the hot and stifling sunlight. It was not a very bad day either, and yet in our cool white suits, and under wide umbrellas, the heat was quite sufficient that afternoon, and we were compelled to change on our return from our "pidgin" with the "Number One Johnny" – the high-class mandarin, to wit.

This mandarin lived in a bungalow, and affected certain tastes in deference to his neighbours – the English. He spoke the

language well, and though he was dressed in Chinese fashion, and was a perfect Chinaman in appearance, he had risen above his people in many ways. We entered the house, which was almost destitute of all the attributes of British houses, no curtains, nor carpets, nor rugs, nor anything to *heat* one to look at; on the contrary, all things were cool – bamboo chairs, high casements, wide windows, stained floor, fans and punkahs waving automatically, it seemed, but, of course, pulled outside.

We were ushered in by a Chinese "boy," and into the presence of the "Number One man." He was dressed in the usual well-known fashion – a loose robe, with trousers, long sleeves to his garment, stuff shoes, and of course a fan. His keen eyes were shaded by spectacles. His shaven head and pendant pigtail and queer eyes betokened the true Chinaman.

After salutations, by rubbing his hands over each other, he asked in what he had deserved the tremendous honour which my captain had done him in visiting his most miserable hut.

The captain in reply mentioned certain instructions he had just received, and suggested that the "Number One man" knew something of his errand. What did the mandarin think of the steamer *Fêng Shui*?

"It is a solid vessel, and can carry soldiers?" he asked quickly, after some other remarks had passed. The Chinaman dispensed with any compliments just then; he offered us tea, but did not taste it then.

"Yes," replied the captain with deference, "she will suit for a

transport. *The Japanese wish for her.*"

The spectacles flashed at us, the fan waved, but no irritation was otherwise expressed.

"Has the Japan Government purchased the 'inside' steamer?" (screw).

"No, highness; I declined the offer. I am awaiting yours."

"Your terms for the steamship for three months, if we wish to send it with your crew to Corea?"

The captain paused a while, then he named a sum which made me look out of the window, I nearly smiled. I did not know the value of steam transports fitted for service; it meant hundreds a day! Hundreds for that small steamer and crew – and, of course, officers.

At length the transaction was completed. The tea was drunk then, not before. We bowed ourselves out, and regained the *Fêng Shui*, where the mate was in charge.

"Well," said the first officer, "what's happened?"

The captain told him our experiences, and mentioned the conclusions at which he had arrived.

"Look here," he said in a low tone, "mark ye this, there's going to be a fuss between these two countries. They are both trying to get ahead of the other, and I understand that Corea has a finger in the pie. That Japanese I told ye of – the man I pointed out to ye," he continued, addressing the mate – "ye know."

"Ay, ay; but he's not a Jap!"

"Not a Jap! What d'ye mean?" exclaimed the captain angrily.

"What I say, captain; *he's* no Jap! He and his pal are Coreans. I can see that. Look at his sleepy face under that 'bowler' hat – a disguise! He isn't a Jap; and he wants a secret passage, you say. Things are getting mixed all round. He's up to no good."

"Well, maybe ye're right, Rose," replied the captain. "But why do ye think the Korean men are cutting in against us?"

"I only know what I have seen; I've seen two Coreans searching for a vessel to-day – and on the sly, I hear. They are up to something; and it's all round queer, because they have a Chinese and a Japanese with them. Four together, and only the Jap looks honest."

"They can't hurt us, so no matter. I'd like to know what they are scheming, by the same token. There's war in it, and the Company's agent knows it. I'll fix it, and we may have to steam for Shanghai on sight. We'll get steam up, Mr. Rose; pass the word for Jenkins."

Mr. Jenkins was the "chief engineer," and he came to confer with the captain in due course.

I obtained leave for the evening. Fancying that I could clear up the mystery of the Japs and Coreans, I took a sampan, and went out on search through the harbour for the hired, secret vessel.

CHAPTER V

A SECRET MISSION

– KIDNAPPED! – THE

SCHOONER – THE ASSASSIN

As I did not wish my chief to know whither I was bound, I went ashore first, and strolled about in the cooler hour of the evening, and even penetrated into the queer Chinese slums where little drums of the peddlers, and the chatter and smells and heat, soon drove me back to the parade, away from the houses of the natives. Their stupid faces, so smooth and greasy-looking, their odd dress, long pigtails (of the men), the coarse, rolled hair, pinned in masses (of the females), both sexes being costumed nearly alike, quite put me off. Even some experience of the country has not impressed me in favour of the native of China.

So I returned to the water, and calling a "sampan" got the number of the man taken – for many people have been "missed" from a Chinese boat at evening – and told my man to propel me across the harbour towards Kow-loon. This is in China, where the change of the scenery is marked and wild; but I did not come for the prospect, I wanted to search the further side of the harbour, which is about a mile across and ten square miles in extent.

If the Koreans had an idea of secrecy, I imagined they would

rather seek a small sailing vessel – perhaps a junk rather than a steamer, though, of course, the latter would be more speedy, and more certain if a storm arose. But they would sail by the north channel, so I made for the north point, the extremity of the peninsula of Kow-loon, which is under British authority by lease.

I passed amid the ships of all kinds, large and small, which crowd the harbour; boat-houses (literally dwelling-houses) of the natives who at Hong Kong, as at Canton and Shanghai, and other places, live in the wherries in aggregate thousands. Small and limited is the accommodation, truly, when a family, with a pig, and perhaps ducks, live on board. The chances are in favour of drowning; but the *male* children are tied to the gunwale; the girls are let to go as they please, and if they disappear – it is "only a girl"! There is little care for life in China – of the natives, I mean – and least of all for female children.

The evening was drawing in, and I had not found any vessel on which I recognised the so-called "Japs." There were hundreds of ships of all sorts, and I was pleased to hear a hail in English from a clipper schooner as I was passing in the dusk.

I pulled alongside the vessel whence the "hail" had come, and, when close aboard, I recognised the speaker as a friend who had assisted me once or twice in the past when I had been unhappy and in need. His name was Eagan.

Glancing along the trim and natty decks of the schooner, I gained the gangway. The little ship was ready to put to sea, the anchor was already weighed, and the schooner was only fast to a

buoy, for the breeze was light. I recognised the craft as a former smuggling vessel, and named *Harada* by her late owner. She traded in "natives" up the coast, and to Formosa, the Pescadores, and as far as Shanghai, or even farther north.

"Hallo! back again?" I cried, as I clasped Eagan's hand.

"Why, certainly," he replied; "think I'd scooted? What are *you* prowling about for?"

"Simple curiosity," I said. "Thanks, yes, I'll have a 'peg," I added, as he indicated refreshment by a nod in the direction of the cabin.

"A tidy berth this," I continued. "Suits you, anyway."

"Yes, not badly. What's your *simple curiosity* led you to? I can estimate the curiosity, but I don't see where the simplicity comes in."

"Really?" I asked, as I watched him mixing a soothing draught.

"No, really. What's your spot? What's your little game?"

"My game! I'm just sculling around – that's all."

"By accident. One of your freaks, o' course! Still acting on the *Fêng Shui*, I suppose?"

"Yes; but confirmed now – second."

"Ah! Going north yet?"

"Presently – I mean by and by. When do *you* sail again?"

"When I receive sailin' orders. Maybe to-morrow – maybe never."

"Come, Eagan, you're mysterious, for *you*! Your anchor's a-

peak, and you are loosing sails. You are just off. What's the game? Whither bound – honour bright?"

He paused and looked at his tumbler, then raised it and looked at the lamp through the liquid the glass contained. He slowly brought his eyes back upon mine, and said —

"Honour it is! Chemulpo perhaps – Shanghai certain."

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "I say, Eagan, what's your *Jap* up to?" He started and stared at me, then he replied —

"I say, Jule, what's your *Chinese* up to?"

"*Rats*," I replied. "What's the coil *here*?"

"*Snakes*," he retorted. "What's your notion?"

He suspected me; and I fancied that I had by accident hit upon the Coreans' vessel, or of the vessel they had chartered, perhaps.

I kept staring at the skipper; he was silently staring at me. Neither would say the word he was anxious to say. A pause ensued.

"Well," I said at length, "I must be off. No more, thanks. 'Pegs' are likely to upset one in the dark; anyway, they don't steady one."

"P'raps not," he replied. "Well, so-long, mate; we'll meet sometimes, I hope."

"Certain! I see your sails are loosed, Eagan. I'd better be going. Ta-ta!"

"Good-night. Hallo! where's your boat?"

I rushed to the side. My sampan and the boatman had disappeared.

"Hang it! I say, skipper, send me ashore, please," I cried

anxiously. "We may sail by daybreak."

"I'm just as sorry as sin, but I can't. My dinghy's ashore, and I've no time to man another. I guess you'll have to wait a while."

"What do you mean? Remain here? I can't."

"Guess ye must, Jule boy, till morning. Say, there's a signal. That's my boss comin' alongside. Show lights!" he called out. "Gangway!"

Three or four men, dark-featured fellows, Chinese apparently, came abaft, and a European mate came up from the cabin somewhere.

I saw a light flashing from a boat which quickly came alongside the schooner. I walked to the counter and watched it. The occupants were two short men in the stern, two natives in the bow, and two sailors rowing.

The lanterns gleamed as the men stepped on deck from the stern-sheets of the boat. They were wrapped up, but I knew one of them. He was the quasi-Japanese officer whom my captain had spoken with. These men were escaping perhaps – whither? What plans had they been maturing – what plots had they been framing in British territory?

The foremost arrival did not notice me, the second did, – he I did not know at all, – but neither made any remark to me. The officer, as I may term him, turned to Eagan, and said in English, clearly —

"Stand out at once, please. Make for Shanghai direct."

Eagan nodded merely, and said, "All right, boss." Then he

gave a few orders which the mate repeated, and in five minutes the schooner was passing out by the north channel.

"Eagan," I said, "where are you taking me? I *must* join my ship."

He shook his head, and went to the wheel himself, leaving me raging. I followed him.

"Do you hear?" I cried. "This is piracy. I'll give the alarm if you do not put me ashore. Hail a boat!"

"Just lie low, Jule. Wait till we reach Shanghai, you'll find the steamer there, I expect, and if not you can wire; so be easy, boy."

"I'll make a row for this!" I cried, feeling enraged with him.

"If ye do I'll put ye overboard. The crew are Chinese, and no one will care except me. So, keep still, and I'll land you safely up at Shanghai; best so, I tell ye."

"Then you are hired to carry these fellows; I see. There is something wrong here, Eagan, and you shouldn't do it."

"It's no business of mine, lad. I'm paid for the passage, and when they land it's finished. Your old screw will be in Shanghai before us. There's nothing wrong in the case so far as I see *yet*; I'll tell you more in a while. Go and have some supper."

I was very much annoyed by this departure, and began to grumble at the skipper; he only laughed at first, and then got angry in his turn, until the mate came aft and dragged me below, where we supped in amity.

"Take no notice of anything," said my new friend; "but, 'tween you and me, there's going to be trouble about this. For one of

these chaps has been induced by the other to clear out of Victoria and to go to Shanghai. I can understand some of the lingo, and it's plain to me that the man named Oh Sing, or Kim, – I can't quite catch it, – is rather frightened of the boss, whose name is Lung. The Lung man won't let him out of his sight, and if a chance comes I suspect Mr. Lung will punish the other fellow."

"What's his object, then?" I asked.

"Can't say. Eagan is suspicious, too, of these Koreans. One fellow is evidently nervous, and keeps his Japanese servant near him all the time. The captain don't want any fuss on board this ship, you understand."

"Well, I shall say nothing. We shan't be long in reaching Shanghai, and there I can quit, eh?"

"Certainly – why yes, of course. Now, when you're finished, we shall go on deck. The captain will want to go down then, and you shall watch with me if you like. Keep your eyes skinned."

"You scent danger then?"

"In two ways. The glass is falling; that, after such a jumpy time as we've had, means tempest. You know that?"

I nodded, and he proceeded.

"Then, again, we must never leave these passengers to themselves, unless the weather's very bad, because there'll be trouble. If the weather's bad they'll all be sick, and near dead anyway. So let us pray for typhoon, mister."

"I shall not," was my reply. "When you see the barometer waltzing down to twenty-eight degrees or so you'll pray for

something more interesting to yourself! Keep an eye upon the Koreans by all means, but watch the glass whatever you do."

We were strolling up and down the weather-side of the deck. The wind was off shore, and a bit abaft the beam. As we cleared the Channel we spun along the ripples, sending the "phosphorus" flying around the stern, and light-up the forepart to the chains. The sky was perfectly clear, and the mate hoped to reach Formosa quickly with such a breeze.

We were still strolling at four bells, ten o'clock, and then I felt inclined to turn in somewhere.

"Take my bunk in the inner cabin. If you hear anything, just let me or the skipper know. Those fellows have a game on if I am not mistaken; but no 'revenge' in this ship, I say."

He nodded at me significantly in the soft light by the binnacle. The steersman was a Lascar. The crew was composed of a variety of natives; but in the cold weather of the northern sea the Lascars were as dead – and died too.

"Good-night," I said. "I'll find my way."

I stepped softly down the stairs, and passed through the "saloon" or eating-cabin. I found the berth close by, and tumbled in by the dim light of a swinging candle-lamp of the spring-up pattern, as we used to call it. The company in the saloon had dispersed; the captain had quitted it some time before, and the two Koreans and the Japanese servant, who stuck to Oh Sing, parted. The man Lung, I fancied, disposed himself in the saloon. The other came and looked at me, and perceiving that I did not

stir, he, after a pause, *crawled* out, hands and knees, on the floor, and vanished in the darkness outside the berth.

The wind was rising, the sea was following suit. I slept lightly as usual, when I was awakened by a breathing close to my face. I opened my eyes quickly, and started up.

A knife flashed in my face. I seized it, and shouted, "Help!"

At the moment I cried out I sprang up. Someone at the same time extinguished the already expiring lamp, and as I leaped upon the deck-floor I distinctly heard *something* retiring. I called again, and the captain came down into the dark and silent saloon.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Is that you, Mr. Julius? Had a bad dream, I reckon, eh? What are you doing here, anyway?"

He turned a ship's lantern upon my scared countenance as he was speaking.

"No; someone came into the berth and flashed a knife in my eyes. If I had not called out I would have been stabbed."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said the captain, who still blinked the light upon my alarmed looks. "There are no murderers here, lad. But tell me how you came in here; this berth belongs to the passengers."

"The mate told me I would find a bunk in his berth."

"Likely; but this isn't his. This belongs to one of my passengers – to Mr. Oh Sing."

"To him!" I exclaimed, recalling the hints of the mate. "Then perhaps somebody intended to stab *him*!"

The skipper looked at me steadily for quite half a minute,

without speaking. Then he replied —

"Better come on deck, sonny; you'll see no knives there, and may bear a hand for me. I think, somehow, a storm is coming up. Look slippery now," he said, as he went to examine the other "rooms" astern.

I looked as slippery as possible, but "look sleepy" was just then the more correct expression, as I ascended the stairs to the deck. The breezy, somewhat cool, night soon dissipated the feelings of sloth which remained in my eyes, and I was able to grasp the aspects of the surroundings, which were, after all, pleasanter than the revealed dangers of the cabin.

The mate was forward, and I took up my position by the wheel so as to look well ahead and around. There was a low grating astern, on that I stood and cast my eyes over the sails.

The schooner was slipping away north-east, the wind still just a little abaft the beam, and filling all our sails. The *Harada* was a topsail schooner — that is, she carried small square sails aloft on the foremast, and as I reflected, with a fast-beating heart, upon the very narrow escape I had had below, my glance was fixed upon the topsail, which seemed pulling hard at intervals. Then the wind would slacken again, the cloths would remain at their former tension, and all well.

The sky was beautifully blue-black and clear, and I calculated that we should reach Shanghai in about six days, supposing no bad weather intervened. I felt very happy and comfortable there, in command, nominally, of the vessel, though I wondered why

the skipper remained below.

After a while I became convinced that the breeze was increasing, and more than that, in a jerky, uncertain manner which I did not like. We had plenty of sail on the vessel, jib, stayforesail, topsail, fore and aft foresail, and mainsail. I fancied we ought to furl the topsail at anyrate, and I called the captain through the skylight.

Eagan came up smartly, and after a comprehensive look around, said —

"Mr. Julius, just call the hands, will you? Watch will reduce sail," he cried. "Be smart, lads!"

The watch, who had been resting in the "shade" of the bulwarks, at once arose at the summons, and I ran forward to call all hands, but the mate anticipated me and turned the men up.

"Come, Mr. Julius, will you lead the men aloft for me? I must get the mainsail stowed and the jib down."

"Aloft, boys!" I exclaimed, and was in a moment leading the hands up the rigging. "Crikey," it did blow up there then! All of a sudden, as it seemed, the wind increased, and when we attempted to secure the sail it flapped and banged us about so that it was with great difficulty we even commenced to secure it. But the six skilful hands managed it, and by holding on "by our eyelids" and "legs and necks" we got the square topsail secured to the yard in fair style. Luckily the true tempest had not then broken, and we got the yard down.

Then came the struggle. Sail after sail was reduced as fast

as possible, and came down rapidly, racing the mercury in the tube which was leaping lower and lower. All hands were on deck except the passengers, and the sea came drifting in foam and spray across the ship. The *Harada* dashed into the short seas, which rose landward, as if ejected by big hands underneath with no roller-force; but the wind made noise enough in the shrouds and cordage to deafen us, and even the boats slapped and almost danced adrift from the davits, and filled with rain-water.

I thought we would escape easily, but Eagan roared in my ear that this was the beginning. He was right. The furious blast seized the sturdy little ship at one moment, and snapping some ropes like whipcord, sent them flying around our heads and beyond. The schooner dipped and dipped, lower and lower; strake after strake disappeared, until the planks seemed to become lost, and the vessel to be settling beam under. The passengers set up a horrible scream, they were too greatly alarmed to fight, no doubt; and even the best of us thought of the great and solemn inevitable end.

All this time the sea was most terrible, the wind and darkness were awful, the foam simply a white mist around us. The vessel suddenly rose up again, was again depressed, again lifted as the squall subsided; and after four such experiences, each one bringing our masts down to the waves, and the last one smashing the mizzen-topmast short at the cap, we floated more steadily. The wind changed, smote us again on the starboard quarter, after blowing in a circle for a couple of hours, and we rested on a

trembling sea, drenched with spray and rain, and dishevelled.

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