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THE BRITISH NAVY, AS IT WAS

The return of the Arctic Expedition to this country after many months' sojourn amid the ice-floes of the mysterious Polar Sea, has once more directed public attention to that gallant service which has been the glory and safeguard of these islands.

Though unsuccessful in its main object, the voyage to the North has again brought out in high relief those admirable qualities which are the characteristic of British sailors; for if devotion to duty, courage, skill, and endurance could have enabled Captain Nares and his brave companions to plant the glorious old meteor flag of Britain upon that Ultima Thule of geographers, the summit of the earth, it would have been braving there the fierce arctic gales at this moment. As it is, however, they have written a brilliant page for our island story that will not soon be forgotten, by carrying forward, in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties, to the most northerly point yet touched by the foot of man, the Union-jack of Old England.

Whether the royal navy – for we are mainly speaking of the service under the crown – will maintain its ancient reputation in new circumstances, is a matter of serious concern. The glory of the service was achieved when ships were of wood, and propelled only by the winds. And it is perfectly marvellous what was done under these conditions by all the great commanders. Things are now greatly changed. Steam-power is relied upon, along with huge batteries moved only by machinery. Ships have become a kind of floating factories, depending on the skill of engineers, and involving such an immense attention to minutiae as to be almost beyond human nature. The pluck of the English sailor remains, as is observable from the Arctic Expedition; but it is a serious question how far pluck and the most brilliant seamanship in a commander will be able to perform deeds like those recorded in our naval annals. Before, however, entering on speculations regarding the future (which we shall do in a subsequent paper), we propose at present to recall to the memory of our readers a few of the naval deeds performed in past times.

The British navy may be said to date the commencement of its fame from the days of Elizabeth, when, under the command and guidance of such eminent sailors and navigators as Lord Howard of Effingham, Drake, Frobisher, and Hawkins, it accomplished the destruction of Spain's mighty but over-ambitious fleet. Up to this period, however, very little information can be gleaned as to the kind of men who manned our ships, but the principal nurseries of the navy were the towns and villages that lined the coasts. This was but natural, seeing that these places were constantly exposed to the fierce attacks of pirates and marauders of every description. Many of the common sailors were natives of Devon and Cornwall, two counties that have always possessed a race of men as renowned for their strength and courage as they are remarkable for their nautical skill.

In former days deeds of daring were of frequent occurrence amongst the English seamen, and may be found duly noted in the chronicles of the period, though no reward or incentive to courage, except (in rare instances) a small sum of money, was ever bestowed upon the humble heroes. It is recorded, for instance, in an old tome which gives the details of the various encounters that took place between the English fleet and the Spanish Armada, how a common sailor named Hampton leaped from the English admiral's ship on to the deck of a Spanish galleon which had run alongside, and although he was immediately surrounded by her fierce-looking crew, gallantly maintained his ground

until the grappling-irons were thrown and the Spaniard was held fast in the death-grip of the Briton. In the struggle he had succeeded in killing three men and wounding two officers, and the moment assistance reached him he dashed forward to the mast and hauled down the Spanish ensign. For this heroic act the brave fellow received the sum of 'three pounds!'

In the year 1642 we find the officers and men of the English navy declaring that they were ready with their lives and fortunes to defend and maintain 'the glory of God; the purity of that religion which is most agreeable to the Word of God; the honour, freedom, and preservation of his Majesty; the privileges of parliament, and the liberty of the subject.' This oath did not, however, prevent them from espousing the Parliamentary cause in that great struggle which ended in the death of the sovereign they had sworn to preserve, and the establishment of the Commonwealth. At this period many sons of noble families served as common soldiers and sailors, and even the great Monk (afterwards Duke of Albemarle, an admiral and general too) once served as a private soldier in the fleet.

Many signal instances of the courage and devotion of the English sailor occurred during the later wars with the Dutch; but as we have no space to record them here, we must pass on to that more glorious period of our naval history when the greatest sailor the world has ever seen, first breathed the air of heaven within our sea-girt isle. During the century which intervened between Monk and Nelson the navy was subjected to varying fortunes, but was ever engaged in doing good service for England in all parts of the world.

Compared with the monstrous armaments of these days, the fleet which existed in the year when Nelson was born (1758) was astonishingly small and weak, for it numbered no more than two hundred and nine vessels, manned by about forty thousand seamen – the annual cost of the whole not exceeding five millions. To recruit these ships, however, all kinds of tyrannical measures were resorted to, the worst of which was the abominable system of the press-gang, by which the unwary citizen was liable to be entrapped and sent to sea against his will. This nefarious business was carried on to a very great extent, each ship, when below its complement, having the power to send out its own press-gang; and numerous were the deeds of cruelty and oppression to which such a wretched system gave rise. The spread of enlightenment during the present century has naturally put an end to this state of things; and at this moment England possesses a fleet manned by between eighty and ninety thousand sailors, who have *voluntarily* chosen a seafaring life as their profession.

In those days of press-gangs it was not to be wondered at that a cruel tyranny should have been practised by most of the officers upon those who were subordinate to them, and the consequences were the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. The British sailor began to feel that it was time his splendid services to his country were rewarded with something better than the 'cat-o'-nine-tails,' and the blows and kicks of those whose lives were daily, nay hourly at his mercy, and he resented the ill-treatment in his own manner when it grew too bad to be borne any longer. But even in this sad hour of his history Jack's heart was in the right place, and in the midst of revenge, he exhibited a chivalrous love of justice and fair-play which redounded highly to his credit.

At Spithead the crew of the *London* mutinied, and Admiral Colpoys gave the order to the marines to fire down the hatchways. The death of some of their comrades so enraged the mutineers that they rushed upon deck, and would have made short work of the officers (indeed the rope was already round the neck of one), when the admiral, stepping forward, told the men that it was he who gave the orders to fire, and that those orders came from the Lords of the Admiralty. The rope was taken off the officer's neck instantly, and the admiral was requested to produce his orders. After a little delay he did so, and handed them to the leading mutineers, who instantly retired to deliberate on the question. They decided that the admiral *only obeyed his orders* in doing what he had done, and permitted him and the other officers to leave the ship unharmed. The mutineers, however, although they permitted their officers to escape with their lives, forfeited their own, as they were afterwards condemned to be hanged at the mast-head.

A sketch of the British navy, however brief we may make it, would be incomplete without some mention of the life and services of that incomparable commander and matchless sailor, Horatio Viscount Nelson, together with a few instances of deeds of daring performed by the brave seamen that served under him.

Brought up in a rough manner upon that element which was the cradle of his fame, and in the midst of wars and rumours of wars, Nelson's boyhood was passed in sheer hard work, which nought but an enthusiastic love of his profession could have enabled his weak and emaciated frame to bear. Yet to him is due England's proud place as mistress of the seas. His life stands out clear and bright upon her annals as a noble example of self-sacrifice and unremitting devotion to duty – an example which cannot be too often placed before the youth of Britain. A stranger to fear and a strict disciplinarian, he was yet generous to a fault, and as sensitive as a woman.

His form was of the manliest beauty;
His words were kind and soft;
Faithful below he did his duty.

It is related of him that he never allowed corporal punishment to be inflicted upon a seaman, except when it was made clear to him that it could not possibly be avoided, and immediately on signing the sentence he would bury his face in his hands and weep like a child.

Perfect sailor and brave man, he was ever the high-minded hero, and was beloved by his officers and idolised by his men, inasmuch that they were ever willing and ready at any moment to die for his sake. As an instance of this, it may be mentioned that when the *Theseus*, a vessel which had been in the mutiny at the Nore, joined his fleet abroad, Nelson, who had just been appointed admiral, shifted his flag to her, in order that nothing should be done to tamper with the dangerous temper of the men. One morning, very shortly after he had done so, a piece of paper, signed on behalf of all the ship's company, was dropped on the quarter-deck, bearing the following words: 'Success attend Admiral Nelson! God bless Captain Miller! We will shed every drop of blood in our veins to support them, and the name of the *Theseus* shall be immortalised as high as her captain's!'

One of the crew of this ship, a sailor named John Sykes, was appointed coxswain to the admiral's boat; and when Nelson, with a boat's crew of only ten men, made a night attack on some Spanish gun-boats in Cadiz harbour, this man actually saved the life of his great commander twice by warding off with his cutlass blows aimed at the admiral, and at last interposed his own head to receive a deadly blow directed at Nelson's life. Had Sykes lived, Nelson had determined to make him a lieutenant, for he declared that the man's manner and conduct was such that nature must have intended him to be an officer and a gentleman.

The honour of the British flag is so dear to an English sailor, that he has in many instances risked life itself to prevent the grand old piece of bunting from becoming the 'property' of the enemy. In one notable instance an attack was made on some shore batteries, and a force of marines and sailors had been landed for the purpose. Having found, however, that it was useless to sacrifice a number of valuable lives in an attempt which had no apparent chance of success, orders were given for a retreat to the boats. At the last moment it was observed that a boat's flag, which had been planted on a garden-wall, as a signal to the ships, had been left behind. A volunteer was instantly called for to fetch the flag (which was waving defiantly on the breeze right in front of the enemy's works), and a hero presented himself in the person of a boatswain named M'Donald. This intrepid fellow went coolly back in the midst of a heavy fire, seized the flag, waved it above his head, and then carried it safely down to the boats, where he was received with three hearty rounds of cheering by his comrades; and on the boats reaching the ships the rigging of each vessel was manned in his honour.

In these glorious days it was more a question of men than ships; yet had England possessed one-half of her present fleet, she might have been the sole arbiter of the world's destinies. Nelson

was the type of a true British sailor; and no finer tableau can be imagined, or one more gratifying to the pride of an ancient maritime race, than that scene on board of the Spanish ship *San Josef*, when the great Englishman, having captured the vessel after exclaiming, 'Westminster Abbey or victory,' received on the quarter-deck of the Spanish admiral's ship the swords of its officers. Behind him stood an old sailor of the *Agamemnon*, whom Nelson knew, and this man received the Spaniards' swords from the admiral and coolly bundled them up under his arm like so many sticks of wood, and within gunshot of twenty-two sail of the enemy's line.

Nelson's generosity and indomitable courage were contagious, and made a hero of every man and boy in his fleet. At Aboukir he received what was thought to be a mortal wound over the only eye which he had left; and when he was removed to the cockpit, the surgeon immediately left the poor sailor he was attending, to wait on his distinguished commander; but Nelson, though *himself* still in the hour of supreme pain, waved the doctor away: 'No,' said he calmly; 'I will take my turn with my brave fellows.' Nor would he suffer the wound to be touched until all who had been previously wounded were attended to.

On the blowing up of the French ship *Orient* at the same battle, the British sailors dragged all the drowning Frenchmen within reach into the port-holes of the English ships. In this act of humanity in the midst of the carnage caused by war, they had been preceded, however, by their great captain, who, notwithstanding his wound, on hearing that the French admiral's vessel was on fire, rushed from the cockpit to the deck, astonishing everybody by his sudden appearance, and ordered the boats to the 'assistance of the enemy.'

A sailor standing near Nelson suddenly recognised in the sea, just beneath the bulwarks of the ship, the face of a Frenchman who had treated him kindly while a prisoner of war in France, and without the slightest hesitation, he leaped into the water and seized hold of the drowning man. The lives of both would have been sacrificed, had not Nelson, who had witnessed the brave act (without knowing the motive which prompted it), directed one of the boats to the spot.

Acts of bravery and devotion to duty were of course not wanting on the side of the enemy. Captain Casabianca had been wounded by a splinter, and when the fire broke out, his son, a boy of ten years, refused to enter the boats into which the men were crowding, but stayed beside his wounded father, and with the help of one of the officers, when the fire advanced, the father and the boy got on to a floating mast. They were seen there just before the *Orient* blew up, but must have sunk immediately afterwards.

At Copenhagen, Nelson, wishing, to communicate with one of the ships which had grounded in the shallow water, asked for a volunteer who was willing to undertake the task. A dozen sailors stepped forward to do his bidding. One was chosen; and this man, named Troubridge, swam the distance between the two vessels notwithstanding the storm of shot and shell which fell into the sea on all sides of him. He was rewarded for his brave act by the personal thanks of his great commander, who shook hands with him, and made him a handsome present.

When Sidon was captured by Sir Charles Napier, an incident took place which was specially mentioned in his despatches. A party of sailors were landed to act against the town in conjunction with an Austrian force, and the English flag was intrusted for a few moments to the care of a sailor named Hunt. It could not have been given into better hands, for the man was a hero, and directly the order to advance was made, Hunt, jealous of his country's honour, and seeing the Austrian flag-bearer hastening forward, ran a race with the latter, and succeeded, after a desperate struggle, and in the midst of a terrible storm of shot, in planting the Union-jack *first* upon the ramparts of the city. He afterwards received a commission for his brave and patriotic act.

When that splendid victory at Trafalgar was gained, and paid for at such a terrible price, Britain may be said to have been in the zenith of her glory. Neither before nor since has England held such a high place in the councils of the world. Trafalgar was indeed all her own; there were no allies, no assistance of any kind, but simply her own beloved 'wooden walls' and her *invincible* sailors. The

celebrated signal which Nelson ran up to his mast-head at the commencement of the action has become a household phrase wherever the English language is spoken; and wherever, in any part of the globe, danger is to be met or honour won for Britain, the greatest incentive to courage and duty in the breast of an Englishman is the knowledge that 'England expects every man to do his duty.'

At this battle a sailor named Berryman, anxious to be the first on board the enemy's ship *Santissima Trinidad*, instead of boarding her in the usual manner, leaped through the quarter-gallery window, and found himself face to face with the Spanish officers in council. They fired point-blank at him, but he was not hit, and he dashed right through their midst, and rushing to the deck instantly began hauling down the Spaniards' flag. He succeeded in his brave though rash deed, but it cost him his life.

Owing to the fact that the French and Spanish fleets were completely crushed at Trafalgar, no foreign country has ever since been enabled to defy the power of England upon the sea, and the principal duty of the British navy has now, for more than half a century past, been the protection of English commerce on the great ocean highway, and the suppression of the slave-trade.

This peaceable duty was, however, broken during the Crimean War, when England's sailors once more exhibited the old spirit, but failed to gain the opportunities for distinguishing themselves which fell to the lot of their predecessors. The Russian fleet was always prudent enough to keep beneath the cover of stone walls, and when these failed at length to protect it, sooner than risk the loss of a battle, its commanders sunk it beneath the waters of the Black Sea. What the sailors could not do at sea, however, they did on land; for instance, one gallant fellow, Ferguson, gained that noblest of all distinctions, the Victoria Cross, for seizing a live-shell in his hands and flinging it over the parapet of the battery occupied by the Naval Brigade; thus saving many lives at the risk of his own.

In the face of all obstacles, the navy rendered excellent service on several occasions, notably at the bombardment of Sevastopol, which it soon made too warm to hold the Russian army. The old *Agamemnon* went right in beneath the Muscovite batteries, without, however, effecting the desired result. She was led into position by an English merchantman, whose captain volunteered to take the soundings of the harbour as the two vessels advanced; and this he succeeded in accomplishing under a heavy fire, which struck down all his crew but one – he being wounded himself – and crippled the gallant little ship.

The officers and crew of the *Agamemnon* exhibited the same noble spirit and stern devotedness to duty which impelled Nelson at Copenhagen, when told that the admiral was signalling a retreat, to place his glass to his blind eye, and give orders to nail his colours to the mast. 'Thank God, I have done my duty!' exclaimed England's darling hero, as he lay bleeding to death for her sake in the hour of his greatest triumph; and we may thank God too that England may ever rest assured, when the hour of danger comes and the war-clouds break over her shores, that her sons will be found at their posts, true and steadfast as of yore, guarding from dishonour, as Nelson and his brave seamen did, the flag that has 'braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze,' and shewing to an astonished and admiring world that 'the path of duty is the way to glory.'

THE LAST OF THE HADDONS

CHAPTER XIV. – A REVELATION

I was saying a few words to the housekeeper, when one of the maids came running in to tell me that Miss Farrar wanted me in the green room immediately. 'I am afraid Miss Farrar is taken suddenly ill, or something serious has happened, Miss; for she could hardly speak, and told me to beg you not to delay a moment.'

Lilian ill! I hastened up-stairs as fast as my feet would carry me. It was the room in which her father had died, and it had been shut up ever since. I had advised her to have it opened and the furniture changed, in order to destroy painful associations; and she had at length yielded to my persuasions. But we decided that she and I were first to give a last look through the cabinet before it was removed, she having resolved to keep that one memento of her father in her own room. She had gone on, and I was only waiting to give some instructions to the housekeeper before following her.

I found her standing near the cabinet, which was open, with her eyes fixed upon a paper she held in her hand, and looking as though she had been suddenly turned to stone. Quietly and quickly closing the door, and turning the key in the lock, I went towards her.

'What is it, Lilian?'

Without a word, she put the paper into my hands, then knelt down before her father's chair, burying her face in her hands. I knelt down beside her, and passing my arm round her waist, turned my eyes upon the paper.

I was in a measure prepared for some kind of calamity. But this! I read the lines slowly through a second time:

I, Jacob Farrar, take Lucy Reed as my lawful wife, on this twelfth day of January 1839, at this place, Dunkeld, Perthshire, in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

Donald Grey, Shepherd

Peter Forbes, Hostler.

The date I knew to be three years previous to Mr Farrar's marriage with Lilian's mother; and with that knowledge, something else broke upon me. I myself had left that paper in the recess of the cabinet from which I had taken the letters and little packet. I could even recollect having had a moment's hesitation as to whether I should take it or not, when I lifted the papers which lay upon it; but it looked so insignificant, merely like a piece of blank paper folded together, that I let it remain. From the moment my eyes fell upon its contents I recognised that it was of vital importance to Lilian. Not a moment's doubt as to its genuineness entered my head. Mr Farrar's anxiety to have those papers destroyed was too vividly impressed upon my mind.

But my fear of what that paper might import, and my love for Lilian notwithstanding, I strongly resented his having endeavoured to make me an instrument to destroy it.

'Help me, Mary!'

Imagining that she was speaking in grief, instead of joy, I offered up a mental prayer for strength to help her in the right way, then drew her head on to my shoulder. 'I will, Lilian.'

'You think it is true?' she whispered, clinging to me.

As it happened, we had been lately reading about a much-talked-of will case, in which a great deal depended upon the claimant being able to prove a Scotch marriage; and both Lilian and I had taken sufficient interest in the question to read up the evidence. We were therefore the more startled

by the discovery of the paper, and more ready to believe in its genuineness than we might otherwise have been.

'I think there may be some possibility that it is genuine, Lilian,' I hesitatingly replied; grieved as I was to say it, giving her my real opinion.

'Ah, Mary, be glad with me!' she ejaculated, to my intense surprise; for I still did not perceive what was in her mind. 'How could his child have doubted him!' She rose exultant, adding with glowing cheeks and brilliant eyes: 'Can I ever be thankful enough for his sake! No more shame for me! Be glad with me, Mary.'

'I will, dear,' I returned, still a little bewildered at her joy, 'when – when I am quite sure there are good grounds for being glad.'

'Grounds? Do not you think it is genuine?' she asked eagerly. 'Look at the dates – and names too.'

'Yes; I think – perhaps it may prove so. The signatures are in different handwritings: it certainly looks like a genuine document,' I said stupidly; 'but' —

'There must be no "buts!" Don't you see, dear slow darling that you are, this proves Papa to have been an honourable gentleman, and takes the shame of his wrong-doing from his child? Was not my shame greater than hers, if he had wronged her mother?'

I saw now. But I saw too that another thing of terrible import to herself had not occurred to her. After a few moments' reflection, I said: 'Will you wait here five minutes for me, Lilian? I must send off a letter I have written, to save the next post; but I will be back in five minutes.' I really had a letter to send – an order to a London tradesman, which the housekeeper wished to be attended to; but I should not have thought of it at that moment, had I not been seeking about in my mind for an excuse for leaving her a short time.

She looked not a little surprised; but replied: 'Of course I will wait, if you wish it, Mary.'

'Promise me, Lilian – promise me that you will not leave this room until I return?'

She gravely promised; and I hastened from the room and down-stairs, my pulse beating tumultuously. Hurriedly throwing the letter on to the hall table, I turned into the morning-room, where Marian Reed was practising a new song. I was so far fortunate as to find her too much occupied to notice my agitation, which must, I think, have been very evident in my face. I found it difficult enough to command my thoughts, much more the expression of my face. She did not notice my entrance into the room, and that gave me a few moments to gather courage and decide how I could best lead up to the subject I wanted to introduce. I could think of no better way than putting a direct question. Catching up a piece of Lilian's dainty embroidery, which lay in her work-basket, and putting in a few random stitches, in the hope that it might appear as if the idea had suddenly occurred to me whilst I sat working, I asked: 'I suppose you have no recollection of your mother, Miss Reed? Had she dark hair and eyes like your own – have you heard?'

'Ma? O yes; I recollect Ma perfectly well, Miss Haddon. Her eyes were just a shade lighter than' —

'Some people have such wonderful memories. I have heard of people recollecting things which occurred when they were quite babies,' I put in; trying to speak lightly, as I dragged the needle through and through, to the utter destruction of Lilian's delicate work.

'But I wasn't a baby when Ma died, you know.'

'About two years old, I suppose?'

'No; I was over five when Ma died, Miss Haddon.'

'You must be mistaken, I think. I recollect your aunt saying that you were quite young – almost a baby,' I returned, bringing the words out slowly and heavily.

'Well, five is almost a baby, isn't it?' – turning on the music-stool to look at me.

'But I think you must be mistaken in fancying you were as old as five. You could not have been much over two years and a half, or three – perhaps three,' I pleaded. If what I feared was true, was I not pleading for the good name of Lilian's mother?

'Well, I do think I ought to be allowed to know best about that, Miss Haddon. I am over twenty, and Ma has been dead fifteen years.' Then she added, with what was meant for satire: 'But if I can't be believed about it, there's the register of my birth and Ma's death to be found, I suppose; and it may not be *all* stories on her tombstone, which I must say Pa spared no expense about. It's in the churchyard at Highgate, where Ma was staying for change of air when she died, if you would like to go and see it.'

I folded the spoiled work carefully together, methodically replacing it in the basket, first square, then corner-wise, as I tried to gather up my scattered wits and prepare my face for Lilian's eyes again. Fortunately, Marian Reed flattered herself that she had for once succeeded in putting Mary Haddon down, and was in spirits accordingly, singing away at the top of her voice again.

I quitted the room, and slowly made my way to the green chamber, where Lilian was waiting for me.

'Well, Mary!' she ejaculated, turning a smiling happy face towards me as I entered; 'have you come to set your prisoner free, madam?'

'Yes,' I replied, stupidly gazing at her.

'What makes you look at me like that, Mary?'

'How do I look?' I replied, with an attempt at a smile.

But her fears were aroused. 'Is it anything about this?' she anxiously asked, looking down at the paper in her hand, and then into my face.

'I – I have been thinking the matter over, Lilian, and – I should like to ask some one's advice.'

'Some one's advice? – About this, dear?' turning it over in her hand, and then giving a wondering look at me.

'I mean as to its genuineness, Lilian.'

'I do not understand. These names are plain enough, and you thought just now' —

'Oh, any one might have written these names without the document being a binding one,' I said, catching at any hope. 'To be legal, it must have been signed *in* Scotland, you know; and there is no proof that it was.'

'But you hope – Mary, do not you *hope* that it is genuine?'

'I do not quite know what to hope, dearie,' I replied, with a would-be careless air.

In her utter unconsciousness of the cause of my uneasiness, she could not account for my want of sympathy, looking at me in some surprise. Then, after a few moments' silence, she said in a low grave voice: 'I know what to hope, Mary. I heartily hope that Marian's mother may have been righted.'

Not once did it occur to her that it might be at the expense of her own mother. How she would act when the whole truth broke upon her, remained to be seen. I could not tell her whilst there seemed a thread of hope to cling to; and I tried to persuade myself that my fears as to the genuineness of that paper might yet prove to have been groundless.

'I think the best plan will be for me to write to Mr Wentworth, and ask him to advise and assist us, Lilian. He will be able to ascertain whether this is a *bonâ fide* document, and represents a real marriage or not. And until that is done, I strongly advise you to say nothing about having found the paper.'

'Dear Mary, do you think there is so much necessity for secrecy about it?'

'I do indeed, Lilian.' Then, seeing that she still demurred (it seemed to her only natural and right at once to make known the discovery of the paper, be the consequences what they might), I added, diplomatically: 'I think it would be wiser not to raise Marian's hopes until you are quite sure they will not be disappointed. It is a case in which disappointment might be very terrible for her.'

'Yes; of course it would: I did not think of that. You are quite right, dear cautious old darling that you are; and I will obey you, though I do not myself fear disappointment.'

'Then it is understood that for the present it is to go no further; and I will at once write to Mr Wentworth, inclosing him a copy of this;' taking the paper from her reluctant fingers.

'You will be very careful of it, Mary? Recollect how much depends' —

'O yes; it will be safe enough,' I hurriedly replied, only anxious to make my escape before she could change her mind.

Once in my room, with that paper in my own possession, I very quickly had my nerves under command, and was ready for business, sitting down to write my letter with a clear head and firm hand:

'My dear Mr Wentworth – In looking through a cabinet of her father's, Lilian just now found the original of the paper which I have copied, and inclose. *She* sees in it only the vindication of Marian's mother, and rejoices accordingly. Unknown to Lilian, I have questioned Marian as to her age when her mother died. She insists that she was over five years old, and that her mother has been dead only fifteen years. If this be so, and this document is genuine, it is not *Marian's* mother who has been wronged; and the former will be righted at the expense of our Lilian. You and I know that right will be done, be the cost what it may to her. I need not say on which side my sympathies are. I have not much hope; but hasten to send the paper for your consideration, and beg you to act for her. Please go first to Marian's aunt, Mrs Pratt, Green Street, Islington; and make sure about the dates of Marian's birth and her mother's death before you take measures to prove the validity of the marriage. I do not apologise for asking this of you. To do our best for Lilian is a real privilege to you and me, and I know that it is not necessary to beg you to lose no time.'

A telegram was handed to me that night at tea-time – 'Robert Wentworth to Miss Haddon – *Letter received, and I am at work.*' I shewed it to Lilian, who returned it to me with a nod and smile.

Dear old Mrs Tipper looked somewhat surprised and Marian curious; but surprised and curious they had to remain. Meantime the suspense was terrible to me; I was so restless and unlike my ordinary self, that I could do nothing, even in the way of occupying only my fingers. In my discomfort I was impolitic enough to offend Marian Reed as I had not yet done. The very sight of her irritated me, and her imperfections seemed more glaring than ever. I think I should have grudged allowing her credit for having a single good quality. A very slight event brought my indignation to a climax.

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